

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

April 9, 2002

The Honorable Rick Perry
The Honorable William R. Ratliff
The Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney
Members of the 77th Legislature
Commissioner Dr. Felipe T. Alanis, Ph.D.

Fellow Texans:

I am pleased to present my performance review of the Lasara Independent School District (LISD).

This review is intended to help Lasara ISD hold the line on costs, streamline operations, and improve services to ensure that more of every education dollar goes directly into the classroom with the teachers and children, where it belongs. To aid in this task, I contracted with SoCo Consulting.

I have made a number of recommendations to improve LISD's efficiency. I have also highlighted a number of "best practices" in district operations-model programs and services provided by the district's administrators, teachers, and staff. This report outlines 37 detailed recommendations that could save Lasara ISD more than \$810,000 over the next five years, while reinvesting more than \$184,000 to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to reach \$626,000 that the district can redirect into the classroom.

I am grateful for the cooperation of LISD's board, staff, parents, and community members. I commend them for their dedication to improving the educational opportunities for our most precious resource in LISD-our children.

I am also pleased to announce that the report is available on my Window on State Government Web site at
<<http://www.window.state.tx.us/tspr/lasara/>>.



Carole Keeton Rylander
Texas Comptroller

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary Overview

Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation (Exhibit 5)

In October 2001, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander began a review of the Lasara Independent School District (LISD) as part of a four-district project that also included reviews of the neighboring San Perlita, Raymondville and Lyford school districts. Based upon more than six months of work, this report identifies LISD's exemplary programs and suggests concrete ways to improve district operations. If fully implemented, the Comptroller's 37 recommendations could result in net savings of more than \$626,000 over the next five years.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review

Soon after taking office in January 1999, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander consulted school district officials, parents and teachers from across Texas and carefully examined past reviews and progress reports to make the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) more valuable to the state's school districts. With the perspective of a former teacher and school board president, the Comptroller has vowed to use TSPR to increase local school districts' accountability to the communities they serve.

Recognizing that only 52 cents of every education dollar is spent on instruction, Comptroller Rylander's goal is to drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom. Comptroller Rylander also has ordered TSPR staff to share best practices and exemplary programs quickly and systematically with all the state's school districts and with anyone else who requests such information. Comptroller Rylander has directed TSPR to serve as a clearinghouse of the best ideas in Texas public education.

Under Comptroller Rylander's approach, consultants and the TSPR team will work with districts to:

- Ensure students and teachers receive the support and resources necessary to succeed;
- Identify innovative ways to address the district's core management challenges;
- Ensure administrative duties are performed efficiently, without duplication, and in a way that fosters education;
- Develop strategies to ensure the district's processes and programs are continuously assessed and improved;

- Challenge any process, procedure, program or policy that impedes instruction and recommend ways to reduce or eliminate obstacles; and
- Put goods and services to the "Yellow Pages Test": government should do no job if a business in the Yellow Pages can do that job better and at a lower cost.

Finally, Comptroller Rylander has opened her door to Texans who share her optimism about the potential for public education. Suggestions to improve Texas schools or the school reviews are welcome at any time. The Comptroller believes public schools deserve all the attention and assistance they can get.

For more information, contact TSPR by calling toll-free 1-800-531-5441, extension 5-3676, or see the Comptroller's Web site at www.window.state.tx.us.

TSPR in Lasara ISD

As the review began in October 2001, LISD was the only Recognized school district in Willacy County. The Comptroller contracted with SoCo Consulting, an Austin-based consulting firm, to assist with the review. The team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents and community members and held a public forum on October 29, at the Lasara School Cafeteria from 6 to 8 p.m.

To ensure stakeholders had an opportunity to give comment to the review team, surveys were sent to parents, teachers and district staff. More than 300 surveys were mailed out and a total of 66 respondents answered surveys. Twelve campus and central administrators and support staff, eight teachers, and 46 parents completed written surveys. Details from the surveys and the public forum appear in **Appendices A** through **D**.

The review team also consulted two databases of comparative educational information maintained by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

LISD selected five peer districts for comparisons based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The districts chosen were San Perlita, San Isidro, Monte Alto, Santa Maria, and La Villa. The district was also compared to the state and district averages in TEA's Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1).

In 2000-01, the district served a population of 310 students: 97.4 percent Hispanic and 2.6 percent are Anglo, with 88.1 percent economically disadvantaged. **Exhibit 1** details the demographic characteristics of LISD, its peer school districts, Region 1 and the state.

Exhibit 1
Demographics of LISD, Peer Districts,
Region 1 and State Student Populations
2000-01

District Name	Enrollment	African American	Anglo	Hispanic	Other	Economically Disadvantaged
Lasara	310	0.0%	2.6%	97.4%	0.0%	88.1%
San Perlita	272	0%	20.6%	79.4%	0.0%	83.1%
San Isidro	270	0.0%	5.6%	94.4%	0.0%	77.8%
Monte Alto	451	0.0%	2.4%	97.6%	0.0%	86.7%
La Villa	726	0.0%	0.4%	99.6%	0.0%	89.5%
Santa Maria	510	0.0%	0.0%	99.8%	0.2%	97.3%
Region 1	302,528	0.2%	3.8%	95.6%	0.4%	82.7%
State	4,059,619	14.4%	42.0%	40.6%	3.0%	49.3%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2000-01.

During its more than six-month review, TSPR developed 37 recommendations to improve operations and save taxpayers more than \$810,000 by 2006-07. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach more than \$626,000 by 2006-07.

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 5**. Many TSPR recommendations would not have a direct financial impact but would improve the district's overall operations.

Acknowledgments

The Comptroller's office and SoCo Consulting wish to express their appreciation to the LISD Board of Trustees, the deputy superintendent,

Raul "Bobby" Chapa, district employees, students, parents and community residents who helped during the review.

Lasara ISD

LISD is located in the western half of Willacy County in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. The district's population is more than 95 percent Hispanic, according to the 2000 US Census. The largest employers are the school district and the county government. Ranching and farming are also key components of the county's economy.

LISD is a small district serving students from pre-Kindergarten through grade 8 with a static student growth and a fairly static tax base, without any major commercial property. The district is a Recognized district with one campus. It receives the preponderance of its funding from the state; 88.1 percent of students are economically disadvantaged. The district's annual budget for 2000-01 is \$2,162,341. Compared to its peer districts, LISD has the second-lowest property tax rate and third-lowest taxable property value per pupil (**Exhibit 2**).

Exhibit 2
LISD Adopted Tax Rate and Taxable Property Value
Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District Name	Tax Rate	Taxable Property Value per Pupil
Lasara	\$1.430	\$61,954
San Perlita	\$1.380	\$185,979
San Isidro	\$1.500	\$481,161
Monte Alto	\$1.540	\$73,777
La Villa	\$1.577	\$60,269
Santa Maria	\$1.640	\$32,430

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

The percentage of LISD students passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was second highest among all its peer districts and above the regional and state averages in reading, writing, mathematics and all tests taken (**Exhibit 3**).

Exhibit 3
Percent of LISD, Region 1 and State
Students Passing TAAS, All Levels
2000-01

District Name	Reading	Writing	Math	All Tests
Lasara	86.1%	94.7%	97.0%	83.4%
San Perlita	87.5%	79.5%	94.2%	79.0%
San Isidro	99.1%	100%	98.2%	98.2%
Monte Alto	86.3%	88.8%	94.6%	82.7%
La Villa	77.9%	80.6%	79.2%	68.4%
Santa Maria	83.3%	84.9%	84.5%	71.7%
Region 1	84.5%	85.7%	88.7%	77.9%
State	88.9%	87.9%	90.2%	82.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

While TSPR found some exemplary programs and practices that can and should be replicated by other districts, the district is facing a number of challenges. As LISD positions itself for the future, the board, the superintendent and administrators must move forward to:

- Improve district governance;
- Improve district planning; and
- Improve financial management through cost containment.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Improve District Governance

- **Immediately recruit a superintendent to lead the district.** The board reassigned the superintendent to be the deputy superintendent and made the principal the interim superintendent in response to TEA's concern that the district had no certified superintendent. The interim superintendent is also not a certified superintendent. By hiring a certified superintendent to lead the district, staff will have focus and direction and the community's perception that district leadership is committed to education can be restored.

- **Develop a local nepotism policy to address management and reporting practices.** No local LISD nepotism policies govern the hiring of staff and reporting responsibilities. Without a local nepotism policy, spouses or relatives may end up reporting to each other and can be perceived by community members as improper. The board, by creating an effective local nepotism policy, would remove the community's perception that nepotism governs hiring, clarify reporting responsibilities, and ensure internal controls and appropriate oversight of all staff positions.

Improve District Planning

- **Integrate the district's planning documents into a district strategic plan and link it to the budget.** With only one school, the district combines its campus and district improvement plan (DIP) into one document. LISD's DIP lacks clear strategies and performance measures, does not include tracking of compensatory education funds, and it is not linked to the district's budget. Without an effective plan, the district has no roadmap to guide it where it wants to go and places itself in a reactive rather than a proactive position when dealing with external events. Planning strategically will allow the board and administration to set a future vision for the district, help it manage community expectations and allow it to more effectively manage the district's budget.
- **Develop a facilities master plan.** In May 2000 community members voted for bonds totaling almost \$3 million to build a new school. The district, however, has no facilities master plan to manage the overall processing of selling the bonds, hiring an architect, approving school designs, establish construction requirements and schedules, establishing future classroom and maintenance needs and custodial standards. A comprehensive facilities master plan addresses these needs, while also providing a mechanism for establishing and tracking budgets and keeping community members informed concerning construction progress and cost.
- **Develop a comprehensive technology plan for the district.** The district has a technology plan but it lacks some key components to help the district implement and manage information technology (IT). Missing components include an assessment of current and future IT needs, a cost-benefit analysis for specific purchases, a list of district priorities, and funding sources for purchases. Information technology links LISD students to a larger world. Planning for information technology purchases will allow the

district to implement effective technology and help district children compete in the local and global marketplace.

Improve Financial Management Through Cost Containment

- **Implement staffing formulas and reduce staff.** The district does not use staffing formulas to guide hiring practices. Comparative formulas show LISD to be overstaffed in several areas. A staffing formula could save the district more than \$689,000 over five years.
- **Contract with the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector to collect property taxes.** LISD is a small district, yet it employs its own tax assessor collector. The district collected 92.3 percent of the taxes owed it in 2000-01, which is low. While local economic conditions might impact any improvement on the overall taxation collection rate, eliminating its tax office would save the district more than \$28,000 annually and transferring the functions to the Willacy County Tax Assessor Collector could improve overall collection rates.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

TSPR identified numerous "best practices" in LISD. Through commendations in each chapter, the report highlights model programs, operations and services provided by LISD administrators, teachers and staff. Other school districts throughout Texas are encouraged to examine these exemplary programs and services to see if they could be adapted to meet their local needs. TSPR's commendations include the following:

- ***LISD has a comprehensive parental-involvement handbook.*** The parental-involvement handbook provides information parents need on how to be involved in their children's education. Included in the handbook are the names and numbers of teachers and administrators, volunteering procedures, district goals and objectives, parent surveys, an involvement pledge and helpful hints about how to work with students. And, the handbook is printed in English and Spanish.
- ***Teacher aides are encouraged to continue their education.*** Each teacher aide is required to take three hours of college credit a year after the first year of employment. For each hour of college credit they receive they are paid an additional \$100 annually. LISD pays the tuition and the costs of the books. Ten percent of the LISD teaching staff, who started out as teacher aides and went on to get their college degrees, are a product of this program.

- ***LISD developed programs to improve deficient TAAS math scores.*** The district recognized its TAAS math scores were low and implemented a number of improvements, ensuring that its math curriculum was vertically and horizontally aligned and that all teachers used, and were trained in the Sharon Wells math curriculum. Across all grades, math scores on the TAAS improved by 44 percent between 1999-2000 and 2000-01.
- ***LISD serves breakfast to children in the classroom, ensuring all children eat a nutritious breakfast.*** All children in grades 2 through 8 receive a breakfast in their classroom every day. The district reports children are more alert and attentive in class since the program began.

Savings and Investment Requirements

Many TSPR's recommendations would result in savings and increased revenue that could be used to improve classroom instruction. The savings identified in this report are conservative and should be considered minimum. Proposed investments of additional funds usually are related to increased efficiencies, savings or improved productivity and effectiveness.

TSPR recommended 37 ways to save LISD more than \$810,000 over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities will cost the district \$184,000 during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of \$626,000 by 2006-07 (**Exhibit 4**).

Exhibit 4 Summary of Net Savings TSPR Review of Lasara Independent School District

Year	Total
2002-03 Initial Annual Net Savings	\$108,125
2003-04 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$136,578
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$136,578
2005-06 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$136,578
2006-07 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$136,578
One Time Net (Costs)/Savings	(\$28,000)
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2002-2007	\$626,437

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 5**. The page number for each recommendation is listed in the summary chart for reference purposes. Detailed implementation strategies, timelines and the estimates of fiscal impact follow each recommendation in this

report. The implementation section associated with each recommendation highlights the actions necessary to achieve the proposed results. Some items should be implemented immediately, some over the next year or two and some over several years.

TSPR recommends the LISD board ask district administrators to review the recommendations, develop an implementation plan and monitor its progress. As always, TSPR staff is available to help implement proposals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exhibit 5 Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One- Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1 District Organization and Management							
1	Hold board meetings at the Community Resource Center to encourage community attendance. p. 16	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2	Include necessary information in board packets so board members can make informed decisions. p. 18	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3	Record board meeting minutes and transcribe the discussion for inclusion in board meeting minutes. p. 20	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
4	Prepare a performance report for	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	policy that addresses management and reporting practices. p. 34							
12	Develop a checklist for what should be included in personnel files. p. 35	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
13	Develop a policy for handling accumulated sick and personal leave for employees who leave the district or retire. p. 37	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
14	Report and track all vacation time earned. p. 37	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
15	Evaluate all non-teaching staff annually. p. 38	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 1	\$0						
Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery								
16	Implement staffing formulas and reduce staff. p. 52	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$689,040	\$0
17	Develop a textbook procedures manual. p. 54	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

18	Develop strategies to improve reading proficiency by 5 percent. p. 58	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
19	Review Algebra I curriculum and align it with end-of-course examinations. p. 60	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
20	Monitor student academic performance through high school graduation. p. 61	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
21	Re-evaluate the bilingual/ESL program to make it more effective. p. 64	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
22	Allocate additional district funds to special education. p. 69	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$156,000)	\$0
23	Establish and administer a Gifted and Talented program that complies with state guidelines. n.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	72							
24	Include compensatory education funds in the district improvement plan. p. 75	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 2	\$106,608	\$106,608	\$106,608	\$106,608	\$106,608	\$533,040	\$0
Chapter 3 Financial Management								
25	Establish a policy for management of the fund balance. p. 85	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
26	Generate financial statements each month for the board and administrators. p. 87	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
27	Draft and publish a purchasing procedures manual. p. 90	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
28	Develop an external auditor Request for Proposal policy to ensure that new auditors are solicited every five years. p. 92	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
29	Contract with the Willacv	\$0	\$28,453	\$28,453	\$28,453	\$28,453	\$113,812	\$0

	County Tax Assessor Collector to collect property taxes. p. 94							
30	Closely monitor expenditures and produce a monthly budget report. p. 96	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
31	Establish a Budget Planning Committee to identify the district's goals and financial constraints. p. 98	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
32	Establish a committee of staff and administrators to implement the state health plan for 2002-03. p. 101	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
33	Sweep the business checking accounts nightly. p. 103	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$7,585	\$0
	Totals- Chapter 3	\$1,517	\$29,970	\$29,970	\$29,970	\$29,970	\$121,397	\$0
Chapter 4 Operations								
34	Develop a facilities master plan. p. 110	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$28,000)

35	Prepare a custodial plan to improve school cleanliness. p. 111	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
36	Use all available commodity resources to lower food costs to the district. p. 115	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
37	Develop a bus replacement policy. p. 119	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 4	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$28,000)
	TOTAL SAVINGS	\$139,325	\$167,778	\$167,778	\$167,778	\$167,778	\$810,437	\$0
	TOTAL COSTS	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$156,000)	(\$28,000)
	NET SAVINGS (COSTS)	\$108,125	\$136,578	\$136,578	\$136,578	\$136,578	\$654,437	(\$28,000)

5-Year Gross Savings	\$810,437
5-Year Gross Costs	(\$184,000)
Grand Total	\$626,437

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter reviews Lasara Independent School District's (LISD) organization and management, community involvement and personnel in five sections.

- A. Governance
- B. District Management
- C. District Planning
- D. Community Involvement
- E. Personnel

School districts in Texas are governed by elected Boards of Trustees. School boards focus on decision-making processes, planning and providing resources for goal achievement. To a great extent, the ability of the board to perform these duties effectively is determined by their knowledge and recognition of the separation of their role from that of the superintendent.

The superintendent acts as the chief executive administrator of the district, responsible for implementing policies adopted by the local board, assigning personnel responsibilities and managing day-to-day operations.

BACKGROUND

Lasara Independent School District (LISD) is a small, rural, agricultural district located in the western half of Willacy County in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Willacy County has a population of 19,217. Of this total, approximately 1,000 individuals reside within the boundaries of the district. LISD is 10 miles west of Raymondville, the county seat, 13 miles north of Edcouch and 13 miles east of San Manuel in Hidalgo County.

The economy of the region centers on ranching and farming. Lasara has very little industry and depends on agribusinesses, tourism, shipping and oil.

LISD is one of the smaller school districts in Texas with a student population of 310 in 2000-01. The average property value of \$61,954 is \$153,278 less per student than the average property value of \$215,232 for the state meaning that the district receives the majority of its funds from the state.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. GOVERNANCE

While the school board is responsible for creating policy, the superintendent is responsible for carrying out policy. The superintendent must manage the district cost-effectively and efficiently. Section 11.201 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) states that the superintendent holds:

- Administrative responsibility for the planning, operation, supervision and evaluation of the educational programs, services and facilities of the district and for annual performance appraisals of the staff;
- Administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all district personnel;
- Responsibility for the termination or suspension of staff members or the non-renewal of staff members' term contracts;
- Authority over day-to-day management of district operations;
- Responsibility for the preparation of district budgets;
- Responsibility for the preparation of policy recommendations for the board and implementation of adopted policies;
- Responsibility for the development of appropriate administrative regulations to implement board policies;
- Responsibility for leadership in attainment of student performance; and
- Responsibility for the organization of the district's central administration.

Section 11.254(a) of the Texas Education Code requires "each school district to maintain current policies and procedures to ensure that effective planning and site-based decision-making occur at each school to direct and support the improvement of student performance."

LISD's Board of Trustees consists of seven trustees; all elected at large. Trustees are elected to three-year terms on a rotating basis. The terms of approximately one-third of the trustees expire each year. **Exhibit 1-1** presents information on the board of trustees.

Exhibit 1-1
LISD Board of Trustees
2001-02

Board Member	Title	Term Expires	Years of Service	Occupation
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Isidro Robles	President	2005	11 years	Clerk, U.S. Postal Service
Alberto Salazar	Vice president	2003	26 years	Co-Owner, S&S Produce
Gloria Nieto	Secretary	2005	8 years	Secretary, USDA
Adan Chavez	Board member	2004	8 years	Construction laborer, Valley Telephone Cooperative
Marco A. "Tony" Nieto	Board member	2004	1 year	Foreman, Kenaf Industries
Salome Saenz	Board member	2003	27 years	Co-Owner, S&S Produce
Reynaldo Ramirez	Board member	2005	27 years	Retired teacher

Source: Lasara Independent School District (LISD) Board of Trustees, March 2002.

Regular board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month. In addition, the board may hold special meetings whenever it deems necessary. Meetings are posted in compliance with the state law on the front window of the district's administrative office. The superintendent serves as the administrative leader responsible for policy implementation and day-to-day operations.

FINDING

Community participation and attendance at LISD board meetings are minimal.

During each regular board meeting, the public can sign up to address the board, and people who sign up are allotted time to do so. **Exhibit 1-2** lists all board meetings conducted during the 2000-01 school year, the type of meeting held and the public input received during those meetings. No parents or community members addressed the board during 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-2 Board Meetings and Public Input Received

Board Meeting	Day of the Week	Type of Board Meeting	Public Input Received
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09/20/2000	Wednesday	Regular	None
10/10/2000	Tuesday	Regular	None
11/14/2000	Tuesday	Regular	None
12/12/2000	Tuesday	Regular	None
01/16/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
02/12/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
03/08/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
04/11/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
05/08/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
06/12/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
07/10/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
08/14/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
09/11/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None
10/09/2001	Tuesday	Regular	None

Source: LISD board meeting minutes.

In compliance with state law, the district posts notices of upcoming meetings and agendas three days before the board convenes on the front window of the district's administrative office. The district distributes school calendars to parents, but these do not always indicate board-meeting dates. District staff does not send board-meeting notices to the local newspaper ahead of time.

The school board always holds its meetings in the boardroom in the central administration office. The administration building was formerly a small apartment building occupied by teachers, and the boardroom is about the size of an average residential living room, which is too small to support many visitors. The room has a conference table and chairs, kitchen facilities, a refrigerator and a single restroom. Other than seating at the conference table, the room offers little area for public seating. The room also connects to staff offices at each end. The room is too small to support many visitors to the board meetings.

LISD board policy states "Unless otherwise provided in the notice for a meeting, Board meetings shall be held at the teacher's workroom," Board policy, therefore, does not prohibit a board meeting being held at another location to improve community participation and attendance. However,

meetings are not held at any other locations in the district to encourage input.

As shown in **Exhibit 1-3**, most survey responses from parents indicated disagreement on whether the board allowed sufficient time for public input or listened to the opinions of others.

Exhibit 1-3
Survey Results About the LISD Board

Parent Survey Questions	Parent Responses
The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings?	45 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed 39 percent agreed or strongly agreed
School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others?	52 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed 37 percent agreed or strongly agreed

Source: TSPR, LISD Management and Performance Review Survey.

According to the district's policies: "Board meetings are held to transact the business of the district. So that citizens have the opportunity to be informed concerning those transactions, meetings are open to the public, except when closed meetings are conducted as permitted by the Open Meetings Act. The board may provide opportunities at its meetings for citizens to address the board, but shall impose reasonable restraints on the number, length, and frequency of presentations, so long as it does not unfairly discriminate among views seeking expression." Board policy further states: "Audience participation at a board meeting is limited to the portion of the meeting designated for that purpose." LISD board members have designated a portion of each meeting for public input.

Recommendation 1:

Hold board meetings at the Community Resource Center to encourage community attendance.

Holding meetings in a location that will hold more people will demonstrate to the community that the district wants the community involved and knowledgeable about what is happening in the district. Greater school board meeting attendance would also demonstrate to the local school staff that the board is both interested and informed about issues relating to their school.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager makes arrangements with the community center to set aside the proposed dates for the board meetings for the upcoming year.	May 2002
2.	The principal publishes the board-meeting dates in the school calendar.	June 2002
3.	The business manager notifies the media, community groups and parents one month or several weeks before each board meeting.	August 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Recommendations contained in board meeting agendas drafted by the administration and presented to the board for approval do not contain enough information for a board member to make an informed business decision.

Boards have the power and authority over a range of topics and the obligation to make the best decisions possible comes with this power. However, the basis for all decisions is good explanation and financial data.

The LISD board policy says, "Agendas for all meetings shall be sufficiently specific to inform the public of the subjects to be deliberated at the meeting, setting out any special or unusual matters to be considered or any matter in which the public has a particular interest."

Agendas contain item numbers and item names, but often lack adequate descriptions of pending issues and cost-justification data. Board members often must engage in additional discussions during the board meeting to get the necessary data to make informed decisions. **Exhibit 1-4** indicates which agenda-packet items are adequate to support the decision-making process.

**Exhibit 1-4
Board Packet Assessment**

Suggested Agenda Information Packet Contents	LISD Packet Contents	
	Adequate	Inadequate
Item number	X	

Item name	X	
Item description		X
Requested action		X
Cost-benefit analysis		X
Impact on planning documents		X
Impact on budget		X
Start date		X
Assigned responsibility		X

Source: Review of Lasara Board Agenda Packets.

A Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) grant was presented to the board during the July 2001 board meeting. The agenda stated "Discussion & Appropriate Action on Approval of TIF Grant as Proposed by Valley Telephone Cooperative." The district provided no additional information to the board members on which to base decisions. One of the board members works for Valley Telephone Cooperative, but no mention of this was made in the minutes. A formalized board recommendation was not presented to the board members containing the information necessary for a board member to make an informed decision about this contract.

The review team reviewed the board agenda packets for all recommendations presented to the board during 2000-01. None was accompanied by support material to justify the recommendation. This practice leaves board members to either: (1) take an educated guess; (2) remain silent in order to not seem uninformed; or (3) get into long discussions about the merit of the recommendation, unnecessarily extending the board meetings.

Recommendation 2:

Include necessary information in board packets so that board members can make informed decisions.

Exhibit 1-5 is a proposed format for the board recommendation.

**Exhibit 1-5
Proposed Board Recommendation Format**

Board Recommendation

Rationale for Board Review/Approval		
Definitions		
Define any acronyms or terms that the general public would not necessarily know.		
Cost-Benefit Justification		
<u>Requirements:</u>		
<u>Population:</u>		
<u>Costs to the district:</u>		
<u>Benefits to LISD by using an outside provider are:</u>		
<u>Breakeven to LISD:</u>		
Roles & Responsibilities		
<u>Vendor:</u>		
<u>LISD:</u>		
<u>Other:</u>		
Expected Results		
Duration		
Start date:		
End date:		
Report back to the board:		
Fiscal Impact		
Fiscal Component	General Fund Impact	Other Fund(s) Impact
One-Time Costs		
One-Time Revenue Gains		
One-Time Net		
Ongoing Costs		
On-going revenue gains		
Net (Cost) or Gain to LISD		

Source: TSPR.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager creates a format for board recommendations	May
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	to meet LISD's needs and requests corrections or changes from the board.	2002
2.	The business manager works with the respective LISD manager to prepare a board recommendation form each time a recommendation is going to the board for approval.	June 2002
3.	The business manager distributes the board recommendation packets to the board before the meeting to ensure that they have ample time to review and identify their questions.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LISD's board meeting minutes lack sufficient detail to fully document the board's decisions.

LISD board minutes are missing critical information necessary to understand how decisions were reached. The minutes contain the date of the board meeting; the times of call to order and adjournment; agenda item titles; motions made, including the names of individuals making and seconding the motions; votes taken by the board as a whole; and the outcome of decisions or discussions. The minutes do not, however, describe the content of any discussions relating to the agenda items and what time the board convened into and exited from executive session.

Exhibit 1-6 assesses the adequacy of the existing board minutes.

Exhibit 1-6 Board Meeting Minutes Content

Board Meeting Minutes Documentation	LISD	
	Adequate	Inadequate
Date of the board meeting	X	
Board item number and name	X	
Description of the item		X
Action required		X
Time of call to order and adjournment	X	
Motions made including the names of individuals making and seconding the motion	X	

Votes taken by each member including yes, no and abstentions	X	
Detailed discussion giving a clear indication of the board's deliberations and the factors considered when making the decision		X
Follow-up action required		X

Source: Review of Board Minutes 2001.

Requiring a board member to record minutes limits the board member's participation in the meeting. The board member is primarily paying attention to ensuring that he/she records the minutes accurately, rather than fully participating in the discussion. Also, since the board does not audiotape record its meetings, minutes cannot be reconstructed easily.

Recommendation 3:

Record board meeting minutes and transcribe the discussion for inclusion in board meeting minutes.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager designs a standardized format for board minutes to support all the requirements- using the above form as a guide.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent appoints a secretary within the district to record minutes at the board meetings.	May 2002
3.	The district secretary starts recording board meetings using a tape recorder and documenting minutes in the new format.	June 2002 and Ongoing
4.	The board secretary certifies the minutes to all board members and distributes them accordingly	June 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not provide board members with specific performance reporting to ensure that non-educational support functions of the district, also called auxiliary services, such as transportation, food services,

custodial support, maintenance and personnel are run efficiently and cost-effectively.

Auxiliary services are generally responsible for most of the routine, day-to-day operations and expenditures encountered in the typical school system. They also generate the most public comment.

Following are examples of performance measures that the board is not receiving:

Transportation measures:

- Cost per mile
- Cost by program
- Cost per rider
- Comparison to peer districts and state average

Food service measures:

- Meals prepared per labor hour
- Meal participation rates
- Comparison to peer districts and state average

Technology measures:

- Ratio of students to instructional computers
- Ratio of administrators to administrative computers
- Number and percentage of computers more than five years old
- Comparison to peer districts and state average

Facilities measures:

- Cost per square foot
- Square feet supported by maintenance/custodial worker
- Cost per student
- Total utility cost per square foot and by facility
- Telephone cost per staff person
- Comparison to peer districts and state average

Personnel measures:

- Overtime hours and dollars incurred for all staff
- Sick days worked versus days allocated to work for all staff
- Substitutes used and the costs of substitutes
- Comparison to peer districts and state average

Education cost measures:

- Cost per special education student
- Cost per gifted and talented student
- Cost per English as a second language (ESL)/bilingual student
- Cost per compensatory education student
- Cost per regular student
- Comparison to peer districts and state average

While these services are not directly related to the instructional programs the district must operate them efficiently for the educational process to be effective. In LISD, board members do not have enough information about these services to make informed decisions regarding them.

Recommendation 4:

Prepare a performance report for auxiliary functions for the board annually.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to begin developing a performance report for auxiliary functions.	May 2002
2.	The business manager works with each auxiliary services manager to design the format and data collection process for the report.	May 2002
3.	The business manager prepares and presents the report to the board noting areas that need special attention.	August 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LISD staff does not prepare a written calendar of board events, outlining major board activities by month to:

- Help the board know what to expect at any given time of year;
- Ensure the board does not overlook any major responsibilities;
- Help the board prepare in advance for the regular tasks an effective board performs;
- Assist the board and administration in judiciously scheduling their work; and

- Ensure the board receives regular information on district progress and operations success.

The district's former business manager retired in December 2001 after 30 years service. While the new business manager spent several weeks with the former business manager before the business manager retired, all of the institutional knowledge that the former business manager had acquired could not be transferred to the new business manager during that time.

A crucial tool for continuity in any district is a written, annual calendar of board events. Normally, a school district's calendars list by month the activities the board is expected to perform. For example, a budget hearing might appear on the calendar for August and an evaluation conference with the superintendent might appear in June. The annual review and adoption of district goals would appear in whatever month the board and administration find it most useful to conclude the goal-setting process.

Recommendation 5:

Prepare an annual board calendar.

The calendar will contain notations by month of what information and reports the board will receive, such as updates on district goal progress or results from TAAS testing. It will also serve as a reminder for major district events.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager makes a list of all critical dates affecting district operations.	May 2002
2.	The business manager prepares a board calendar and submits to the superintendent for approval.	June 2002
3.	The superintendent presents the calendar to the board for approval.	June 2002
4.	The superintendent follows the new calendar and uses it to remind the board and administrators of upcoming events.	July 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

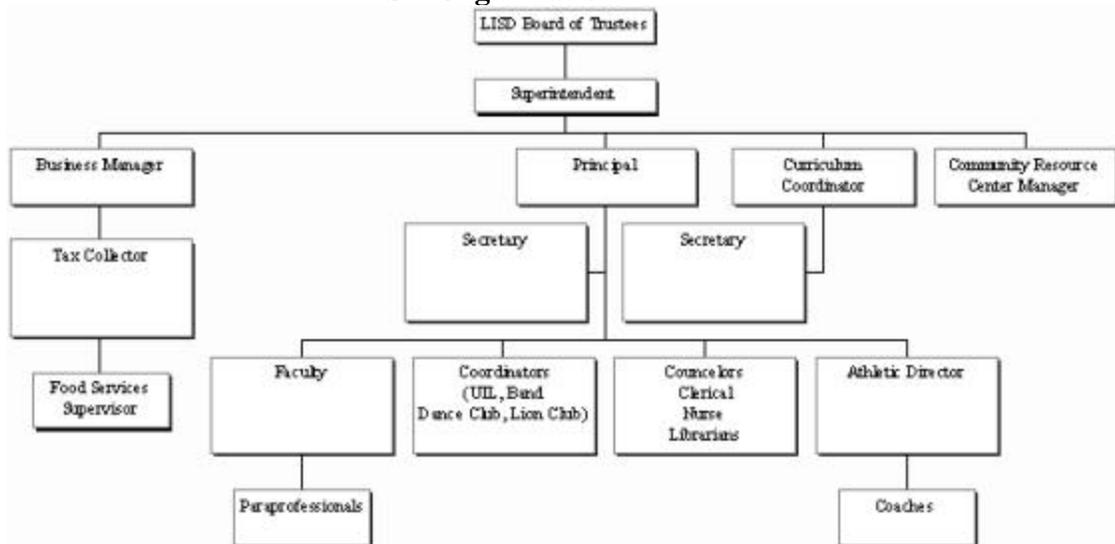
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

B. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

While the board sets policy, the superintendent is responsible for carrying out that policy and managing the district in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible. The goal of administration must always be to facilitate and support the instruction of students by ensuring that every possible dollar and resource is directed to the classroom.

The superintendent has four employees reporting directly to him as depicted in **Exhibit 1-7**. The following chart depicts the organizational structure of the district.

Exhibit 1-7
LISD Organization



Source: LISD Organization, November 2001.

FINDING

An interim superintendent who is also the school principal currently runs LISD. The former superintendent was reclassified as the deputy superintendent. Neither the former superintendent nor the interim superintendent are certified. The State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) requires superintendents to be certified as a superintendent or administrator or to have a temporary certification while studying for certification.

SBEC requires that an individual applying for the superintendent certificate successfully complete an SBEC-approved superintendent-preparation program at a college or university. Specifically, SBEC states that the superintendent must attend a series of classes created by the college or university. Once the superintendent completes the classes, the university grants the superintendent permission to take the SBEC certification examination. If the superintendent passes the test, the university makes a recommendation for certification.

During the December 2001 board meeting, trustees named the LISD school principal as interim superintendent after the superintendent failed to pass the certification exam. The superintendent had been on temporary certification from the SBEC, but the temporary certification has since expired. The superintendent was quoted in the newspaper as saying: "he would continue performing a lot of the same duties and receive the same pay. The principal would continue serving as principal and would not receive a pay increase with the new title." The deputy superintendent stated he did not say this but did not dispute the quote on advice of counsel. Representatives of the Texas Education Agency and SBEC expressed concern about this arrangement since it clearly circumvents the intent of the law and regulations. The superintendent states that he did not say what was written in the newspaper.

The certification issue is causing significant controversy within the district and affecting the parents' perception of the superintendent as reflected in the survey results shown in **Exhibit 1-8**.

**Exhibit 1-8
Survey Results and Comments Relating to the Superintendent**

Survey Question	Parent Survey Responses	
	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Disagree or Disagree
The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	28%	38%
The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	40%	48%

Source: TSPR survey results, 2001.

The district's organization arrangement also leaves employees unclear about who they report to and blurs the lines of authority. The current situation is unhealthy both administratively and academically, since a sitting principal is being asked to divide his time between these functions.

Recommendation 6:

Immediately recruit a superintendent to lead the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board appoints a committee of community members, parents, teachers and board members to search for a superintendent replacement.	Immediately
2.	The committee conducts a search for applicants and makes a recommendation to the board.	May 2002 through August 2002
3.	The board interviews the top three candidates and extends an offer to a new superintendent.	September 2002
4.	The board negotiates a contract with the new superintendent.	October 2002
5.	The board hires a superintendent.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district uses a consultant to find and obtain grants and pays the consultant a percentage of the total dollar amount obtained for their grant writing services. The consultant LISD uses, a retired educator, searches for and writes all grant applications on behalf of the district. The consultant's other experience includes service as an assistant superintendent, superintendent and educational specialist with both the Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) and TEA. The consultant visits the district every Monday and works on obtaining both competitive and non-competitive grants.

The consultant is paid only if the grant is awarded to LISD. The commission is 6 percent for non-competitive grants and more if the grant is competitive. The fee for competitive grants is negotiated between the superintendent and the consultant. No criteria were given to the review team nor was a maximum fee stated.

Texas Education Code at § 44.031 requires that contracts for goods or services valued at \$25,000 or more in the aggregate shall be made by methods that provide the best value for the district. Among the criteria school districts must follow are competitive bidding, competitive sealed bids, requests for proposals, the use of contracts between local entities and

others. Although the Government code exempts certain professional services from competitive bidding requirements, grant writing is not included as a professional service. Some violations of the Education Code's purchasing statutes contain criminal penalties.

As of November 2001, the district had paid the consultant \$39,540 in fees for calendar year 2001 according to district records. This figure, taken from the "Vendor Reference List, Lasara ISD; Program FIN460PO" dated November 8, 2001, the report that lists district purchase orders, is disputed by the district. The district provided a copy of an IRS form 1099 MISC, listing the consultant's "nonemployee compensation" as \$23,411.

State law requires written competitive bidding for expenditures exceeding \$25,000, and three oral bids for services costing between \$10,000 and \$25,000. No competitive bidding occurred for the contract, nor was a written contract ever drawn for the consulting services. The consultant was hired by verbal contract, and the district was unable to provide a full accounting of the total amount of grant money that this consultant obtained, from which these commissions were generated. All fees are paid from "consultant fees" under the general operating fund on a monthly basis except for the Title 1 and migrant's grant, which are charged directly for the fees. The grants awarded to the district on the consultant's August 27, 2001 invoice were all non-competitive in nature and warranted a 6 percent commission fee.

Wimberley ISD contracts with a professional grant writer part-time who researches and applies for all available grants that meet the district's needs. The district has captured nearly \$700,000 in grant funds due to grant-writing efforts.

Recommendation 7:

Hire a part-time grant writer.

The district is likely to save money by hiring a part-time grant writer rather than using a consultant on a percentage basis. Until a job description and the number of hours of work are determined, a savings cannot be estimated, however.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops a job description for a part-time grant writer and secures board permission to hire the grant writer.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent and advertises the grant writer position in	June 2002

	newspapers and through Region 1.	
3.	The superintendent interviews applicants and selects the most qualified	July 2002
4.	The superintendent recommends an applicant to the board	August 2002
5.	The grant writer begins work.	September 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

C. DISTRICT PLANNING

State law requires districts to ensure that careful planning and evaluation occur at the school and district level. A district with a strategic plan that has received broad-based input and has well-defined goals is likely to be better able to attain state standards in respect to academic excellence achievement. When the school board and administrators evaluate the district's programs they are able to gauge the success of each program by determining if the programs met key objectives and obtained desired results and if the benefits of the program merit the costs incurred. Leadership can then make changes to programs based on those results.

FINDING

LISD's board does not use strategic planning to drive district activity. LISD does not have adequate planning documents. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) lacks clear strategies and performance measures for achieving the district's overall mission and vision for student success. It does not have a strategic plan, a document districts use for long-range district goals including facility needs. The district plans and budgets for the current year only, based on needs and requirements identified in the DIP.

Strategic planning would involve creating a strategic plan to promote enhanced student achievement; and plan for the day-to-day planning in all other functional areas such as facilities, technology, transportation; providing guidance and direction for accomplishing the plan's goals; measuring and communicating how well the board is implementing the plan, and working with the superintendent to lead the district toward planned objectives. But the DIP is more for instructional programs than an overall plan incorporating non-instruction programs. A strategic plan encompasses all and ties it to the budget.

Strategic planning begins at the board level, where the district's mission, goals and expectations for performance and outcomes are established.

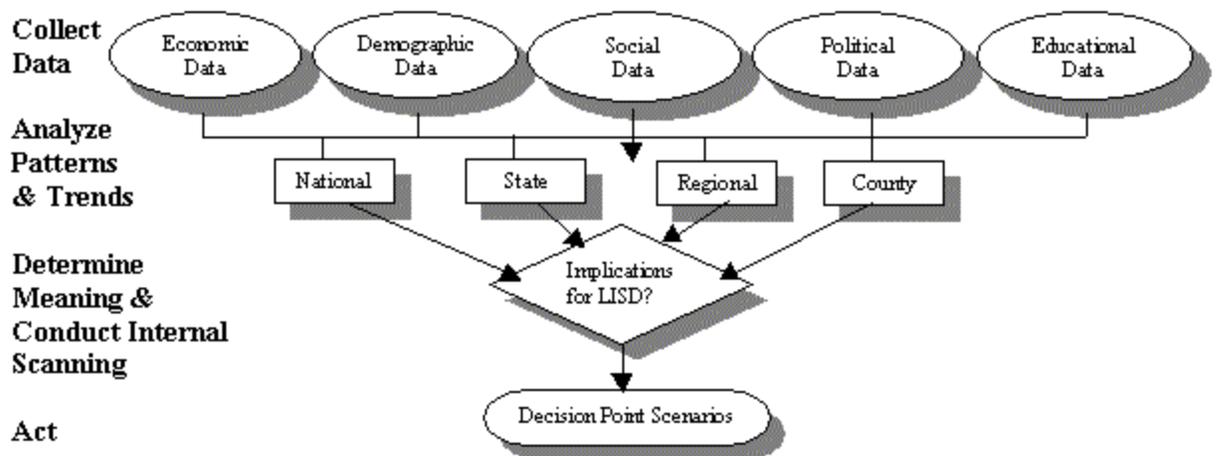
Neither the board nor the superintendent in LISD prepares a district improvement plan to guide the lower-level plans and the district's budget. LISD's District/School Improvement Plan (DIP) is vague in the following areas: cost-benefit justification data to support its staffing needs; staffing guidelines; implementation strategies; relationship to other plans such as technology; monitoring; inclusion of the auxiliary functions within the district; and a renewal process.

According to the district, a site-based decision-making committee prepares the DIP. The committee gives the plan to the administration, which presents it to the board for approval. The most recent plan was approved and adopted by the school board at its January 15, 2002 meeting.

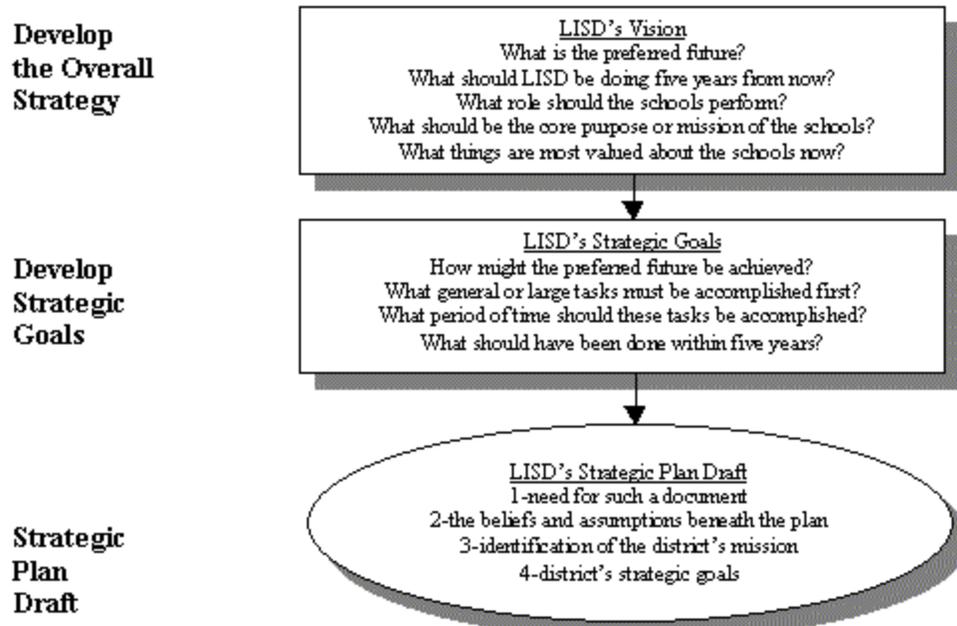
A strategic planning process is outlined in **Exhibit 1-9**.

Exhibit 1-9 Strategic Planning Methodology

PHASE 1-Perform Environmental Scanning:



PHASE 2-Develop a Strategic Plan:



PHASE 3-Develop an Implementation Plan:

Develop Implementation Plan

LISD's Implementation Plan
Develop alternative ways of reaching the district's goals.
Develop detailed implementation steps.
Assign responsibilities.
Set estimated due dates and expected results.

PHASE 4-Implement and Monitor the Plan:

Implement and Monitor the Plan

LISD Implements and Monitors the Plan
Monitor the implementation of the plan.
Adjust elements of the plan and perhaps the plan itself, based on actual
experience.

PHASE 5-Renew the Strategic Plan:

Renew the Plan

LISD's Renewal Process
What conditions have changed in the external environment since the
plan was written?
Do the original assumptions of the plan still apply?
Do the mission and goals continue to express the current vision of
LISD and the things needed to reach that vision?
What has been learned that should modify the strategic plan?

Source: SoCo Consulting.

The DIP, a planning instrument used mainly for the district's instructional issues features broad goals and limited strategies. It contains the district's mission, vision and philosophy statements; TAAS accountability ratings and summary reports; and a student achievement improvement plan. This plan includes goals addressing student achievement, discipline, parent involvement, attendance and staff development. The strategies for achieving these goals, however, are not well-developed or adequately related to the district's vision. The plan lacks a strong evaluation component and is not linked to the district budget.

The district's lack of long-term planning and budgeting for facilities, school buses, technology and other large expense items along with plans for a changing student population puts the district in a reactive rather than a proactive mode of operation. During the review team's visit in November 2001, a majority of the district personnel interviewed stated that the district's most pressing need is for new facilities. Planning for new facilities had just begun and the district did not provide the review team with specific planning documents addressing all the functional areas of the district's needs.

An effective five-year strategic plan prioritizes a district's goals and specifies courses of action, timelines and required resources and increases the overall effectiveness of the district planning process. It includes a method

for evaluating the district's progress and for making adjustments to the plan as needed. The strategic plan includes all district functions and is tied to the district's budget.

Recommendation 8:

Integrate the district's planning documents into a district strategic plan and link it to the budget.

The district should revise its DIP to include goals that affect the non-instructional functions of the district. A strategic planning team including board members, the superintendent and the Site-Based Decision-Making committee should develop the SPISD strategic plan using its current DIP as well as the draft technology plan as a base to further develop and expand its district wide planning.

The District and Campus Improvement Plans should be aligned with the budget in order to fund the district's initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The superintendent with the assistance of the district-level SBDM committee expands the DIP into a true strategic plan that addresses all areas of district need.	June 2002
2.	The superintendent presents the board with the revised DIP for approval.	August 2002
3.	The planning coordinator evaluates and adjusts the plan when necessary.	December 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LISD has a written technology plan for 2001-02, but it is lacking some critical information.

The district has plans listed in its technology plan designed to address each of the district's individual technology goals. For example, the technology plan's first goal is to integrate information technology as part of the educational process. The strategic plans outlined to address this goal are as follows:

1. Refine the Internet connectivity to all classrooms by acquiring additional necessary technical hardware, software, additional wiring and equipment by 2001-04;
2. Upgrade existing computers to meet current standards and dispose of obsolete equipment by 2001-04;
3. Continue reviewing and evaluating the Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) on a yearly basis;
4. Continue reviewing, evaluating and modifying the technology plan on a yearly basis;
5. Redefine purchasing standards for computer workstations for students, teachers and staff and review these on a yearly basis;
6. Evaluate purchasing, connectivity, maintenance and networking via a semester report;
7. Update educational TAAS-correlated software for specific content areas such as reading, writing, English, math, science, social studies and all other subjects by 2001-2004;
8. Update the district's integrated-learning technology program to enhance staff and student learning, productivity and management by 2001-04;
9. Update equipment for special-needs students such as magnifiers for computers, voice-generated computers, headphones and management - by 2001-2004; and
10. Submit semester reports concerning Goal 1 progress to superintendent and school board.

While the technology plan includes general information, many specifics have been left out. There is no assessment of the district's present or future needs. There are no cost/benefit analyses or mention of the source of funds to accomplish its goals. The plan does not set any priorities, budget dollars, answer specific questions on the cost of software or programs or how the district will benefit by implementing these items.

Veribest Independent School District, a district with an enrollment of 272, has a thorough technology plan that guides a strong technology program. It developed an initial three-year plan in 1998 and updated it for 2000-02. Their technology committee consists of the technology coordinator, superintendent, two teachers, a librarian, a parent and representatives from the site-based decision-making committee. The district's technology plan contains specific strategies for achieving each objective. Each strategy has a person assigned to it, a timeline, a cost estimate and an evaluation component that includes references to source documents supporting the conclusion. LISD noted that its technology plan was approved by Region 1 and the TEA.

Recommendation 9:

Develop a comprehensive technology plan for the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent appoints a technology committee consisting of representatives from various departments and the community to develop a comprehensive technology plan.	May 2002
2.	The technology committee expands the plan and ties it to the budget.	May 2002
3.	The technology committee determines a timeline, cost estimate and evaluation component for each strategy.	June 2002
4.	The superintendent and board approve and secure funding to meet objectives of the plan.	July 2002
5.	The technology committee allocates funding to the specific programs and continues to evaluate new opportunities.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

D. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

LISD community involvement, like that of many other smaller districts, must rely on a handful of people who perform a variety of community-relations activities. The superintendent and the Board of Trustees play important roles in community involvement.

FINDING

LISD publishes a parental-involvement handbook. This handbook includes information parents need in order to be involved in their children's education. It not only includes phone numbers of school administrators, but also the goals, objectives and procedures of the district's parental involvement program. The handbook lists specific areas where parents may serve in the district and written volunteer procedures. It also outlines the laws about parental involvement in Texas and helpful do's and don'ts for working with students. The back of the handbook also contains a parent involvement pledge and parent surveys. The handbook is comprehensive and contains materials in both English and Spanish.

COMMENDATION

LISD has a comprehensive parental-involvement handbook to keep parents informed about ways they can volunteer in the district.

FINDING

LISD is not monitoring costs for its Lasara Community Resource Center (LCRC).

LISD entered into a contract with Willacy county government to establish the community resource center with an agreement executed between Texas A&M University and the county and between LISD and the county. The purpose of the community center is to improve the self-sufficiency, health and well-being of the residents of the colonia area known as Lasara, which is geographically and socially isolated from services provided in urban centers by various county, state, federal and private entities. The three entities agreed to locate the facility on land owned by LISD. The county agreed to manage the construction process and transfer title of the property with all improvements to the district giving LISD exclusive rights to own, manage and control the property. Once the property was turned over to LISD, the district agreed to provide or pay for daily maintenance

and general operation of the facility. This includes the cost of all utilities, insurance coverage, telephone lines, office and cleaning supplies, activities required for daily maintenance and periodic maintenance of plumbing, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units, electrical fixtures, doors, windows, security, painting and roof repairs.

LISD is also responsible for paying the salary of the center director and coordinating the use of space. The contract between the county and LISD stated that LISD was to "demonstrate the impact of delivery of education, health, human services, youth, elderly, job training and housing programs in the colonias area of Lasara" in the use of the resource center.

LCRC provides a large variety of services to the population living within the Lasara school district. These services include adult literacy classes, family services, after school childcare, parenting classes, arts and crafts, GED classes and sewing classes. Local governmental agencies, state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and private sector groups hold special functions or meetings in the LCRC facility.

Two vans are used to transport community members to doctor's visits. One was purchased by Texas A&M University with the other purchased by the district.

Exhibit 1-10 shows the LISD community-service expenditures compared to its peer districts for 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

Exhibit 1-10
Community Service Operating Expenditures per Student
LISD, Peer Districts and State
1996-97 through 1999-2000

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Lasara	\$31	\$123	\$140	\$179
Monte Alto	\$27	\$12	\$8	\$5
La Villa	\$63	\$77	\$90	\$39
Santa Maria	\$18	\$10	\$0	\$8
San Isidro	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
San Perlita	\$4	\$7	\$0	\$0
State	\$24	\$26	\$29	\$31

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

The only expenses charged to the center during 2000-01 were salary dollars and some supply expenditures. The remainder of the expenses for utilities, insurance, maintenance, custodial support and fuel for the vans are being paid from local funds and booked to the district's general ledger accounts meaning the district cannot tell how much the center is actually costing LISD to support. Separate financial statements are not prepared and submitted to the board to keep the board informed.

Recommendation 10:

Create community center financial statements and monitor the costs and benefits of continued

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager documents all expenses incurred by LISD on behalf of the community center in the community services function code within the general ledger.	May 2002
2.	The business manager prepares a monthly financial report to the board reflecting month-to-date and year-to-date expenditures for the center.	May 2002 and Ongoing
3.	The board and superintendent monitor the expenditures of the center to ensure that the expense does not exceed a set percentage of the total budget.	Ongoing
4.	The board monitors the long-term costs of the center and evaluates its costs and benefits to LISD and the community.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

E. PERSONNEL

The superintendent and the business manager are responsible for managing the payroll for the 64.6 people employed by the district.

The payroll expenditures for LISD are outlined in **Exhibit 1-12** below and show that for the 1999-2000, the percentage of the budget used for payroll expenditures for LISD is tied for the highest percentage among the peer districts.

Exhibit 1-12
LISD Payroll Costs by Function Compared to Peer Districts
1999-2000

Function	Lasara	San Isidro	San Perlita	Monte Alto	Santa Maria	LaVilla
Total Payroll Expenditures	\$1,786,060	\$2,099,348	\$1,911,804	\$2,659,152	\$3,214,776	\$4,440,506
Total Expenditures	\$2,463,493	\$2,867,878	\$2,710,655	\$3,915,135	\$6,168,657	\$9,622,918
Payroll as a Percent of Total Expenditures	73%	73%	71%	68%	52%	46%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1999-2000.

Exhibit 1-13 provides a breakdown of positions in LISD in 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-13
LISD Employees by Job Category
2000-01

Employee Category	Full-Time Employee Equivalents
Teachers	24.0
Central Administration	1.0

School Administration	2.5
Professional Staff	4.0
Total Professional Staff	31.5
Educational Aides	17.0
Auxiliary Staff	16.1
Total Staff	64.6

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-01.

FINDING

Paraprofessional employees, such as teachers' aides, are required to attend 3 hours of college coursework to continue employment in the district after the first year. The paraprofessional starting salary in the district is \$8,304 per year. For every hour of college they attend, they are paid an additional \$100 in salary per year. LISD also pays for all tuition and books. Ten percent of the district's certified teaching staff are a product of this program, according to the superintendent.

COMMENDATION

The district is encouraging teacher aides to continue their education and become teachers.

FINDING

LISD violates its own policies governing nepotism. The district has 65 employees, and 36, or 55.4 percent, are related to each other. Three of the employees in the district are related to three of the board members. LISD staff contains individuals who are related to school board members either by common ancestry or as descendants ("consanguinity" in legal terms), or by marriage, legally described as "affinity," some of which are prohibited by the Texas Government Code. The district disputes this but was unable to establish that the relationships were distant enough to comply with board policy. One staffer related to a board member was with the district as a district employee for many years prior to the board member being elected to the board, which is an exception in the law. However, the relationship concerns a husband and wife, which raises concerns with the community.

LISD's Policy Manual, item (numbered as) "BBFA" point 7 states:

"No person shall be employed in the District who is related to a member of the Board by blood (consanguinity) within the third degree, or by marriage (affinity) within the second degree. *Gov't. Code Ch. 573 B, Subch. B...*"

A local board-approved policy does not exist stating when it is acceptable for members of the same family to be employed and in what conditions it would not be acceptable - only that employees cannot be related to board members. For example, the superintendent is the business manager's father-in-law. These two employees are responsible for signing all paychecks and operating checks for the district. While no abuses were detected, internal controls are compromised when collusion between family members is possible. One of the principals in the district is married to a teacher in his school. The principal is responsible for all teacher performance evaluations, making it difficult to ensure an impartial, unbiased and objective feedback of his spouse's performance. Other teachers in the district could perceive that the spouse is receiving favorable treatment and resent the relationship, which could undermine the principal's authority and general district morale.

Recommendation 11:

Develop a local nepotism policy to addresses management and reporting practices.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops a local nepotism policy.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent presents the policy to the board for approval.	June 2002
3.	The superintendent and the board enforce board-approved policy.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Many of the district's personnel files are incomplete and some include inaccurate information. The district is responsible for maintaining efficient, accurate and up-to-date employee personnel files. An employee personnel file contains the employee's application for employment, appointment letters, contract, employee history form, references, personal data form, certificates of achievement, transcripts if applicable to position and correspondence. Accurate district records ensure employees receive

proper pay, benefits and training and provide accurate and speedy data for administrative uses.

Although the business manager said that criminal background checks were performed on all employees before they were hired, no evidence could be provided that this was done.

The review team audited 10 employee files, including files for four teachers, three paraprofessionals, two maintenance workers and one assistant. The results of the review are shown in **Exhibit 1-14**.

Exhibit 1-14
Summary of Information Contained in Personnel Files
Review Conducted November 2001

Personnel Information	Percent Complete
Contracts	100.0%
Application	80.0%
Service Record	75.0%
References	0.0%
Certification	100.0%
Authorization for criminal records check	70.0%
I-9 (certification of citizenship/work status)	100.0%
Transcripts	100.0%
Oath of Office	90.0%
Signed copy of job description	0.0%
Receipts of employee handbook	0.0%
Evaluation in the last 2 years	30.0%

Source: Review of LISD personnel files, November 2001.

Recommendation 12:

Develop a checklist for what should be included in personnel files.

On an ongoing basis, the superintendent's offices should ensure that personnel files are current and up-to-date with the latest information available for each employee.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to develop a checklist for the contents of personnel records.	May 2002
2.	The business manager develops an information model and specifications that will allow needed information to be retrieved quickly. Rapid response to third party requests should also be included.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent directs the business manager to perform an audit of all personnel files and record missing information.	June 2002
4.	The business manager prepares a memo to employees requesting missing information.	September 2002
5.	The business manager updates the personnel files with information provided.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not have a board-approved policy governing what happens to accumulated sick time and personal time when an employee leaves the district. The business manager says the informal policy in the district is that no leave time will be paid when an employee leaves the district or retires.

The district offers state-provided personal leave, sick leave and vacation pay for some employees. According to the district, only 3 employees receive paid vacations.

State law requires that all employees receive up to five days of paid personal leave a year. Personal leave is earned at a rate of approximately one-half workday for every 18 days of employment, up to the statutory maximum of five workdays annually. There is no limit on the accumulation of state personal leave, and it can be transferred to other Texas school districts and is generally transferable to education service centers.

The district has a limit on the amount of personal leave an employee can take. Discretionary leave may not be taken for more than two consecutive workdays except with special approval for extenuating circumstances.

All eligible employees accrue approximately one-half workday of local sick leave for every 22 days employed, up to a maximum of four days a school year. Local sick leave may accumulate with no limit from one year to the next, but it may not be transferred to other school districts. Sick leave may be used for employee illness; illness in the employee's immediate family; family emergency, such as a natural disaster or life-threatening situation; and death in the immediate family, not to exceed 5 days.

Employees employed before May 30, 1995 are also eligible for state sick leave. The state no longer offers sick leave, but previously accumulated state sick leave is available for use and can be transferred to other school districts in Texas. A review of the district's leave status report shows that district employees have accumulated 375 days of local sick leave, 780 days of state personal leave, and 562 days of state leave for a total of 1,717 days. State leave applies to the benefits that were provided to all regular employees before May 30, 1995.

The magnitude of the potential payout to district employees if all accumulated leave was distributed to employees can be calculated by taking the total number of days owed to district employees and multiplying it by the employee's daily rate. The total potential outlay is \$295,635.

School districts in Texas handle unused leave time in different ways, according to the Texas Association of School Boards. Upon retirement, school employees are eligible through TRS to buy additional service credit based on accumulated, unused state personal leave.

Recommendation 13:

Develop a policy for handling accumulated sick and personal leave for employees who leave the district or retire.

Once the policy is approved, it should be documented in the employee handbook.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to draft a policy addressing the issue of accumulated sick time and personal time and whether it is paid out or lost when an employee leaves the district or retires.	May 2002
2.	The business manager presents the policy to the board for approval.	June 2002

3.	The board approves the policy.	July 2002
4.	The business manager or designee updates the employee manual and distributes updates to all staff.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not monitor and report the total vacation time and pay owed to employees. Employees who work at least 246 days a year accrue one workday a month of paid vacation leave. Employees who work less than 252 days a year do not receive paid vacation leave.

The number of days and amount owed to employees for vacation time as of November 2001 is \$21,296. If an employee were to leave employment, the district would be required to pay that employee for his or her accrued vacation time, so any vacation time accrued but unused at the end of the year becomes a financial liability of the district. If the district were required to pay employees for their unused vacation time, it could cause an undue financial burden on the district. Tracking the amount of vacation time owed to employees on the financial statements raises awareness about the liability owed to employees.

Recommendation 14:

Report and track all vacation time earned.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager enters the vacation time by employee by department or school into a spreadsheet.	May 2002 and Ongoing
2.	The business manager calculates the vacation amount owed to the employees using the spreadsheet.	May 2002
3.	The business manager reviews the report with the superintendent and forwards the report to school administration and department management.	June 2002
4.	The business manager ensures that any vacation time not taken at the end of each year is entered as a liability on the district's financial statements.	August 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not conduct regular annual employee evaluations of auxiliary or professional staff. Of the 10 personnel files examined by the review team, six were non-certified employees. None of the six non-certified employees had a documented employee evaluation on file for the last two years. In addition, the principal has not had a written evaluation since 1994, and the curriculum coordinator has not had a written evaluation since 1989.

Without an annual performance evaluation, employees are deprived of useful feedback and the opportunity to plan their professional development with their supervisor.

The Texas Education Code, Section 21.352 (c) requires school districts to conduct teacher performance evaluations at least once during each school year. The district conducts annual teacher performance evaluations.

Recommendation 15:

Evaluate all non-teaching staff annually.

Administrative procedures should be developed that clearly outline the process of conducting evaluations, including the consequences of violating state law by not performing them.

The procedure should specify a timeframe for the evaluation process, a deadline for evaluations to be submitted and the consequences of not meeting the deadline. Part of the process could include sending reminders at least a week before the deadline. A grace period of 10 days could be established before consequences are applied.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to review and standardize the employee evaluations and to develop procedures for conducting appraisals for non-certified employees.	May 2002
2.	The business manager presents the procedures to the superintendent for review.	July 2002
3.	The superintendent and the business manager communicate the new procedures to the principal, district employees and	August 2002

	management.	
4.	The business manager follows up with school and department management to ensure procedures are being followed.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter reviews the Lasara Independent School District's (LISD's) educational service delivery in six sections.

- A. Instructional Management
- B. Student Performance
- C. Bilingual/English as a Second Language Education
- D. Special Education
- E. Gifted and Talented Education
- F. Compensatory Education

If a school district is to meet the needs of the students it serves, it must have a well-designed and well-managed process for directing instructors, maintaining a curriculum, evaluating and monitoring the success of its educational programs and providing the resources needed to support its educational programs.

BACKGROUND

LISD is a rural school district that serves students in western Willacy County. Willacy County covers a 784-mile geographic area. The district educates students in grades pre-Kindergarten through the grade 8. Once a LISD student reaches the ninth grade, they can attend either Raymondville or Lyford High School. LISD pays the receiving high school a fee for the student to attend and is responsible for transporting the student to and from the high school.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides information on the results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) as well as other demographic, staffing and financial data to school districts and the public annually through the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). The Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) used both the AEIS and PEIMS reports to analyze LISD and to compare the performance of LISD's students with those of its peer districts, the state as a whole and districts in the Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) area. The latest AEIS data available are for 2000-01. LISD selected five Texas school districts to serve as peer districts: La Villa, Santa Maria, Monte Alto, San Perlita and San Isidro ISDs.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

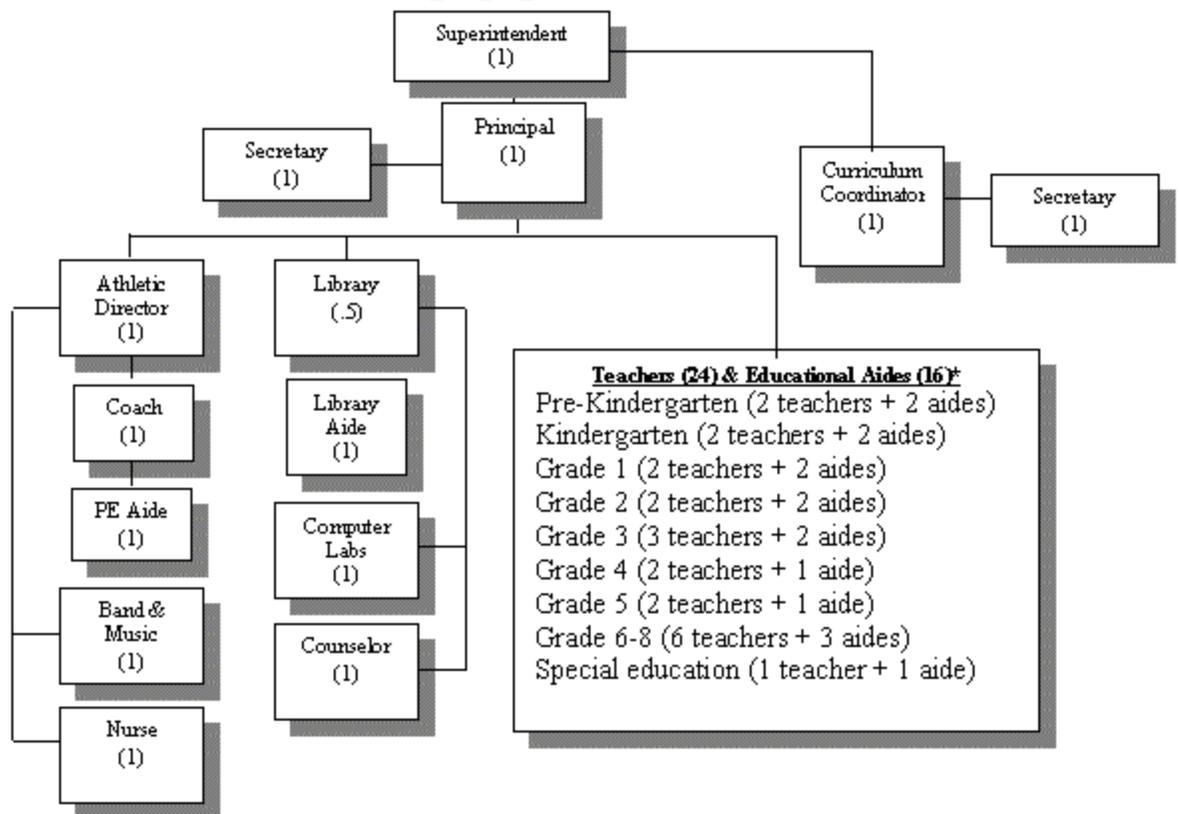
A. INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

School district administrators must ensure that the resources allocated to instructional programs produce continual improvements in student performance. Administrators must determine the amount of resources needed, and must monitor and evaluate district personnel and instructional programs.

LISD is led by an interim superintendent who is also the school principal, a deputy superintendent and a curriculum coordinator.

Exhibit 2-1 presents the organizational structure of the district.

Exhibit 2-1
LISD Educational Organization
2001-02



Source: LISD superintendent.

Note: A seventeenth aide, the PE Aide, is located further left in the chart.

The superintendent assumes administrative responsibility for the planning, operation, supervision and evaluation of the district's education programs, services and facilities. The principal directs and manages the district's instructional programs and oversees compliance with district policies, monitors the success of instructional programs and the operation of all school activities. The curriculum coordinator ensures the curriculum meets student needs. LISD employed 64.6 FTE total staff, (including educational aides and auxiliary, part-time employees) including 24 teachers and 17 educational aides, to serve 310 students during the 2000-01 school year.

The students attending LISD are evenly distributed between grade levels, as shown in **Exhibit 2-2**.

Exhibit 2-2
LISD Students by Grade Level
2000-01

Grade	Enrollment	Percent of Total Student Population
Pre-Kindergarten	36	11.6%
Kindergarten	22	7.1%
Grade 1	34	11.0%
Grade 2	28	9.0%
Grade 3	39	12.6%
Grade 4	25	8.0%
Grade 5	35	11.3%
Grade 6	29	9.4%
Grade 7	25	8.1%
Grade 8	37	11.9%
Total	310	100.0%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2000-01.

LISD and its peer districts are predominantly Hispanic, with a large percentage of students considered economically disadvantaged. Economically disadvantaged students are eligible for free or reduced-price

meals or other public assistance. **Exhibit 2-3** displays student demographic information for LISD and its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-3
Demographic Student Characteristics of LISD Students, Peer
Districts, Region 1 and State
2000-01

District	Student Enrollment Count	Ethnic Groups				Percent Economically Disadvantaged
		Percent African American	Percent Hispanic	Percent Anglo	Percent Other	
San Isidro	270	0.0%	94.4%	5.6%	0.0%	77.8%
San Perlita	272	0.0%	79.4%	20.6%	0.0%	83.1%
Lasara	310	0.0%	97.4%	2.6%	0.0%	88.1%
Monte Alto	451	0.0%	97.6%	2.4%	0.0%	86.7%
Santa Maria	510	0.0%	99.8%	0.0%	0.2%	97.3%
La Villa	726	0.0%	99.6%	0.4%	0.0%	89.5%
Region 1	302,528	0.2%	95.6%	3.8%	0.3%	82.7%
State	4,059,619	14.4%	40.6%	42.0%	3.0%	49.3%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-4 shows the attendance rates for LISD compared to its peer districts and the state average for 1996-97 through 2000-01. LISD had better attendance than the state average and two peer districts in 2000-01 and the attendance for the last five years has remained relatively constant.

Exhibit 2-4
Attendance Rates for LISD versus Peer Districts and State
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change

						1996-97 through 2000-01
Monte Alto	97.5%	97.5%	97.7%	97.8%	97.5%	0%
San Isidro	97.0%	97.0%	96.8%	97.5%	97.5%	0.5%
San Perlita	96.6%	97.6%	97.2%	97.2%	97.3%	0.7%
Lasara	97.1%	97.3%	97.3%	97.2%	97.2%	0.1%
Santa Maria	96.5%	95.9%	95.9%	95.4%	95.5%	(1.0%)
La Villa	96.1%	95.3%	96.4%	95.8%	95.2%	(0.9%)
State	95.1%	95.2%	95.3%	95.4%	95.6%	0.5%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-5 shows the percentage of the budgeted instructional operating expenditures by program for 2000-01. LISD spends the largest percentage of its instructional budget on regular programs compared to the state average and its peers. Because LISD only serves grades pre-K through 8, it does not participate in the Career and Technology program.

Exhibit 2-5
Budgeted Instructional Operating Expenditures by Program
Comparison
Lasara, Peer Districts and State
2000-01

Program	Lasara	State	La Villa	Monte Alto	San Isidro	Santa Maria	San Perlita
Regular	80.7%	70.7%	72.1%	75.6%	69.4%	67.2%	71.5%
Compensatory	10.7%	6.6%	11.0%	15.2%	3.8%	12.2%	8.4%
Special Education	5.5%	12.6%	7.8%	5.2%	18.4%	9.4%	11.4%
Gifted and Talented	0.6%	1.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
Bilingual/ESL	2.5%	4.3%	2.8%	3.5%	0.3%	3.1%	1.7%
Career and Technology	0.0%	4.1%	5.8%	0.0%	7.9%	8.0%	6.4%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

LISD has steadily increased its instructional spending for each student since 1996-97, as illustrated in **Exhibit 2-6**.

Exhibit 2-6
LISD Instructional Budgeted Expenditures Per Pupil
1996-97 through 2000-01

Function	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percentage Increase or (Decrease) 1996-97 through 2000-01
Instruction (11,95)	\$3,191	\$3,212	\$3,159	\$3,344	\$3,241	2%
Instructional Related-Services (12,13)	\$148	\$265	\$409	\$373	\$288	94%
Instructional Leadership (21)	\$63	\$78	\$99	\$56	\$32	(49%)
School Leadership (23)	\$166	\$270	\$147	\$347	\$286	73%
Curriculum/Extracurricular Activities (36)	\$84	\$78	\$97	\$111	\$91	9%
Enrollment	280	270	305	287	310	11%
Total Instructional Budgeted Exp. Per Pupil	\$3,652	\$3,902	\$3,911	\$4,231	\$3,938	8%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

LISD's teachers have a level of experience that is comparable to its peers. It also compares favorably to the state average. None of the district's teachers are beginners, and LISD has nearly the same percentage of teachers with six to 10 years of experience as the state average. **Exhibit 2-7** indicates the experience level of the teachers at LISD and its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-7
LISD Teachers by Years of Experience and Percent of Total
2000-01

District	Beginning/ Percent	1-5 Years/	6-10 Years/	11-20 Years/	Greater than 20	Percent Greater
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		Percent	Percent	Percent	Years/ Percent	than >6
San Isidro	0.0 0%	3.0 12%	2.0 8%	9.6 40%	9.5 39%	87%
San Perlita	2.0 8%	3.9 16%	5.0 21%	8.0 33%	5.4 22%	76%
Monte Alto	6.0 19%	4.0 13%	5.4 17%	13.0 41%	3.0 10%	68%
Lasara	0.0 0%	9.0 37%	4.0 17%	4.0 17%	7.0 29%	63%
La Villa	13.5 26%	6.0 12%	11.0 21%	13.4 26%	8.0 16%	63%
Santa Maria	6.2 15%	11.0 27%	5.0 12%	9.6 24%	9.0 22%	58%
State	21,493 8%	75,174 27%	49,717 18%	69,509 25%	58,924 21%	64%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

More than 90 percent of the teachers in the district are Hispanic, creating an equitable teacher-to-student ethnicity ratio. Three of LISD's teachers have an advanced degree while the remaining 21 have bachelors' degrees. More than 60 percent of the teachers have more than six years of teaching experience.

Exhibit 2-8 shows the percentage of teachers on staff by level of education as indicated by the degree held. The majority of LISD teachers have bachelors' degrees, with 13 percent holding advanced degrees. LISD's teaching core compares favorably to peer districts.

Exhibit 2-8
LISD Compared to Peer Districts and State
Teachers by Education
2000-01

District	None	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate	Percent With Masters or Doctorate
San Isidro	0.0%	85.1%	14.9%	0.0%	14.9%
Monte Alto	0.3%	85.9%	13.8%	0.0%	13.8%

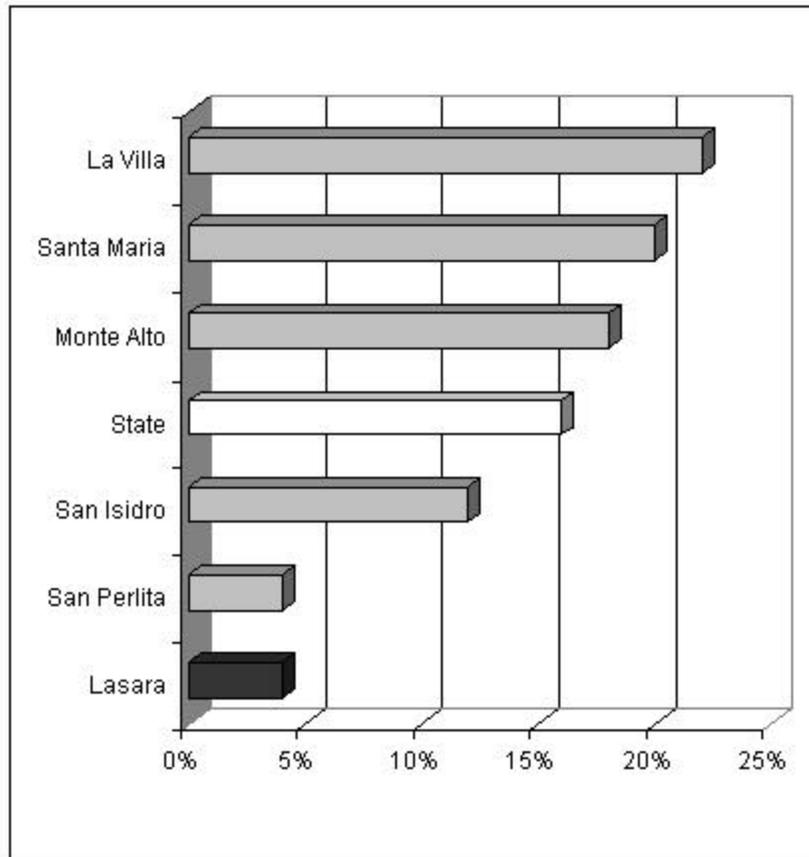
Lasara	0.0%	87.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
San Perlita	0.0%	87.6%	12.4%	0.0%	12.4%
La Villa	0.0%	88.4%	11.6%	0.0%	11.6%
Santa Maria	3.0%	90.6%	3.9%	2.4%	6.3%
State	1.3%	74.7%	23.4%	0.5%	23.9%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

The district does a good job retaining its teachers, as shown by its low teacher turnover rate. LISD lost 4 percent of its teachers in 2000-01 compared to the state average of 16 percent. LISD also had a lower turnover rate than its peers.

Exhibit 2-9 details the turnover rate of teachers at LISD.

Exhibit 2-9
LISD Teacher Turnover Comparison
2000-01



Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

LISD's teacher salaries are higher than those for most of its peer districts. LISD pays \$3,000 more than the state salary scale for teachers with 0-15 years of experience. Teachers with 15-20 years of experience receive \$3,500 more than the state average. At 21 years of experience, teachers receive \$3,500 more than the state scale plus an additional \$500 for each year, up to 30 years of experience. Teachers with 30 years of experience receive \$49,300 a year. Teacher's salary peer comparison is shown in **Exhibit 2-10**.

Exhibit 2-10
LISD, Peer Districts and State Average Salary Comparison
2000-01

	San Perlita	Lasara	San Isidro	La Villa	Santa Maria	Monte Alto	State
Teachers	\$39,821	\$39,124	\$38,212	\$36,858	\$34,549	\$34,813	\$38,361

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-11 shows the percentage of teachers for each program, comparing LISD to the state and its peers. LISD does not dedicate any teachers to compensatory education, Gifted and Talented, bilingual/ESL or career and technology programs. LISD dedicates 25 percent more teachers to regular education than the state average and 18 percent more than its closest peer district. LISD only serves only students from grades K-8 and, therefore, does not participate in the Career and Technology program.

Exhibit 2-11
LISD, Peer Districts and State
Teachers by Program Comparison
2000-01

Program	Lasara	San Perlita	Monte Alto	Santa Maria	La Villa	San Isidro	State
Regular Education	95.8%	77.0%	32.6%	77.4%	54.6%	75.2%	70.4%
Compensatory	0.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	3.3%
Special Education	4.2%	7.7%	3.2%	6.3%	5.6%	8.3%	9.9%
Gifted and Talented	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	1.3%	2.2%
Bilingual/ESL	0.0%	0.0%	64.2%	7.5%	37.5%	4.1%	7.5%

Career and Technology	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	7.3%	2.2%	9.7%	4.3%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	2.4%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-12 indicates the number of students per teacher for the district, its peer districts and the state average. LISD averages 12.9 students per teacher. The state average is 14.8 students per teacher.

**Exhibit 2-12
Number of Students per Teacher
LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01**

District	Number of Enrolled Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Students per Teacher
San Perlita	272	24.3	11.2
San Isidro	274	24.1	11.4
Santa Maria	510	40.8	12.5
Lasara	310	24.0	12.9
La Villa	726	51.9	14.0
Monte Alto	453	31.4	14.4
State	4,059,619	274,816.7	14.8

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

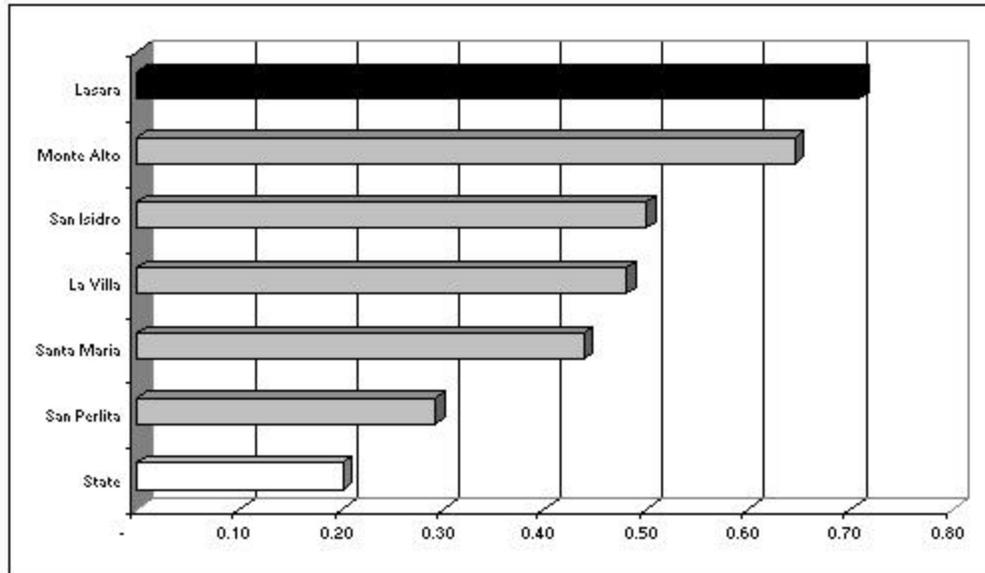
FINDING

LISD does not use a formula to calculate and project its staffing requirements throughout the district, and is overstaffed in several areas including educational aides, secretary/clerks and library aides.

Educational aides are paraprofessionals who assist teachers in the classroom by performing routine classroom tasks under the general supervision of a certified teacher or teaching team. LISD employs 17 educational aides who are paid an average base salary of \$10,748 and an average \$1,129 for benefits for a total of \$11,877.

Exhibit 2-13 compares the total number of educational aides at LISD with the state average and peer districts. LISD has more aides than all the peer districts, and exceeds the state average of about one aide for every five teachers. Lasara ISD has an aide for nearly every teacher.

Exhibit 2-13
LISD Educational Aides to Teacher Ratio Compared to Peer Districts
and State
2000-01



Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

LISD has the larger percentage of educational aides as a percentage of its total staff than the state average and peer districts. **Exhibit 2-14** shows that educational aides are 26 percent of LISD's staff compared with the state average of 10 percent. Monte Alto ISD has 23 percent of educational aides compared to Lasara ISD.

Exhibit 2-14
Educational Aides as a Percentage of Total Staff
LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01

District	Number of Students	Number of Educational Aides	Total Staff	Educational Aides as a Percent of Total Staff
Lasara	310	17.0	64.6	26.3%
Monte Alto	451	20.2	86.8	23.3%

Santa Maria	510	18.0	95.0	18.9%
La Villa	726	25.0	129.1	19.3%
San Isidro	270	12.0	65.4	18.3%
San Perlita	272	6.7	55.1	12.1%
State	4,059,619	55,466.8	541,342.9	10.2%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2000-01.

The review team compared LISD's educational aide count against the *Checklist of Standards for the Accreditation of Elementary Schools* by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). SACS, which accredits more than 12,000 public and private institutions in the southeastern United States and Latin America and is only one of six regional accrediting organizations recognized by the Department of Education, states that paraprofessionals or educational aides should not exceed 10 percent of the number of teachers. SACS suggests using one aide with each teacher in pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes and no aides in grades one through eight. The differences between SACS suggestions and LISD's actual practices are highlighted in **Exhibit 2-15**.

Exhibit 2-15
Number of Educational Aides Assessment

LISD Instructional Aide Use				SACS Accreditation Standards	
Grade Level	Total Enrollment by Grade Level	Teacher	Number of Aides	Suggested Number of Aides	Difference More or (Less)
Pre-Kindergarten	36	Class 1	1	1	0
		Class 2	1	1	0
Kindergarten	22	Class 1	1	1	0
		Class 2	1	1	0
1st Grade	34	Class 1	1	0	1
		Class 2	1	0	1
2nd Grade	28	Class 1	1	0	1
		Class 2	1	0	1

3rd Grade	39	Class 1	2	0	2
		Class 2			
		Class 3			
4th Grade	25	Class 1	1	0	1
		Class 2			
5th Grade	35	Class 1	1	0	1
		Class 2			
Junior High (6th - 8th)	6th - 29, 7th - 25, 8th - 37	English	3	0	3
		Reading			
		Science			
		Social Studies			
		Math			
		Spanish			
All Grades	15	Special Education	1	0	1
All Grades	0	Athletic Director/Coach	1	0	1
All Grades	0	Band/Choir	0	0	0
All Grades	0	Computer Ed	0	0	0
Totals		24	17	4	13

Source: LISD Principal for LISD Statistics, 2000-01, and SACS Checklist of Standards for the Accreditation of Elementary Schools, 2001-02.

LISD has 13 more aides than the recommended SACS accreditation standards. Eight of the aides are paid for with federal Title I funds. Six of these aide positions are funded by Title I-Improving Basic Programs and two aides are funded through Title I-Education of Migratory Children funding.

LISD is also not using staffing formulas to project school administration staffing requirements for principals, librarians, library aides/clerks, counselors, secretaries and clerks. SACS has published minimum personnel requirements for schools in the *Checklist of Standards for the Accreditation of Elementary Schools*. The personnel requirements are based on the student enrollment count for a district. LISD has 310

students. For that enrollment, SACS recommends one principal, one librarian one secretary and a part-time counselor. **Exhibit 2-16** compares SACS standards to LISD's practices.

Exhibit 2-16
SACS Minimum Personnel Requirements as Compared to LISD Staffing

Entity	Enrollment Count	Principal	Librarian	Library Aides	Secretary or Clerks	Counselor	Total
LISD	310	1.0	0.5	1.0	3.0	0.5	6.0
SACS	264-439	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	3.5
Difference More/(Less)		0.0	(0.5)	1.0	2.0	0.0	2.5

Source: SACS Checklist of Standards for the Accreditation of Elementary Schools, 2001-02.

According to SACS, LISD is overstaffed by 2.5 positions that include a library aide and two clerks. LISD is understaffed in the library by 0.5 positions.

Recommendation 16:

Implement staffing formulas and reduce staff.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The curriculum coordinator evaluates the number of educational aides, library aides and secretaries against industry standards and district needs.	May 2002
2.	The curriculum coordinator presents the analysis to the principal and the superintendent.	June 2002
3.	The curriculum coordinator, the principal and the superintendent determine appropriate staffing levels.	June 2002
4.	The curriculum coordinator, principal and superintendent notify the business manager of budget revisions.	July 2002
5.	The superintendent reduces staff.	August 2002
6.	The curriculum coordinator, principal and superintendent evaluate	May

staffing levels during the budget preparation process each year.	2003
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FISCAL IMPACT

Educational aides earn an average of \$10,748 in base salary with another \$1,129 in benefit costs for a total of \$11,877. SACS standards show that LISD should have four aides or 13 fewer than it employs. However, eight of the 17 aides are paid with Title I funds. The fiscal impact of adopting SACS standards can be calculated by taking the average salary and benefit cost of an educational aide, \$11,877, and multiplying it by nine aides, for a total of \$106,893 in projected savings (9 aides x \$11,877).

LISD employs one full-time library aide at an annual salary of \$8,437 plus \$886 in benefits for a total cost of \$9,323. The secretaries earn \$12,286, \$9,504 and \$10,036 with respective benefit costs of \$1,290, \$998 and \$1,054. The total payroll costs for these secretaries are \$13,576, \$10,502 and \$11,090.

If LISD implemented the SACS guidelines the district could eliminate two secretary positions, saving \$21,592 in annual costs (\$10,502 + \$11,090). The district could also eliminate the library aide position to save another \$9,323. The total annual savings is \$137,808 (\$106,893 for nine educational aides + \$21,592 for two secretaries and \$9,323 for the library aide).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Implement staffing formulas and reduce staff.	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$137,808	\$137,808

FINDING

LISD follows TEA's textbook adoption procedures but has no procedures for the safekeeping of textbooks. The review team found that books were not organized in the storage room. Inventory practices to track textbooks do not exist and no one knows how many books are missing. The district must pay for lost textbooks if students or their parents do not pay for them. Strict controls are not in place to establish accountability for lost textbooks.

TEA is responsible for selecting and purchasing most of the textbooks used in Texas school districts. Each year, TEA provides districts with a list of recommended textbooks, buys textbooks from publishers and lends them to districts. A district's established textbook adoption committee then selects the textbooks the district will order, following TEA guidelines. The

decision to order is made at the local level and TEA does not monitor the use of textbooks.

The number of books allowed for each subject and grade level is based upon student enrollment information submitted to TEA through PEIMS. Annual orders for instructional materials are based on the maximum number of students enrolled in the district during the previous school year and/or registered to attend district schools during the next school year.

Annual textbook orders are due by April 1 of each year and supplemental orders are submitted after the annual order and throughout the year. Districts are given the opportunity to report exceptions to the PEIMS data if district officials report the data are incorrect.

A good textbook adoption process ensures that sufficient textbooks are available, and minimizes losses. Kenedy Independent School District's textbook coordinator developed a textbook manual that provides detailed guidance on how to manage the district's textbook needs. The manual allows the district to maintain compliance with applicable textbook rules and regulations. The manual contains all correspondence from TEA's textbook division; a requisition packet for the next school year; downloadable textbook materials such as questions and answers to commonly asked questions pertaining to out-of-adoption textbooks, surplus materials, and rules and regulations; instructions for supplemental requests for textbooks; and district policies and procedures including annual inventory procedures.

Recommendation 17:

Develop a textbook procedures manual.

The procedures need to provide detailed guidance on how to track, distribute and inventory textbooks. Textbook storerooms should be organized to ensure books can be easily tracked and maintained.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the curriculum coordinator to develop a standardized procedures manual for textbooks.	May 2002
2.	The curriculum coordinator develops and documents the district's textbook procedures.	June 2002
3.	The curriculum coordinator distributes the procedures and trains staff to use them.	July 2002
4.	The curriculum coordinator ensures the procedures are	July 2002 and

followed and the manual is updated annually.	Ongoing
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

B. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is a series of tests used to measure student performance. TAAS is administered in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight; in reading and mathematics in Spanish in grades three and four; in writing in grades four and eight; and in science and social studies in grade eight. End-of-course examinations are administered in Algebra I.

FINDING

The passing rates for LISD students increased from 1995-96 through 2000-01. The percent of students passing the TAAS reading test increased more than 20 percent, from 65.8 percent to 86.1 percent. The increase has been even greater in mathematics, from 76.3 percent passing in 1995-96 to 97 percent passing in 2000-01. The passing rate of LISD students on all tests increased from 57.1 percent to 83.4 percent. The LISD passing rates in 2000-01 exceeded those statewide in all areas except reading. LISD passing rates are provided in **Exhibit 2-17**.

Exhibit 2-17
LISD versus State Passing Rates
TAAS Reading, Mathematics, Writing and All Tests
1995-96 through 2000-01

School Year	Reading		Mathematics		Writing		All Tests	
	LISD	State	LISD	State	LISD	State	LISD	State
2000-01	86.1%	88.9%	97.0%	90.2%	94.7%	87.9%	83.4%	82.1%
1999-2000	81.8%	87.4%	85.5%	87.4%	88.9%	88.2%	71.3%	79.9%
1998-99	83.3%	86.3%	91.7%	85.6%	86.5%	87.9%	76.1%	78.3%
1997-98	86.0%	83.3%	88.4%	80.4%	93.9%	84.2%	82.3%	77.7%
1996-97	75.8%	84.0%	79.4%	80.1%	80.5%	85.3%	67.5%	73.2%
1995-96	65.8%	80.4%	76.3%	82.9%	86.8%	74.2%	57.1%	67.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1995-96 through 2000-01.

Only San Isidro had a higher TAAS passing rate than LISD in 2000-01 on all tests taken. Among the peer districts, the LISD rate was the third-

lowest in reading, second-highest in math and second-highest in writing. The LISD passing rate on reading was lower than the state average, but higher than the Region 1 average. On math and writing, LISD students performed better than both the state and regional averages, as shown in **Exhibit 2-18**.

Exhibit 2-18
Passing Rates on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
Reading, Mathematics, Writing and All Tests
LISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and State
2000-01

District	Reading	Mathematics	Writing	All Tests
San Isidro	99.1%	98.2%	100.0%	98.2%
Lasara	86.1%	97.0%	94.7%	83.4%
Monte Alto	86.3%	94.6%	88.8%	82.7%
San Perlita	87.5%	94.2%	79.5%	79.0%
Santa Maria	83.3%	84.5%	84.9%	71.7%
La Villa	77.9%	79.2%	80.6%	68.4%
Region 1	84.5%	88.7%	85.7%	77.9%
State	88.9%	90.2%	87.9%	82.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Student performance on the TAAS is the primary factor in determining a school's accountability rating. Accountability standards for 2001 include four ratings for schools: exemplary, recognized, acceptable and low performing. To receive an exemplary rating, at least 90 percent of all students combined as well as each student group (African American, Hispanic, Anglo and Economically Disadvantaged) must pass all TAAS sub-tests (reading, writing and mathematics). To receive a recognized or acceptable rating, the passing rates must be at least 80 percent and 50 percent, respectively. A school is rated as low performing if fewer than 50 percent of all students or any of the four student groups pass any of the subject area tests. Although the accountability standards have changed in the last several years, LISD has maintained a consistent recognized rating since 1997-98.

LISD students exceeded the regional and state averages at every grade level on the TAAS math test for 2000-01, as shown in **Exhibit 2-19**.

Exhibit 2-19
TAAS Percent Passing in Math, by Grade
LISD, Region 1 and State
2000-01

Grade	LISD	Region 1	State
3	94%	82%	83%
4	100%	90%	91%
5	100%	95%	95%
6	93%	89%	91%
7	100%	87%	90%
8	97%	90%	92%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

LISD students also showed more improvement in TAAS math scores in grades three, five, six and seven than the state or regional averages between 1999-2000 and 2000-01, as shown in **Exhibit 2-20**.

Exhibit 2-20
Percent Change for Students Passing Math TAAS Test, by Grade
1999-2000 and 2000-01

Grade	State			Region 1			LISD		
	1999-2000	2000-01	Change	1999-2000	2000-01	Change	1999-2000	2000-01	Change
3	81%	83%	2%	79%	82%	3%	50%	94%	44%
4	87%	91%	4%	85%	90%	5%	97%	100%	3%
5	92%	95%	3%	92%	95%	3%	90%	100%	10%
6	89%	91%	2%	84%	89%	5%	62%	70%	8%
7	88%	90%	2%	86%	87%	1%	92%	100%	8%
8	90%	92%	2%	88%	90%	2%	96%	97%	1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

LISD recognized that its math scores needed improvement, and began an initiative to increase the students' math scores. They achieved their results

by making sure the curriculum was vertically and horizontally aligned and all teachers were trained in and using the Sharon Wells math curriculum.

Commendation

LISD recognized its deficiency in its Math TAAS scores and developed initiatives to improve those scores.

FINDING

While progress has been made in the past five years, LISD students have not performed comparably to the state average in reading proficiency, as depicted in **Exhibit 2-21**.

Exhibit 2-21
LISD Reading Performance Compared to State
1996-97 through 2000-01

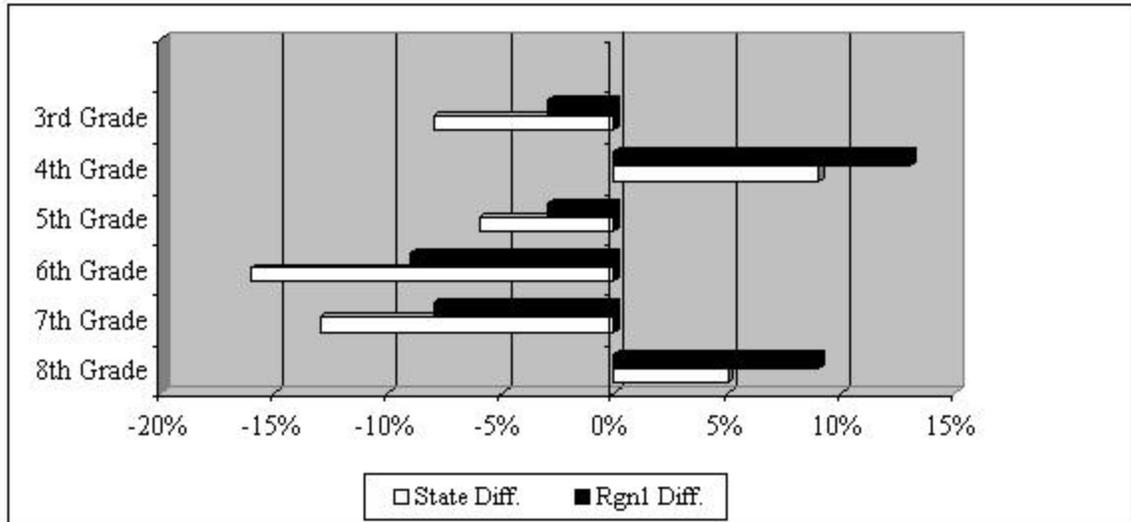
Year	LISD	State	Percent More or (Less) Than State
2000-01	86%	89%	(3%)
1999-2000	82%	87%	(5%)
1998-99	83%	86%	(3%)
1997-98	86%	83%	3%
1996-97	76%	84%	(8%)

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-22 shows how LISD reading proficiency performance varies from the state average and Region 1's district average. If the bar is to the left of zero, LISD is performing below state and regional averages for that particular grade level. Conversely, if the bar extends to the right, it indicates that LISD is performing better in reading than the state and Region 1. LISD is not achieving academic proficiency in reading in grades three, five, six and seven, while they are succeeding in grades four and eight. The white bar represents the state average with the black bar representing the Region 1 average.

Exhibit 2-22
LISD Reading Performance Versus State and Region 1

2000-01



Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Reading curriculum lacks vertical alignment from grade to grade and has hurt student performance. According to the curriculum director, the district is trying to improve vertical alignment in reading and other programs.

The district stated, however, that numerous development sessions have been held with the small schools cooperative to align reading curriculum both vertically and horizontally. The district purchased and implemented Saxon Phonics in grades K, 1 and 2. Also, the Gourmet program has been incorporated into the reading curriculum and the Reading Renaissance Program continues to be in place.

LISD uses the state-adopted textbooks from Harcourt and Brace for elementary level reading and uses Glencoe from McGraw for middle school reading. The district has been placing emphasis in recent years on increasing its math scores through workshops and other initiatives, but has not been placing the same emphasis on its reading scores. According to the LISD curriculum coordinator, the district has made reading its focus for the second year in a row, since its reading test scores have been low. The district is restructuring its grants and sending teachers to training at Region 1. The district is also trying to vertically and horizontally align all curriculum by meeting every Tuesday afternoon with all the teachers in the district.

LISD's school improvement plans for 2000-01 and 2001-02 both address reading achievement. LISD states their objective as: "To increase student achievement by 5 percent in Reading...as measured by TAAS and Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS.)" Specific activities listed include: "Utilizing

phonemic awareness focusing on TPRI [Texas Primary Reading Inventory] targets and use TPRI objectives and implement Accelerated Reading Program."

Veribest Independent School District (VISD) implemented the Accelerated Reader program, which is a computerized program that assists teachers in recording the reading and comprehension levels of each student and helps the teacher develop individual plans to help students improve their reading. VISD also implemented the Reading Renaissance program to enhance the Accelerated Reader program already in place. The program is designed to increase the number of books a student reads and to gradually increase their difficulty level. The program also rewards students for reading books and encourages students to take books home to read with their parents. The teachers said that this program has increased reading comprehension.

Crystal City Independent School District (CCISD) created a team to develop continuity in the district's reading instruction. The superintendent selected a group of teachers and administrators to form the Superintendent's Reading Cabinet. The superintendent directed the cabinet to research best practices in reading instruction and develop a reading process to provide a consistent reading program for Pre-K through eighth grade.

Galveston Independent School District (GISD) uses the Success For All (SFA) reading program, developed by Johns Hopkins University for children from low-income backgrounds, for its students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. The goal of SFA is to help every child learn to read through intensive daily instruction, continual assessment and timely one-on-one tutoring. Since implementing the SFA program, the percentage of GISD students in grades three through eight passing the reading portion of TAAS rose from 65.4 percent in 1994-95 to 84.5 percent in 1998-99.

Recommendation 18:

Develop strategies to improve reading proficiency by 5 percent.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with the principal and curriculum coordinator to discuss ideas for improving reading performance.	May 2002
2.	The principal, curriculum coordinator and reading teachers research successful reading programs in other school districts.	June 2002
3.	The department heads select and develop a program that provides a consistent reading program for Pre-K through eighth grade and	July 2002

	present it to the principal and superintendent for approval.	
4.	The teachers implement the reading program.	August 2002
5.	The curriculum coordinator evaluates the effectiveness of the program by analyzing TAAS results and teacher feedback.	August 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Algebra I curriculum has not been reviewed and aligned with end-of-course (EOC) Algebra I examinations. The percentage of students passing the EOC Algebra I examination at LISD is among the lowest compared to peer districts, and has declined in the past two years. All students completing Algebra I must take an EOC examination. Students may take the examinations during the summer, fall or spring, and the results of all three administrations are included as part of the district's spring report. The percentage of students taking and passing the Algebra I EOC examination includes only those in eighth grade.

The percentage of LISD students taking the EOC examinations was higher than the peer districts and higher than both the Region 1 and state averages. However, the percentage of LISD students passing the exam was the third-lowest among its peer districts and lower than both the state and regional averages, as shown in **Exhibit 2-23**.

Exhibit 2-23
Percent of Students Taking and Passing EOC Examinations
LISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and State
2000-01

District	Percent Taking Exam	Percent Passing Exam	Percent Failing Exam
Santa Maria	14%	0%	100%
La Villa	12%	23%	77%
Lasara	34%	29%	71%
San Isidro	20%	56%	44%
San Perlita	16%	65%	35%

Monte Alto	12%	92%	8%
Region 1	18%	42%	58%
State	17%	49%	51%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

In addition, the percentage of LISD students passing the Algebra I EOC examination declined from 38 percent in 1999-2000 to 29 percent in 2000-01, as shown in **Exhibit 2-24**.

Exhibit 2-24
Percent of LISD Students Passing
End-of-Course Examinations
1999-2000 through 2000-01

Year	Algebra I
2000-01	29%
1999-2000	38%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

Recommendation 19:

Review Algebra I curriculum and align with end-of-course examinations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The curriculum coordinator gathers information about the availability of assistance from regional education service centers or other school districts in conducting curriculum alignment studies for end-of-course exams in Algebra I.	May 2002
2.	The curriculum coordinator convenes a committee of teachers, administrators and central office personnel to review the information and formulate recommendations about alignment of the district's Algebra I curricula.	September 2002
3.	The committee submits its recommendations with timelines and any cost estimates to the superintendent for review.	November 2002
4.	The superintendent submits the recommendations to the board for approval.	December 2002

5.	The curriculum coordinator initiates the approved plan for ensuring alignment of the district's Algebra I curriculum with end-of-year examinations.	January 2003 and Ongoing
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LISD does not track the academic performance of students who proceed to either Lyford or Raymondville high schools. LISD educates students from pre-K through eighth grade. LISD tracks student performance continually for all its students. However, upon completion of the eighth grade, students are given a choice to attend either Raymondville High School, which is 10 miles from Lasara or Lyford High School, located 12 miles from Lasara.

LISD management does not track academic performance statistics beyond the eighth grade for these students to ensure that the education they received is a solid base for high school. District officials do not meet with high school officials to vertically align their curriculums to ensure that the courses are appropriate for the level of work students will perform at the high school level.

Recommendation 20:

Monitor student academic performance through high school graduation.

These statistics should be analyzed and used to determine if the district's programs are successful and in line with secondary curriculum at these high schools.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The curriculum coordinator evaluates the district's method of tracking student performance to see if high school performance can be incorporated.	May 2002
2.	The curriculum coordinator contacts Raymondville and Lyford high schools to determine the most effective and efficient way of obtaining student performance information on LISD students.	June 2002
3.	The curriculum coordinator develops a methodology for	July 2002

	tracking student performance in the high schools and presents it to the principal and superintendent for approval.	
4.	The curriculum coordinator starts tracking and evaluating student performance in the high schools.	August 2002
5.	The curriculum coordinator lines up programs to help students succeed in high school.	September 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

C. BILINGUAL/ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

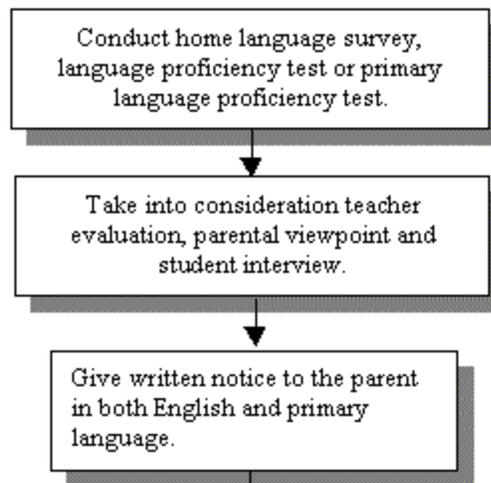
Public schools are responsible for providing a full opportunity for all students to become competent in speaking, reading, writing and comprehending the English language. English is not the primary language for a large number of Texas students. Experience has shown that public school classes in which instruction is given only in English are often inadequate for the education of those students. The mastery of basic English language skills is a prerequisite for effective participation in the state's educational program. Bilingual education and special language programs address these students' needs and help integrate them into the regular school curriculum. **Exhibit 2-25** shows the evaluation process for a bilingual ESL program.

Exhibit 2-25
Evaluation of bilingual/ESL program

**Identify
students
with limited
English
proficiency**

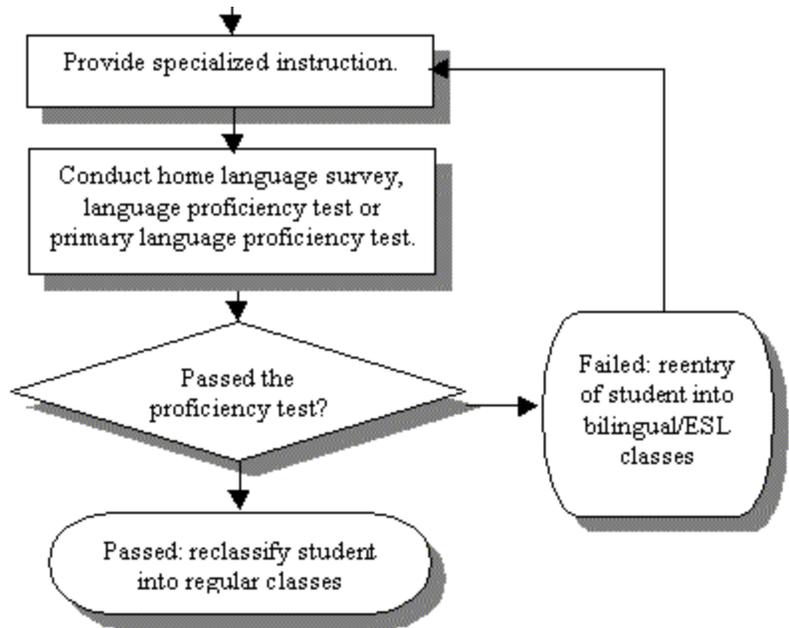
**Assess
student's
proficiency**

**Give written
notice**



Provide instruction

Administer tests at end of school year



Source: Texas Education Code, Chapter 29. Subchapter B.

FINDING

LISD has 95 students, or 31 percent of its total enrollment, attending the bilingual/ESL program but dedicates 2.5 percent, or \$25,000, of its instructional budget to bilingual education, as illustrated in **Exhibit 2-26**.

Exhibit 2-26
Budgeted Bilingual/ESL Operating Expenditures
LISD versus Peer Districts and State
2000-01

District	ESL/ Bilingual Budgeted Expenditures	Percent of Total Instructional Operating Expenditures	Number of Enrolled Students	Percent of Total Students	Expenditure for Each Student
Monte Alto	\$61,081	3.5%	165	36.6%	\$370
San Perlita	\$19,621	1.7%	57	21.0%	\$344
Santa Maria	\$57,790	3.1%	176	34.5%	\$328

La Villa	\$68,216	2.8%	245	33.7%	\$278
Lasara	\$25,208	2.5%	95	30.6%	\$265
San Isidro	\$4,190	0.3%	48	17.8%	\$87
State	\$590,748,041	4.3%	509,885	12.6%	\$1,159

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

In addition, the expenditures dedicated for each student for the bilingual/ESL program have declined 26 percent since 1996-97, as shown in **Exhibit 2-27**.

Exhibit 2-27
LISD Bilingual/ESL Budgeted Expenditures for Each Student
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change in Five Years
Bilingual/ESL Programs Expenditure	\$39,763	\$31,820	\$37,886	\$30,620	\$25,208	(37%)
Bilingual/ESL Students Served	111	91	96	86	95	(14%)
Bilingual/ESL Expenditures for Each Student	\$358	\$350	\$395	\$356	\$265	(26%)

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

United Independent School District (UISD) developed a comprehensive bilingual education curriculum for first and second graders coupled with extensive training for teachers.

A Web site specifically devoted to bilingual/ESL education can be accessed at www.tcbee.org. This Web site contains an online handbook developed by Region 19 in El Paso that provided guidance to schools trying to implement a successful bilingual/ESL education program:

Purpose of Handbook

To provide a resource to districts seeking to either develop or enhance bilingual/English as a second language education for limited English proficient students.

Product Information

Each handbook is divided into five sections:

- **Section 1** focuses on the law and provides a historical background for bilingual education.
- **Section 2** contains a matrix, which may serve as a resource guide for districts wishing to enhance their bilingual/ESL programs.
- **Section 3** contains supporting resources for the matrix.
- **Section 4** contains a step-by-step process for districts needing to implement a bilingual/ESL program. This particular guide should be considered the beginning steps to a quality bilingual/ESL program.
- **Section 5** contains a glossary of terms, frequently asked questions, helpful web sites for bilingual education, a bibliography and other helpful resources.

Recommendation 21:

Re-evaluate the bilingual/ESL program to make it more effective.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The curriculum coordinator assesses the district's bilingual education needs with input from teachers, staff and parents.	May 2002
2.	The curriculum coordinator works with staff to develop or modify the bilingual program.	June 2002
3.	The curriculum coordinator ensures that teachers are trained and/or certified to implement the new or modified program if necessary.	July 2002
4.	The curriculum coordinator evaluates the program annually and makes program modifications as needed.	September 2003
5.	The curriculum coordinator develops a modified plan and submits it to the superintendent and the board for approval.	September 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

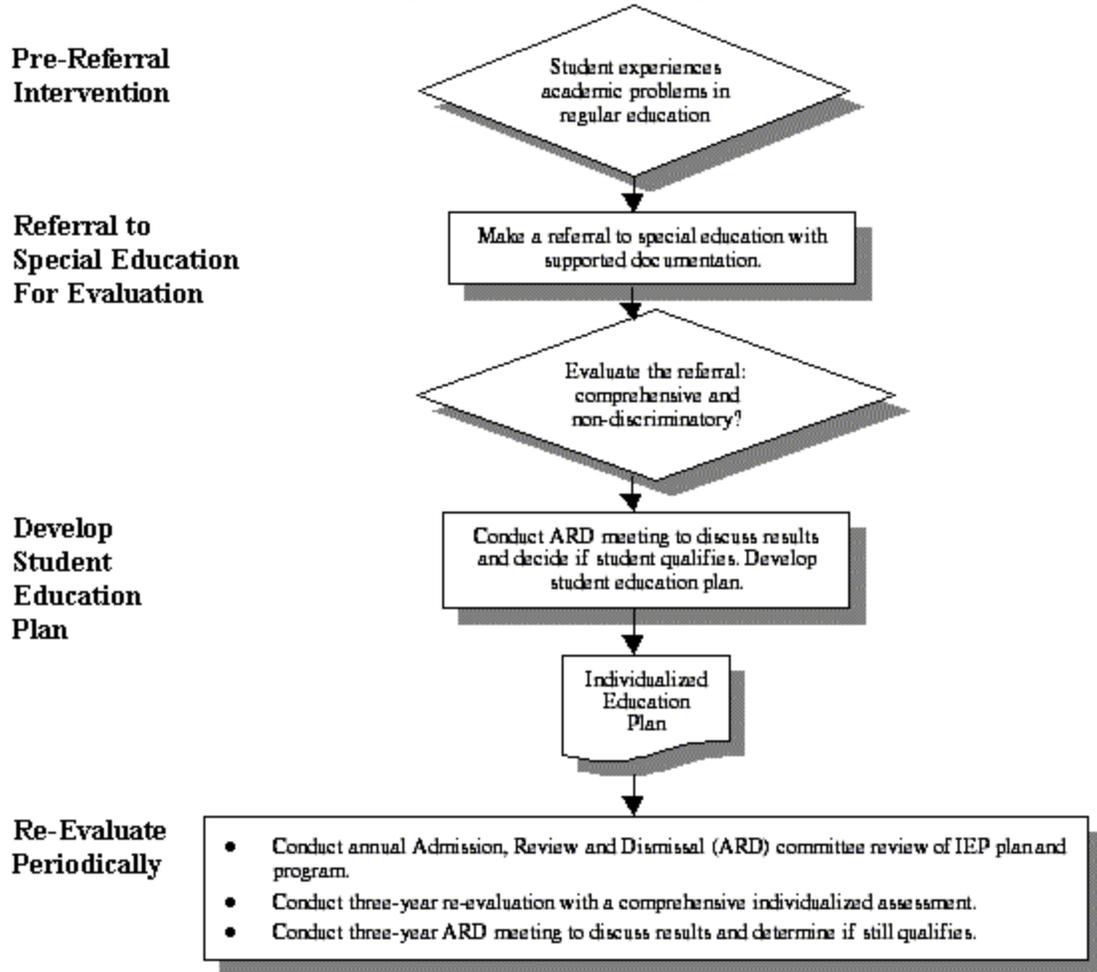
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

D. SPECIAL EDUCATION

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities regardless of the severity of their handicaps. This law requires the district to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each child with a disability.

The law also requires school districts to educate students with disabilities in the "least restrictive" environment. In 1997, the federal government re-authorized IDEA. The new law states that the IEP must be more clearly aligned with the education received by children in general classrooms and that districts must include regular education teachers in the IEP decision-making process. The new law also requires the inclusion of students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs and in setting and reporting performance goals. Students are placed in special education by an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee made up of the student's parent or guardian, teacher, administrator and other concerned parties. A student may take the TAAS or be exempted from one or all of them; however, the performance of any special education student who takes the TAAS will be included in the performance of his or her school or district for accountability ratings. The Texas Education Code §29.004 requires the following processes to be implemented by the district to establish an effective special education program, as shown in **Exhibit 2-28**.

**Exhibit 2-28
Evaluation of Special Education Program**



Source: Texas Education Code, §29.004.

FINDING

LISD does not allocate an adequate level of funding for its special education program. LISD has 24 students in its special education program, which is staffed by one teacher and one educational aide. The district allocates \$55,172 to cover special education expenditures. The school district contracts with the Raymondville Willacy-Cameron County Special Education co-op (WIL-CAM Co-op) for specialized services such as speech, physical and occupational therapy and for additional services for students with severe handicaps or life skills needs. LISD also uses a diagnostician through the Co-op, since it is more cost effective. The special education teacher receives periodic training to improve her skills. LISD's special education program is compliant with TEA's regulations.

The principal is in charge of the special education program at LISD. According to the principal, the special education referral process is as follows: a teacher observes a student, or a parent makes an inquiry; the teacher completes a referral form, answering questions about modifications they have made in the classroom; the teacher signs the form and submits it to the principal; the referral committee, consisting of the principal, referring teacher and the curriculum coordinator, meets to discuss the student's needs and complete the co-op's special education packet; the packet is released; a person is assigned the responsibility of "walking through" the packet; the packet is given to the diagnostician at the co-op who conducts a comprehensive individual assessment of the student; the ARD committee meets; and the committee develops the individual education plan (IEP) for the child. According to the LISD principal, the majority of the students in the district's special education program are either learning disabled (LD) or are LD and need speech therapy. There are other combinations, such as counseling only or LD with counseling.

The number of special education students has decreased by seven students in five years. The number of special education students as a percentage of all students has also decreased in the last five years by 3 percent, as indicated in **Exhibit 2-29**.

Exhibit 2-29
Number and Percent of Special Education Students in LISD
1996-97 through 2000-01

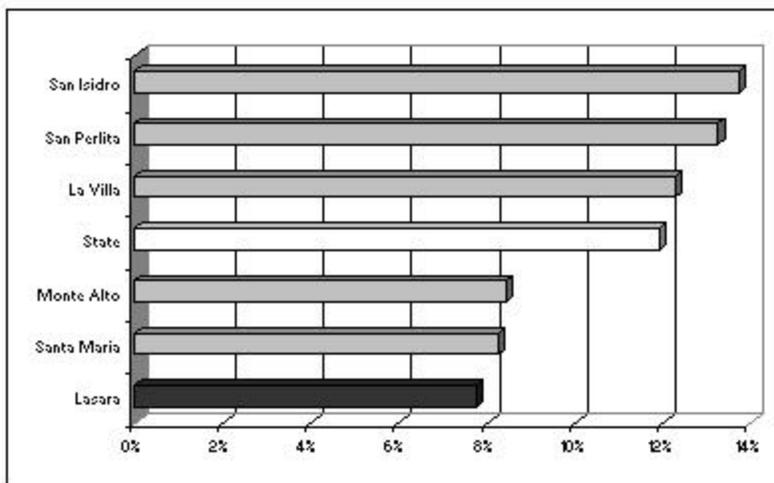
Year	Number	Percent
2000-01	24	7.7%
1999-2000	23	8.0%
1998-99	24	7.9%
1997-98	29	10.7%
1996-97	31	11.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-30 indicates the percentage of the overall student population served by LISD's special education program compared to the peer districts and the state average.

Exhibit 2-30
Special Education Students as a Percent of the Total Student
Population

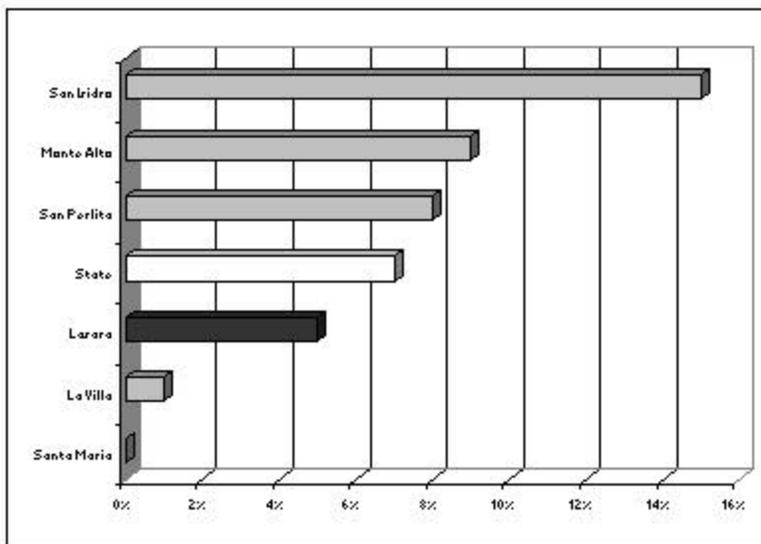
LISD, State and Peer Districts



Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

LISD is exempting fewer special education students from participating in the TAAS test than the peer districts and the state average, as shown in Exhibit 2-31.

Exhibit 2-31 Number of ARD Exemptions from the TAAS Participation Comparison LISD, Peer Districts and State 2000-01



Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

This means that more of the district's special education students are taking the TAAS test and the scores from the special education TAAS are included in the overall population of the school.

LISD has the lowest percent of special education students and spends the lowest amount for each student in its special education program. LISD spends only \$2,299 for each special education student while the state average is \$3,599 and one of its peers, San Isidro, spends more than \$6,000 for each student. LISD also has the third highest student-to-teacher ratios, as highlighted in **Exhibit 2-32**.

Exhibit 2-32
Special Education Program Comparison
LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01

District	Special Education Students as a Percentage of Total Students	Students for Each Teacher	Budgeted Operating Expenditures	Budgeted Operating Expenditures for Each Student
San Isidro	13.7%	19:1	\$237,959	\$6,431
La Villa	12.3%	31:1	\$191,441	\$2,151
Santa Maria	8.2%	16:1	\$173,157	\$4,123
San Perlita	13.2%	19:1	\$130,875	\$3,635
Monte Alto	8.4%	38:1	\$90,550	\$2,383
Lasara	7.7%	24:1	\$55,172	\$2,299
State	11.9%	18:1	\$1,739,689,310	\$3,599

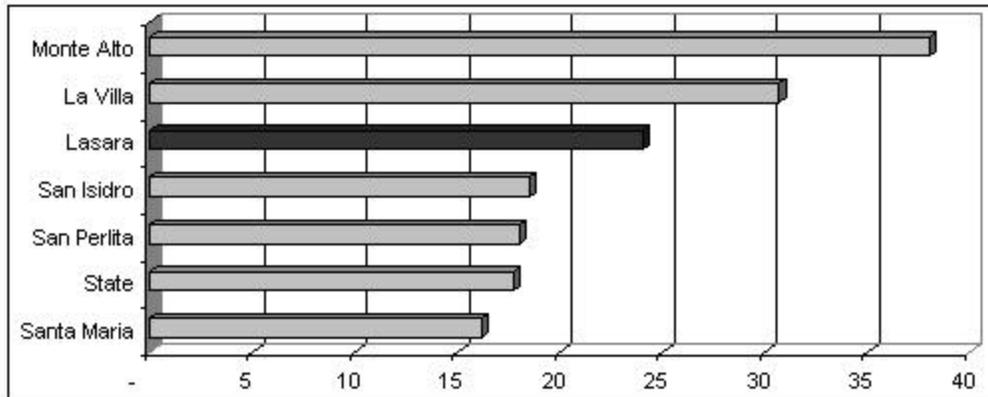
Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

LISD's entire special education budget for 2000-01 is \$55,172. The salaries of its special education teacher and aide are \$34,780 and \$12,354 respectively, for a total of \$47,134, leaving only \$8,038 for other expenditures.

LISD has one teacher and one aide dedicated to the special education program, but this aide leaves the special education classroom a minimum of one day each week to substitute for other teachers or aides within the district.

Exhibit 2-33 indicates the number of special education students for each teacher at Lasara, the peer districts and the state average. LISD has more special education students assigned for each teacher than three of its peer districts and the state average. The state average is 18 students for each teacher, while LISD has 24 students to one teacher with an aide.

Exhibit 2-33
Number of Special Education Students for Each Teacher Comparison
LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01



Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Lasara does, however, have the lowest number of special education students as shown in **Exhibit 2-35**. Students remain in the mainstream classrooms and are in the least-restrictive environment. There is a minimum number of referrals to the special education program because the classroom teachers work together with the special education aide without going through a referral process. Further, the student-to-teacher ratio is never less than 8:1 at any given time in the classroom because the classroom personnel include the teacher, the teacher's aide, and the special education aide.

According to the TEA's Division of Special Education, there is no recommended number of students for each special education teacher. It is subjective, since one school district may have severely disabled students, while another might not. However, the class size and teachers for each student should be appropriate for each special education student's IEP. For example, if a student's IEP requires more one-on-one attention, and the student is put into a special education class with 15 students and one teacher, that program is not appropriate for the student.

According to state law:

"Except as provided by Section 25.112, each school district must employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance in determining the number of students to enroll in any class, a school district shall consider the subject to be taught, the teaching methodology to be used, and any need for individual instruction."

In addition, middle school and elementary special education students are taught in the same classroom. It is difficult for a teacher to teach three different subjects to eight different students at varying grade levels. There is no grouping of students by age or by subject area in the district, and students with high IQs but difficulty with reading may need a multi-sensory program.

Exhibit 2-34 shows the daily classroom schedule for the special education program. As indicated, grade levels are combined, with multiple subjects taught in each class period. For several class periods, teachers must teach up to eight different students in up to four separate subjects at different grade levels, which can prove challenging to the individual instructors.

**Exhibit 2-34
Special Education Daily Schedule**

Morning Schedule				
Grade 6-8: eight students	Grade 6-8: eight students	BREAK	four elementary students, three to four middle school students	four elementary students, three to four middle school students
English, Reading and Math	English, Reading, Math, Math inclusion		English, Reading Math	English, Reading, Math
8:05-8:40	8:55-9:30	9:30-9:40	9:50-10:35	10:50-11:25
Afternoon Schedule				
OPEN	four elementary, three to four middle school students	Four elementary, three to four middle school students	Grade six and seven, four elementary four middle school students	Grade eight

	English, Reading, Math	English, Reading, Math	Reading, Math, Grade eight Content Mastery, Social Studies	Grade eight Content Mastery 30 minute Friday Science
11:30- 12:00	12:00-12:45	12:50-1:35	1:40-2:25	2:30-3:15

Source: LISD, December 2001.

Recommendation 22:

Allocate additional district funds to special education.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The principal contacts the business manager to determine sufficient funding be included in the upcoming budget.	May 2002
2.	The principal notifies the special education teacher and aide that more money will be allocated for special education.	June 2002
3.	The principal and the special education teacher discuss the best uses for the additional funding.	July 2002
4.	The board approves the budget.	August 2002
5.	The principal and the special education teacher spend the funding on the special education program.	August 2002 - May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

If the district increases its spending on special education to meet the state average, it will increase its for each student cost from \$2,299 for each student to \$3,599 for each student. For 24 special education students, the increased cost to the district would be \$31,200 (\$1,300 x 24 students).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Allocate additional district funds to special education.	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(\$31,200)	(31,200)

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

E. GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

According to the Texas Education Code, Gifted and Talented students are those identified by a screening and selection process as performing or showing the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience or environment. These students may also Exhibit high performance capabilities in an intellectual, creative or artistic area; possess an unusual capacity for leadership; or excel in a specific academic field.

The State Board of Education (SBOE) develops and periodically updates a state plan for the education of Gifted and Talented students to guide school districts in establishing and improving programs for identified students. The Regional Education Service Center may assist districts in implementing the state plan. The district's plan will be used by the state to measure the district's performance teaching Gifted and Talented students.

FINDING

The district's Gifted and Talented program does not adequately serve the district's students. The district has fewer students in its Gifted and Talented program than the state average or its peer districts, does not have certified teachers administering its program, spends \$347 less than the state average per student on instructional resources and has no established curriculum.

Texas Education Code requires each school district to adopt a process for identifying and serving Gifted and Talented students using criteria established by the SBOE, and establishing a program for those students at each grade level. The LISD curriculum coordinator told the review team that the district only has gifted and talented students in second, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade. The district says it has other students who have been nominated, but have not yet been tested for the program.

Compared to the peer district average of 10.3 percent, LISD has the lowest percent, 4.8 percent, of students in its Gifted and Talented program. LISD also trails the state average of 8.4 percent as shown in **Exhibit 2-35**.

Exhibit 2-35

Number and Percent of Students Served in the Gifted and Talented Program

**LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01**

District	Number	Percent
La Villa	93	12.8%
San Perlita	31	11.4%
San Isidro	29	10.7%
Monte Alto	48	10.6%
Santa Maria	30	5.9%
Lasara	15	4.8%
Peer Average	46	10.3%
State	342,840	8.4%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

In addition, the district spends less than 1 percent of its overall instructional budget on its Gifted and Talented program compared to the state average of almost 2 percent. **Exhibit 2-36** shows that the district spends \$347 less for each student than the state average of \$717 for Gifted and Talented programs.

**Exhibit 2-36
Budgeted Expenditures for Each Gifted and Talented Student
LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01**

District	Gifted and Talented Expenditures	Total Instructional Expenditures	Percent of Total Expenditures	Gifted and Talented Students	Budgeted Expenditures for Each Student
State	\$245,961,232	\$13,880,333,499	1.8%	342,840	\$717
Lasara	\$5,550	\$1,004,804	0.6%	15	\$370
San Perlita	\$6,972	\$1,145,572	0.6%	31	\$225
Monte Alto	\$9,412	\$1,756,853	0.5%	48	\$196
La Villa	\$11,963	\$2,461,669	0.5%	93	\$129

San Isidro	\$2,924	\$1,293,643	0.2%	29	\$101
Santa Maria	\$700	\$1,840,866	0.0%	30	\$23

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-37 outlines LISD's procedures for identifying students as gifted and talented.

**Exhibit 2-37
Procedures Used to identify Students as Gifted and Talented
2000-01**

Procedures Used in Identifying G/T
A teacher, parent or counselor nominates a student.
The teacher completes an assessment form.
The student is tested.
A committee comprised of the principal, counselor, the student's teacher and the educational coordinator meets to determine if student qualifies.

Source: LISD curriculum coordinator, December 2001.

According to the district, gifted and talented students are not pulled out of their regular classes. They are taught with the regular students. According to the TEA's *Texas State Plan for Education of Gifted and Talented Students*, gifted and talented students may be taught in the regular classroom. However, if this is the program design that is used, the regular classroom teacher must have the 30 hours of professional development in Gifted and Talented education required in state law and an annual update of six hours of professional development in Gifted and Talented education. According to TEA AEIS data, no teachers in LISD have the certification for Gifted and Talented classes. The district must also consider whether the teacher has the time or resources to provide instruction for gifted and talented students at an appropriately challenging level.

The Gifted and Talented curriculum at LISD does not provide an array of learning opportunities for students who are advanced in any of the core content areas of language arts, mathematics, and social studies. It does not include any options such as future problem solving; Odyssey of the Mind/Destination Imagination; MATHCOUNTS; University

Interscholastic League (UIL) academic activities; academic decathlon; science, history, math or book clubs; summer or weekend seminars or classes. According to a letter from one parent, the only activity for gifted and talented students last year was a field trip.

For 2001-02, LISD has begun offering after school Gifted and Talented classes for the identified population. At least one science class has now been added, as well as several offerings in computer technology. The district now has two teachers in the program and the schedule includes two days per week of Gifted and Talented instruction. LISD has ordered additional curriculum materials for Gifted and Talented students and several field trips have been scheduled for them.

Crystal City Independent School District (CCISD) provides Gifted and Talented training for staff and parents and encourages all teachers to receive training in Gifted and Talented education. CCISD improved the quality of instruction and the educational opportunities available for Gifted and Talented students.

Recommendation 23:

Establish and administer a Gifted and Talented program that complies with state guidelines.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent appoints a task force to develop a Gifted and Talented program for the district.	May 2002
2.	The task force investigates successful programs in other school districts.	June 2002
3.	The task force identifies training opportunities and topics that would benefit district teachers and counselors.	July 2002
4.	The task force submits the training opportunities plan to the superintendent and the board for review and approval.	August 2002
5.	The curriculum coordinator organizes training sessions for parent and teachers.	August 2002
6.	The curriculum coordinator and the task force monitor participation in training programs.	September 2002
7.	The curriculum coordinator implements the programs and evaluates their effectiveness in advancing student learning.	October 2002
8.	The curriculum coordinator and the task force prepare a report to the board on the impact on instruction in the district.	August 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

F. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

Compensatory education is defined in law as programs or services designed to improve and enhance the regular education program for students at-risk of dropping out of school. Its purpose is to increase the academic achievement of at-risk students and reduce the dropout rate.

The state criteria for identifying at-risk students are defined in Section 29.081 of the Texas Education Code. A student in grades seven through 12 who is under 21 years of age is at-risk if the student meets one or more of the following criteria:

- was not advanced from one grade level to the next for two or more school years;
- has mathematics or reading skills that are two or more years below grade level;
- did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more courses during a semester, or is not maintaining such an average in two or more courses in the present semester, and is not expected to graduate within four years of the date the student begins ninth grade;
- did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39; or
- is pregnant or a parent.

In addition, each student in pre-Kindergarten through grade six is in an at-risk situation if the student meets one or more of the following criteria:

- did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or an assessment instrument administered at the beginning of the school year;
- did not perform satisfactorily on assessment instrument administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39;
- has limited English proficiency, as defined by TEC Section 29.052;
- Is sexually, physically, or psychologically abused; or
- engages in conduct described by Section 51.03(a), Texas Family Code, which may involve delinquent behavior or where the need for supervision of the child has been identified.

Districts may add local criteria to identify additional students, but must be able to defend the use of the criteria. In addition, those students qualifying as at-risk based on local criteria only are not reported through PEIMS.

State compensatory education programs are intended for the primary benefit of students in at-risk situations, but they are not restricted to the exclusive benefit of these students. In addition, services provided under state compensatory education are not restricted to a "pull-out" setting, where a student must be pulled out of the regular classroom for studies conducted in other classrooms or off campus.

Both state and federal (Title I) programs offer compensatory education funds. Recent changes in federal rules may affect how these funds may be coordinated in the future. State compensatory education funds and federal Title I funds are not linked, although state funding is still based on the number of students in the federal free and reduced-price meal program.

FINDING

The district does not include compensatory education in its district improvement plan as required by State law.

There is a lack of focus in the district on the importance of compensatory education. The district/school improvement plan (DIP) does not mention compensatory funds expenditures and does not include specific objectives for compensatory programs. The Texas Education Code requires each school district to have a DIP. The state compensatory education program must be described in the DIP and the law specifies that the DIP is the primary record supporting expenditures attributed to the state compensatory education program. The DIP should explain the goals and objectives of the compensatory education program. The plan also should explain budget requirements, staffing formulas, curriculum strategies, specialized needs for supplies and equipment, special programs like tutorials that enhance the regular education program and other items and services.

Exhibit 2-38 shows LISD's instructional budget for compensatory education compared to the state average and its peers. As shown in the exhibit, LISD spends \$394 for each economically disadvantaged student compared to the state average of \$455 for each student. Only one peer district, San Isidro, spends less for each student, while Monte Alto ISD spends \$289 more for each student than LISD.

Exhibit 2-38
Compensatory Education Program Comparison
LISD, Peer Districts and State
2000-01

District	Budgeted Instructional	Percent of Total	Number of Economically	Percent of	Instructional Budget for
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	Expenditures	Instructional Expenditures	Disadvantaged Students	Total Students	Each Student
Monte Alto	\$267,208	15.2%	391	86.7%	\$683
Santa Maria	\$224,962	12.2%	496	97.3%	\$454
San Perlita	\$95,840	8.4%	226	83.1%	\$424
La Villa	\$271,221	11.0%	650	89.5%	\$417
Lasara	\$107,549	10.7%	273	88.1%	\$394
San Isidro	\$49,445	3.8%	210	77.8%	\$235
State	\$911,525,819	6.6%	2,001,697	49.3%	\$455

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

In determining the appropriate accelerated, intensive compensatory programs or services, districts must use student performance data from the TAAS and other appropriate assessment instruments and achievement tests administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39 of the Texas Education Code. The district must design the state compensatory education program based on the identified needs of students at risk of dropping out of school.

In addressing the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school, the DIP must include the following:

- the total amount of state compensatory education funds allocated for resources and staff;
- a comprehensive needs assessment;
- all identified strategies;
- supplemental financial resources for state compensatory education;
- supplemental full-time equivalent employees for state compensatory education;
- measurable performance objectives;
- timelines for monitoring strategies; and
- formative and summative evaluation criteria.

State compensatory education resources must be redirected when evaluations show that programs or services are unsuccessful at producing desired results for students at risk of dropping out of school.

Many districts use their Regional Education Service Centers to assist in the development of their District Improvement Plans. Regional Education Service Centers provide technical assistance to school districts and can provide best practices and model programs.

Riviera ISD, a district with only 517 students, uses intervention teams of principals, teachers, staff counselors, community members and students to help its at-risk students. The district's small size allows teachers and other staff members to know the students well, both at school and in the community. The intervention teams meet formally every two weeks to identify at-risk students and recommend ways to help them. Team members identify problems the students are facing, both at home and in the classroom, and try to help them resolve these issues. The high school principal calls parents of absent students to determine whether absences are legitimate, and intervention team members drive to students' homes to drive students to school when they need transportation. Team members also counsel students and monitor their progress until they are back on track.

Recommendation 24:

Include compensatory education funds in the district improvement plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the curriculum coordinator to include compensation education funds in the district improvement plan that complies with state mandates for compensatory funds.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent, curriculum coordinator and principal jointly review the district/school improvement plan to ensure financial requirements are met and that measurable objectives are included.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This chapter reviews the Lasara Independent School District's (LISD) financial management operations in the following four sections.

- A. Financial Management and Purchasing
- B. Budget Process
- C. Risk Management
- D. Investments

School districts must practice sound financial management to maximize the effectiveness of limited resources and to plan for future needs. Effective financial management ensures that internal controls are in place and operating as intended, technology is maximized to increase productivity and that reports are prepared timely and accurately to help management reach its goals.

The district is required to manage its financial operations in conformity with the regulations and requirements established by federal and state laws, rules and regulations. The Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Financial Accountability System Resources Guide (FASRG) outlines accounting and reporting requirements for Texas school districts. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board guidelines also affect school district's financial management activities. Texas school districts report their financial data to the TEA where it is compiled in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

Successful financial management ensures that the district receives all available revenues from the state and federal government; maintains a track record of sound financial decisions and adequate and equitable budget allocations; issues timely, accurate and informative reports on the district's financial position; and maintains a consistent record of unqualified opinions by its external auditors.

Within this overall financial framework: asset and risk management provides insurance coverage to adequately cover the district's assets with the lowest possible premiums; cash management places district funds in investments with good interest potential, while safeguarding the district's cash; taxes are collected quickly and efficiently; and fixed assets are accounted for and safeguarded against theft and obsolescence.

Purchasing guidelines assure that goods and services are acquired at the best price, at the right time and in the right quantity to support the needs of

the district and its personnel, while complying with local, state and federal regulations. Opportunities are identified to cooperatively purchase goods with other jurisdictions when it is mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

BACKGROUND

LISD receives revenue from local, state and federal sources. On average, Texas school districts receive about 53.1 percent of their revenues from local property taxes, 43.6 percent from the state and 3.4 percent from federal sources. LISD receives 77.8 percent of its revenues from state funding because 88.1 percent of its student population is economically disadvantaged. LISD chose as peer districts Monte Alto, La Villa, San Perlita, Santa Maria and San Isidro ISDs. Of the peer districts, only San Isidro ISD has a significantly lower amount of state funding. San Isidro received only 3.1 percent of its funding from the state and received 91 percent of its funding from local sources as shown in **Exhibit 3-1**.

Exhibit 3-1
LISD, Peer Districts and State Budgeted Revenue Comparison -
General Fund
2000-01

	Lasara	Monte Alto	San Perlita	La Villa	San Isidro	Santa Maria	State
Local & Intermediate	14.8%	14.2%	30.4%	15.7%	91.0%	8.6%	53.1%
State	77.8%	78.1%	64.2%	78.8%	3.1%	85.9%	43.6%
Federal	7.4%	7.7%	5.5%	5.4%	5.9%	5.4%	3.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) 2000-01.

Note: San Perlita, La Villa, Santa Maria and the State totals have a rounding error of .001 percent.

Districts receive local revenue from taxes collected on property owned in the district. Since LISD is in South Texas, a large percentage of local revenues are received from taxes collected on land and oil and gas holdings. Almost 48 percent of LISD's local revenue is received from taxes collected on land, which is very different from the state average. The

state average shows that most districts receive their local revenue from taxes collected on residences (**Exhibit 3-2**).

Exhibit 3-2
LISD, Peer Districts and State Taxable Value by Category
2000-01

Source	Taxable Value	Lasara	San Perlita	Monte Alto	Santa Maria	La Villa	San Isidro	State
Business	\$4,548,856	19.2%	18.1%	26.1%	16.0%	49.0%	20.7%	39.0%
Residential	\$6,440,455	27.1%	33.0%	39.2%	50.0%	28.0%	5.8%	50.1%
Land	\$11,315,139	47.6%	48.3%	29.3%	34.1%	19.8%	11.9%	7.0%
Oil and Gas	\$1,106,610	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	61.2%	2.9%
Other	\$336,501	1.4%	0.7%	5.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.3%	1.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PURCHASING (PART 1)

The responsibility for LISD's financial management function rests with the business manager who reports to the superintendent. The business manager is responsible for overseeing the daily activities in accounting and budget monitoring including payroll processing, purchasing, accounts payable processing and fixed asset accountability. The business manager has been with the district for 30 years, and retired in December 2001. A new business manager has already been hired and was in training while the review team was in the district.

Exhibit 3-3 presents a summary of the state aid calculation for LISD in the 2000-01 year. Since LISD receives almost 80 percent of its funding from the state, this funding is critical to the district. The legislative payment estimate is the state aid that was paid to the district based on estimated enrollment. The second column shows the actual amount that the district should have received.

Exhibit 3-3
LISD State Aid Calculation
2000-01

	Legislative Payment Estimate	Calculation as of 09/04/01
Regular education	\$1,074,859	\$1,041,521
Special education	\$192,154	\$105,910
Career and technology education	\$0	\$0
Gifted and talented education	\$6,610	\$6,402
Compensatory education	\$220,463	\$206,033
Bilingual education	\$36,779	\$31,741
Public education grant student allotment	\$0	\$0
New instructional facilities allotment	\$0	\$0
Transportation	\$31,351	\$36,918
Less local share	\$161,271	\$137,948
State Share	\$1,400,945	\$1,290,577

Tier II	\$365,860	\$363,363
Technology allotment	\$8,850	\$8,553
Chapter 46 existing debt allotment	\$0	\$0
Chapter 46 IFA	\$84,963	\$84,963
Other programs	\$85,573	\$85,576
Total State Aid	\$1,946,191	\$1,833,032

Source: TEA, Summary of Finances, 2000-01.

The state has continued to fund the district using enrollment figures that are higher than the actual enrollment. Therefore, future state aid will be decreased to make up for the overpayment. However, the 2001-02 summary of finances shows that the district will be receiving \$369,680 in Tier II funding. Tier II funding is provided to districts who cannot generate as much local revenue as other districts in the state. The expected state funding of \$1,867,095 for 2001-02 will still be consistent with 2000-01 receipts.

Federal revenue is received by the district directly from the federal government or distributed by the TEA or other state entities for programs such as career and technology education, programs for economically disadvantaged children (Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, and Elementary and Secondary Education Act), food service programs and other federal programs.

The district's spending increased between 1997-98 and 1999-2000 by 8.4 percent as shown in **Exhibit 3-4**.

Exhibit 3-4
LISD Actual Expenditures for each Student - General Fund
1997-98 through 1999-2000

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change
Instructional	\$3,565	\$3,663	\$4,037	13.2%
Instructional & School Leadership	\$259	\$234	\$409	57.9%
Support Services, Student	\$1,150	\$1,008	\$976	(15.1%)
Administration	\$741	\$685	\$683	(7.8%)
Support Services, Non-student	\$858	\$926	\$1,004	17.0%

Ancillary Services	\$123	\$140	\$179	45.5%
Capital Outlay	\$103	\$0	\$88	(14.6%)
Intergovernmental Charges	\$72	\$82	\$75	4.2%
Total Expenditures by Student	\$6,871	\$6,738	\$7,451	8.4%

Source: TEA, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 1997-98 through 1999-2000.

The district's expenditures for ancillary services have increased due to the addition of a community center that was completed during the 1999-2000 school year. The district pays for miscellaneous operating expenses for the community center.

Exhibit 3-5 shows key financial data on a comparative basis.

Exhibit 3-5
LISD, Peer Districts and State
Comparative Profile of Financial Performance - General Fund
2000-01

District	Total Revenues for Each Student	Total Expenditures for Each Student	Instructional Expenditures for Each Student	Student/Employee Ratio	Student/Teacher Ratio
Lasara	\$6,975	\$6,759	\$3,274	4.8	12.9
La Villa	\$6,955	\$6,817	\$3,398	5.6	14.0
Santa Maria	\$7,629	\$7,626	\$3,610	5.4	12.5
Monte Alto	\$7,393	\$7,805	\$4,019	5.2	14.5
San Perlita	\$8,542	\$8,441	\$4,212	4.9	11.3
San Isidro	\$8,314	\$8,836	\$4,791	4.2	11.3
State	\$6,433	\$6,638	\$3,500	7.5	14.8

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

When compared to the peer districts, LISD receives less revenue per student than all but one peer district, and spends less on instruction per student than all of the peer districts and the state. LISD also has more employees for each student than almost all of the peer districts.

Payroll Processing

The district uses the Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) Regional Service Center Computer Cooperative Finance System (RSCCC) to process payroll. All staff members are salaried employees so, at the beginning of each school year, the business manager enters the salary for each employee into the system. The staff is paid on the 20th of each month. Timesheets for any overtime worked must be submitted to the business manager by the 18th of each month. On the 18th, the business manager enters any overtime hours and any deductions or changes in salary information for each employee. A process is then run to generate the payroll. Detailed reports showing each employee's pay and deductions are printed at the district. The business manager verifies that the information for each employee is correct. If there are any errors, corrections are made and payroll is regenerated. Once everything is correct, the checks are printed. Approximately 50 percent of the employees have their paycheck direct deposited to the bank. Therefore, by 11:00 am on the 19th, an electronic file is created from the payroll process to submit to the bank via modem. The business manager and the superintendent sign all printed checks. The check stubs for employees with direct deposit and the actual paychecks for the remaining employees are then placed in envelopes for distribution to the staff on the 20th. Checks for all payroll liabilities are then issued automatically through the accounts payable module and mailed. All quarterly payroll reports are completed and submitted by the business manager using reports printed from the RSCCC system.

Detailed procedures for how to process payroll are available from Region 1 and a printed copy is on file in the business office. The business manager refers to the checklists provided in the procedures every month to ensure payroll is processed completely and accurately.

Purchasing and Accounts Payable Processing

The district's purchasing policies require that all purchases valued at \$25,000 or more in the aggregate for each 12-month period, except purchases of produce or vehicle fuel, be made by competitive bidding, competitive sealed proposals, requests for proposals, catalog purchases or through interlocal agreements. Board policy further requires that all purchases that cost or aggregate to a cost of \$10,000 a year or more must have board approval before a transaction can take place.

The superintendent is responsible for all purchasing in the district and signs each requisition before the purchase is made. The superintendent or the requisitioner checks with the business manager to ensure money has been budgeted for the purchase before making the purchase. Once the purchase order is approved, the business manager enters it into the RSCCC system where the funds for the purchase are automatically encumbered. An encumbrance provides budgetary control by reserving a portion of an account's budget to cover the outstanding purchase order. The purchase order is then filed alphabetically in a file awaiting receipt of goods. All items purchased are received at the administration building. The packing slips from the items are forwarded to the business manager who attaches the packing slip to the purchase order.

Invoices are received daily and processed by the business manager. All invoices for items are matched to the purchase order and related packing slips. On the day of the board meeting, checks for all invoices received are entered into the RSCCC system and printed. The printed checks and supporting documentation are taken to the board meeting where the board reviews, approves and signs the checks. The checks are mailed and all supporting documentation is filed alphabetically by vendor name.

During the 2000-01 school year, the district purchased approximately \$500,000 in goods and services.

Fund Balance

Fund balances or reserve balances, are established by school districts to function similarly as a savings account. Fund balances serve as a source of funds in case of an emergency; a source of cash to pay bills in case the outflow of cash for expenditures temporarily occurs faster than the inflow of revenue; or a place to build up savings to make large purchases not affordable within a single year, for example, facility improvements.

Exhibit 3-6 compares the enrollment numbers, the district's revenue and expenditures from 1997-98 through 2000-01.

**Exhibit 3-6
LISD Actual Revenue and Expenditure Comparison - General Fund
1997-98 through 2000-01**

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Enrollment	270	305	287	310
Total Revenue and Other Resources	\$2,042,790	\$2,008,069	\$2,412,739	\$2,168,798

Total Expenditures and Other Uses	\$1,971,796	\$2,095,893	\$2,185,078	\$2,257,275
Excess (Deficiency)	\$70,994	(\$87,824)	\$227,661	(\$88,477)

Source: Lasara Independent School District (LISD) Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2000-01.

According to the external auditors report for the 1998-99 school year, the district's expenditures exceeded ITS revenues because the district overestimated the amount of state funding it would receive by \$125,365. This forced the district to use up what little fund balance existed to continue operations in the 1998-99 school year as shown in **Exhibit 3-7**.

Exhibit 3-7
LISD General Fund Balance
1997-2001

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
General Fund Balance	\$40,919	(\$46,905)	\$180,756	\$92,279	126%

Source: LISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-2001.

State funding to the district increased by \$397,000 in 1999-2000, which allowed the district to recover its fund balance. The majority of the increase was due to a change in the funding formula that allowed the district to recover tuition costs from the state related to LISD's payments to neighboring high schools that serve LISD students.

FINDING

The district does not have an effective policy for the management of its fund balance. LISD's fund balance dropped from \$40,919 in 1997-98 to a low of (\$46,905) in 1998-99. In 1999-2000, it rose to a high of \$180,756, which does not quite cover one month's expenditures. **Exhibit 3-8** shows the ending general fund balance compared to the optimal fund balance as calculated annually by the external auditors.

Exhibit 3-8
LISD General Fund Balance
1997-98 through 2000-01

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
General Fund Balance	\$40,919	(\$46,905)	\$180,756	\$92,279
Less: General Fund Optimum Fund Balance Calculation	\$150,000	\$173,818	\$181,269	\$189,341
Excess (Deficit) Undesignated Unreserved General Fund Balance	(\$109,081)	(\$220,723)	(\$513)	(\$97,062)

Source: LISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2000-01.

The district recovered its fund balance only through an increase in state funding. The increase in the fund balance was not due to a controlled plan set in place by the board and the superintendent to monitor expenditures and revenues to protect and improve the district's fund balance. In fact, during 1999-2000, the year after the fund balance was spent, the district was written up by the external auditors for spending more than was budgeted, a fact noted by TEA in a review of the district's audit for the year. According to the district's external auditors, this trend has continued into the 2000-01 school year, causing the district to reduce the fund balance as of the end of 2001.

According to the TEA, an attorney general's opinion dating back to 1942 specifies that state entities should not have a deficit fund balance. TEA takes the position that school districts should not pay for operations of the district from a subsequent fiscal year's tax levy. Expenditures may exceed revenues in the general fund during a fiscal year if there is sufficient fund balance to maintain a positive unreserved and total fund balance in the general fund. However, districts should be careful not to let the unreserved fund balance decline excessively each year. Although the laws do not specifically state what deficit amounts are and are not allowable, TEA's position is that a deficit fund balance must not exceed the amount of delinquent property taxes.

TEA's Financial Accountability System Resources Guide (FASRG) provides a computation of the optimum fund balance for the general fund. The "Computation Worksheet" for an optimal general fund is a required schedule in the annual external audit. TEA recommends that the optimal fund balance be equal to the total reserved balance, total designated fund balance, an amount needed to cover Fall cash flow deficits in the general fund and one month of average cash disbursements during the regular (non-summer) school year. Reserved fund balances are those that are legally earmarked for specific future use, such as a reserve for

encumbrances. Designated fund balances are those that are identified by the school district management to reflect tentative plans or commitments.

Board members effectively manage a school district's financial resources by having a thorough understanding of the financial condition of the district. Each board member must understand the impact any decision the board makes will have on the financial well being of the district.

Recommendation 25:

Establish a policy for management of the fund balance.

This policy should establish goals concerning what the district's optimum fund balance should be at all times. It should include a means of attaining and maintaining the desired level. The policy should provide the superintendent with clear directions as to how to increase revenues or decrease expenditures in order to meet the district's fund balance goals. It should also require that every agenda item contain a fiscal impact statement.

One of the essential elements of the policy should be a means of keeping the board informed about the status of the fund balance. In every board packet, the superintendent should include a summary of the beginning fund balance, the revenues received during the month, the month's expenditures and the ending fund balance. Any significant events that have had a major impact on the fund balance during that month should be explained. This will ensure that the board and district administration are always aware of the financial position of the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to draft a fund balance policy.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent and the business manager present the policy to the board for approval.	June 2002
3.	The board approves the policy and directs the superintendent to implement.	August 2002
4.	The business manager develops the required reports to submit to the board.	September 2002
5.	Business manager prepares the reports for the board.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The board does not receive regular financial statements in their board agenda packets, resulting in management and board members not fully understanding the financial condition of the district.

The LISD board receives a budget variance report by fund indicating how much each fund is less than or more than the board-approved budget. The board also receives a list of all the checks to be paid by the district since the last board meeting and a tax collection report. The school reports submitted to the board are not financial statements. No financial statements, trends or concerns are expressed in writing to the board.

Financial statements provide management and board members with a summarization of financial status and operating results. These statements are key elements in depicting the financial strengths or weaknesses of the district and the gains or losses arising from its transactions. In addition, the organized, consistent and timely issuance of these statements provides some indication of the orderliness of the underlying accounting system essential for the protection of the net resources of the district.

The individual funds and account groups are vitally important to the proper financial management of a school district. Members of the board need to know the financial position of each fund and account group and the results of operation at the end of each month in order to make effective and timely policy decisions. Each administrative officer having financial responsibility in the district also needs to know the financial position of each fund or account group at least once each month for effective management. In sum, financial statements form the basis for wise administration in that such documents guide future decisions for both prudent and legal reasons.

Board members and district administrators should carefully review these statements to ensure that they are in a position to make informed decisions as to the district's operations. Accuracy and reliability of financial reports are dependent upon sound internal controls, effective underlying systems and periodic external audits.

Exhibit 3-9 illustrates suggested financial reports and whether or not the board presently receives them.

Exhibit 3-9 LISD Financial Reports Received by the Board

Financial Statement	Provide the Board
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	Yes	No
Interim financial statements for each fund and account group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative balance sheet showing current balances compared with balances in the prior year • Statements comparing actual revenue to date with actual revenue in the prior year • Statements of changes in financial position • Statements comparing actual revenue to date with budgeted revenue to date including explanations for variances above 10 percent. 		X
Year-end financial statements for funds and accounts groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance sheet • Statement of revenue, expenditures and fund equity • Statement of changes in financial position • Combined financial statements 		X
Analysis of investments		X
List of checks to be paid this month	X	
Enrollment growth and trend in the past five years		X

Source: LISD, board packets, 2000-01.

School districts' interim financial reports for each of the budgetary funds (general fund, special revenue funds, capital projects fund and each debt service fund) may be reported using a comparative balance sheet that compares balances of accounts at the balance sheet date with account balances at the end of the prior year.

A statement comparing actual revenue to date with actual revenue in the prior year is typical. A similar statement showing actual revenue, expenditures and encumbrances to budgeted amounts provides a different view of the same type of statement. In addition, a statement also could be prepared that would compare expenditures and encumbrances to date with appropriations for the current year. An alternative presentation may combine this statement and the previous statement into a statement comparing actual and budgeted revenue and expenditure accounts.

A statement of changes in financial position is also generally presented to the board and management. This statement presents a statement of

changes in financial position of the general fund when prepared to show gross financial resources provided and total school resources applied.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PURCHASING (PART 2)

Recommendation 26:

Generate financial statements each month for the board and administrators.

These interim statements will not only help the board make effective and timely decisions, but also help the board and management better understand the fiscal position of the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager works with Region 1 to produce the financial statements automatically from the RSCCC system after month-end processing.	May 2002
2.	The business manager submits the financial statements to the board and management each month.	August 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not have detailed purchasing procedures to guide and support district purchases. There is no documented approval structure or purchasing dollar thresholds regarding when purchases must be presented for board approval or what employees have authorization to make purchases or procedures for emergency purchases.

Board approved purchasing policies state that the district may participate in a cooperative purchasing program or participate in the state vendor list offered by the Texas Building and Procurement Commission. Districts that purchase goods and services by agreement with another local government or with the state or a state agency satisfy the requirement to seek competitive bids for the purchase of goods and services. In practice, most of the purchases made by the LISD are made through a cooperative purchasing agreement with the Houston Galveston Area Council.

The board has delegated to the superintendent or designee the authority to determine the method of purchasing and to make budgeted purchases. However, any purchase that costs or aggregates to a cost of \$10,000 or more requires board approval before a transaction may take place.

The review team reviewed supporting documentation for all purchases made in 2000-01 to one vendor that aggregated to \$10,000 or more to determine whether the best value was obtained for the district and to ensure proper approvals were received from the board or the superintendent. Some examples of the documentation reviewed are:

- Furniture purchases were made from one vendor totaling \$32,485.
- A tractor was purchased in June 2001 for \$20,587 plus the trade in of the old tractor for \$2,300.
- A bus was purchased in October 2001 for \$48,953.

The district provided copies of invoices and checks. There was no documentation for any of the purchases showing that the district had shopped competitively for the best value before the decision was made to purchase the product. No documentation could be provided about whether the board approved purchases of more than \$10,000 before the purchase was made.

Schools with successful purchasing programs ensure that purchasing policies adopted by the board follow applicable laws and guidelines and are established and understood by district staff. Purchasing policies are outlined in systematic purchasing procedures for central office staff and school administrators; and policies and procedures are clearly communicated to potential vendors and the public.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) purchasing guidelines say that accurate record keeping and documentation should be a fundamental element of the procurement process. Precise and systematic record-keeping and records management withstands the constant scrutiny of various interest groups including vendors, the general public and outside agencies as well as internal groups who are the users or customers of the purchasing system. This records management should generally provide for the following:

- Flow and retention of forms including requisitions, purchase orders, petty cash and cash reimbursement receipts;
- Full documentation of all competitive procurements with comprehensive competitive procurement files containing specifications, competitive procurement advertisement, pre-competitive procurement conference minutes (as appropriate), competitive procurements submitted, competitive procurement

tabulation, board minutes indicating competitive procurement awards (or a similar award notice) and related records;

- Full documentation of procurement procedures developed to obtain goods and services through competitive sealed proposals, design/build contracts and other procurement options; and
- Documentation of price quotations whether these are informal quotations obtained by school district staff or formal quotations which are required for purchases costing between \$10,000 and \$25,000.

The guide also recommends that every school district, large and small, should have a written manual describing its purchasing policies and procedures. It should be designed to assist school and department personnel in the purchasing of supplies and services. Rules and guidelines for those purchases consistent with relevant statutes, regulations and board policies are a vital part of the manual.

Overall, a good purchasing manual establishes rules for making school district purchases, has clear approval structure and provides a clear designation of authority levels. It provides guidance to school district employees in requisitioning purchases, and is often used to acquaint vendors and suppliers with the school district's policies and procedures. Internally, the manual helps in training school district personnel in purchasing policy and procedures. Finally, it promotes consistency in purchasing applications throughout the school district.

Exhibit 3-10 provides an example of a typical purchase requirement that could be distributed to staff to explain the district purchasing requirements, including approval requirements.

**Exhibit 3-10
Purchasing Requirements**

Purchase Levels	Bid Requirements (if no bid or contract exists)	Approval Requirements
More than \$25,000 annually	Formal sealed bids should be obtained. If the product can be purchased from the Region 1 approved vendor list or the state approved vendor list, three price quotations must be obtained from vendors not on the approved vendor list. Documentation of the price quotes must be included with the purchase requisition before approval can be obtained.	Business manager or designee Superintendent or designee Board of Trustees
\$10,001-\$25,000	Formal written quotations from at least three vendors. If the product can be purchased from	Business manager or designee

annually	the Region 1 approved vendor list or the state approved vendor list, three price quotations must be obtained from vendors not on the approved vendor list. Documentation of the price quotes must be included with the purchase requisition before approval can be obtained.	Superintendent or designee Board of Trustees
\$1,000 - \$10,000	Written quotations from at least three vendors.	Business manager or designee
\$100 - \$999	Telephone, fax or written quotations from at least three vendors.	Business manager or designee

Source: Texas Building and Procurement Commission, Section 2.22, June 1998.

Recommendation 27:

Draft and publish a purchasing procedures manual.

The district's purchasing manual should address purchasing goals and objectives, statutes, regulations and board policies applicable to purchasing, purchasing authority, requisition and purchase order processing. It should also contain competitive procurement requirements and procedures, vendor selection and relations, receiving, distribution and the disposal of obsolete and surplus property. Document retention for supporting documentation should be addressed. Many manuals also discuss request for payment vouchers and repair and service of equipment.

Including examples of forms is helpful to users of the manual. These may include sample bids or proposals, purchase order forms, purchase requisitions (if separate from the purchase order), receiving report, vendor performance evaluation forms and requests for payment voucher.

The business manager should conduct a training session with all staff involved in the purchasing process to ensure that the policies, procedures and practices are effectively communicated.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to develop a comprehensive purchasing procedures manual including a record retention policy for all purchasing documentation.	May 2002
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2.	The business manager develops and documents the district's purchasing policies and procedures.	June 2002
3.	The superintendent submits the purchasing procedures manual to the board.	September 2002
4.	The board reviews and approves the procedures manual.	October 2002
5.	The business manager distributes the procedures manual and communicates procedures and policies to district staff.	October 2002
6.	Procedures are updated annually and communicated to administrators and management every year.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district has had the same external auditing firm for more than 30 years and has not sent out a request for proposal for auditing services in 30 years. A review of the engagement letter provided by the external auditing firm for the 2000-01 school year shows that the auditors will be paid no more than \$10,000 for their services.

LISD has received an unqualified opinion on the district's 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-2000 annual financial reports. An unqualified audit report is one in which the auditor found no significant problems that would affect the integrity of the financial statements. In other words, the district's annual financial report could be relied upon as being materially accurate.

Texas Education Code section 44.008 requires school districts to undergo an annual external audit of their financial statements. The code specifies that external audits must be prepared by a certified public accountant, and that the audit must comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP). External audits provide a review of the district's compliance with established standards and practices. External audits provide the following information: an annual financial and compliance report; an examination of the expenditure of federal funds (as applicable); and a report to management on internal accounting controls (as applicable).

LISD does not have an internal audit function and thus relies entirely upon the external auditor to provide the district with independent assessments of its financial condition and related activities.

State and federal laws do not require a request for proposal (RFP) to be issued for audit services; however, good business practices require school districts to issue RFPs periodically as a matter of policy. RFPs for auditing services provide school districts the opportunity to assess and compare the expertise of audit firms and select the one that can provide them with the best professional service.

The district's long-standing relationship with its auditors does not violate any laws or TEA guidelines but could create a perception in the public's mind that the auditors lack independence. Auditing standards require auditors to maintain independence so that the public will know the auditor's opinions, conclusions, judgments and recommendations are impartial. The question of whether auditors should be rotated periodically to ensure their independence is debated in the auditing profession. A higher quality service can be received when school districts periodically allow qualified firms the opportunity to present their qualifications and expertise through a periodic RFP process. The district can ensure that the price it is charged for the audit is competitive.

FASRG prescribes a model audit RFP that is designed to provide both the district and the auditing firm the information necessary to understand and evaluate the services to be performed. The Government Finance Officers Association-a national organization that seeks to improve the quality of governmental accounting, auditing and reporting-has published an *Audit Management Handbook* to help governments procure quality audit services. The handbook suggests 24 steps to preparing an RFP that meets the needs of the governmental entity as well as the proposing firm.

Recommendation 28:

Develop an external auditor Request for Proposal policy to ensure that new auditors are solicited every five years.

The district should issue a RFP for auditing services at least every five years to widen its choices and allow other firms the opportunity to propose for the contract. By restricting its audit contract award to a single local firm, the district may be denying itself the fresh perspective of other firms as well as the opportunity to obtain the same or better services at a reduced cost.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to draft a policy requiring the district solicit proposals from qualified auditing firm every five years.	May 2002
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2.	The superintendent reviews and approves the draft of the policy.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent presents the policy to the board for adoption.	June 2002
4.	The business manager begins the process to solicit a new audit firm every five years in compliance with district policy.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district's in-house tax collection process is not a cost-effective way to collect property taxes. The district has a tax collector on staff that collects taxes for the district. This person also supervises the food services operations.

Assessing and collecting school district property taxes is an important function involving different entities with distinct responsibilities. School districts develop and adopt their tax rate, while county appraisal districts appraise the value of property within the district. The tax rate that school districts adopt consists of two components: (1) a maintenance and operations component for meeting operating costs and (2) a debt service component to cover the costs of indebtedness. The combined rate is applied to the assessed property value to compute the district's total tax levy.

Property values are important determinates of school funding, not only at the local level, but at the state level as well. There is an inverse relationship between local property wealth and state aid. The greater the property wealth of the district, the greater the amount of revenue raised locally, but the lower the amount of state aid. **Exhibit 3-11** shows the property value for each pupil for LISD compared to the state.

Exhibit 3-11
LISD and State Property Value for each Pupil
2000-01

Wealthy District	LISD	State
\$300,000	\$61,954	\$215,232

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Since LISD's property value is low, they receive little funding from local property revenue. The majority of their funding comes from the state. The history of the district's property appraisals and tax rates is shown in **Exhibit 3-12**.

Exhibit 3-12
LISD Tax Rates
1997-98 through 2000-01

Category	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Maintenance and operations tax rate	\$1.20	\$1.22	\$1.35	\$1.35
Interest and sinking fund	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.08
Total Tax Rate	\$1.20	\$1.22	\$1.35	\$1.43
Total tax levy	\$251,176	\$257,809	\$259,575	\$288,248
Appraised Value	\$20,931,325	\$20,896,095	\$19,227,811	\$20,157,252
Collection Rate	93.4%	93.9%	92.2%	92.3%

Source: LISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 1999-2000. District tax rate sheets for 2000-01.

LISD's tax collector submits monthly status reports to the district on collection activities before each board meeting. The district also contracts with a law firm to collect delinquent taxes. A report is given to the tax collector by the law firm concerning progress made on collecting delinquent taxes when requested by the board.

Exhibit 3-13 illustrates the costs associated with having an in-house tax collection operation.

Exhibit 3-13
LISD In-House Tax Collection Expenses

Item	Cost
Salary	\$30,107
Benefits	\$2,371
Invoice Printing Costs	\$770
Postage (1,547 statements)	\$526

Total Annual Costs	\$33,774
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Source: LISD Personnel report and invoices provided by the Tax Assessor Collector.

The Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector provides collection services on behalf of entities. The Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector collection rate in 2000 was 97 percent.

In 1999, Kingsville Independent School District (KISD) outsourced its tax collection services to its Kleberg County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office. The district was able to reduce internal costs by \$87,545 annually, including three full-time positions plus associated operating costs, while assuring that the collection rate remained high. The contract with the county tax assessor collector costs \$9,377 annually, resulting in annual net savings to KISD of \$78,168.

Recommendation 29:

Contract with the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector to collect property taxes.

The district can redirect management of the food services operations to existing staff.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector and discusses responsibilities, fees and procedures for remitting collections to the district.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent obtains a written contract from the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector documenting all processes.	November 2002
3.	The food services staff are trained by LISD's tax assessor-collector on food service management.	January 2003
4.	The superintendent presents the contract for tax collection to the board for approval.	March 2003
5.	The superintendent outsources billing and collection of the 2003 property taxes to the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector.	August 2003
6.	The superintendent and the business manager monitor the collection process and negotiate the contract annually, as necessary.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The district's tax levy was \$288,249 for the 2000 tax levy of which 92.3 percent was collected, or \$266,053. If the Willacy County Tax Assessor charged the district 2 percent of collections for its services, it would cost the district \$5,321. The district pays approximately \$33,774 for its in-house collection process. The difference between the in-house collection process and the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector is a savings to the district of \$28,453 a year.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Contract with the Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector to collect property taxes.	\$0	\$28,453	\$28,453	\$28,453	\$28,453

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

B. BUDGET PROCESS

Budget preparation and administration are important aspects of overall district operations. Providing adequate resources for programs within the restraints of available funding sources presents administrators with significant challenges. Sound budgeting practices benefit the district by:

- Establishing a documented method for budget development, adoption and administration;
- Providing administrative controls for expenditure of funds within approved allocations; and
- Assuring school and community involvement through a "bottom up" budget approach.

A review of this area must evaluate existing policies and procedures supporting the budget process. Business practices, which must be analyzed, include staff involvement, community involvement, expenditure control, spending plans, program budgeting and long-term budget planning.

Several legal standards exist that control the budgeting preparation of the district, including the Texas Education Code (TEC) and guidelines developed by the TEA. Sections 44.002 through 44.006 of the TEC establish the legal basis for budget development in school districts. The following six items summarize the legal requirements from the code:

- The superintendent is the budget officer for the district and prepares or causes the budget to be prepared.
- The district budget must be prepared by a date set by the state board of education, presently August 20 (June 19 if the district uses a July 1 fiscal year start date).
- The president of the Board of Trustees must call a public meeting of the Board of Trustees, giving 10 days public notice in a newspaper, for the adoption of the district budget. Any taxpayer in the district may be present and participate in the meeting.
- No funds may be expended in any manner other than as provided for in the adopted budget. The board does have the authority to amend the budget or adopt a supplementary emergency budget to cover unforeseen expenditures.
- The budget must be prepared in accordance with and state guidelines.

- The budget must be legally adopted before the adoption of the tax rate. However, if a school district has a July 1st fiscal year start date, then a school district must not adopt a tax rate until after the district receives the certified appraisal roll for the district required by Section 26.01, Tax Code. In addition, a school district must publish a revised notice and hold another public meeting before the district may adopt a tax rate that exceeds the following: (1) The rate proposed in the notice prepared using the estimate; or (2) The district's rollback rate determined by Section 26.08, Tax Code, using the certified appraisal roll.

TEA has developed additional requirements for school district budget preparation. The budget must be adopted by the Board of Trustees, inclusive of amendments, no later than August 31 (June 30 if the district uses a July 1 fiscal year start date). Minutes from district board meetings are used by TEA to record adoption of, and amendments to, the budget. Budgets for the general fund, the Food Service fund (whether accounted for in the general fund, a special revenue fund or enterprise fund) and the debt service fund must be included in the official district budget (legal or fiscal-year basis). These budgets must be prepared and approved at least at the fund and function levels to comply with the state's legal level of control mandates.

The officially adopted district budget, as amended, must be filed with TEA through PEIMS by the date prescribed in the annual system guidelines. Revenues, other fund sources, other uses and fund balances must be reported by fund, object, fiscal year and amount. Expenditures must be reported by fund, function, object, organization, fiscal year, program intent and amount.

A school district must amend the official budget before exceeding a functional expenditure category, i.e., instruction, administration, etc., in the total district budget. The annual financial and compliance report should reflect the amended budget amounts on the schedule comparing budgeted and actual amounts. The requirement for filing the amended budget with TEA is satisfied when the school district files its Annual Financial and Compliance Report.

In addition to state legal requirements, individual school districts may establish their own requirements for annual budget preparation. Local fiscal policies may dictate budgetary requirements that go beyond those required by the TEC and TEA.

LISD's budget development process begins in April of each year and extends until August when the budget is approved by the board.

FINDING

The district spent more than it budgeted in 1999-2000 and 2000-01. The audited financial statements for the year ending August 31, 2001 show that the district's actual expenditures exceeded the budgeted expenditures by \$88,477. The district also does not provide monthly reports showing budget-to-actual expenditures to principals and department heads for monitoring expenditures. By not closely monitoring and controlling expenditures, the district can quickly find itself in financial trouble. With limited local resources, it will be difficult for the district to recover from a financial crisis if one occurs. Therefore, every step must be taken to control expenditures and protect the fund balance.

Corpus Christi Independent School District (CCISD) controlled expenditures to enhance financial stability and increase the fund balance. By controlling general fund expenditures, the CCISD increased its fund balance to more acceptable levels. The district's budget procedures for the two years included a form requesting each department to identify a 5 percent budget reduction. The district's efforts to control expenditures enhanced its financial stability by increasing its fund balance to a reasonable level. CCISD increased its general fund balance from \$18.6 million (1992-93) to \$43.5 million (1995-96).

Recommendation 30:

Closely monitor expenditures and produce a monthly budget report.

Following the month-end closing of the general ledger, a budget report should be generated. This report should detail the approved budget amount by line item, the total year-to-date expenditures and the remaining balance. Once the report has been generated, it should be forwarded to each administrator so that everyone in the district is involved in monitoring expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager generates the budget report comparing budgeted expenditures to actual expenditures.	May 2002 and Every Month Thereafter
2.	The business manager distributes the budget report to the superintendent and administrators.	May 2002 and Every Month Thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not publish or follow a budget calendar. The superintendent and the business manager evaluate prior year expenditures and needed goods and services and develop a budget that is presented to the board. The process does not allow cooperative interaction between departments, the District Improvement Plan process, the Technology Plan process and schools so that everyone understands where the district's resources are spent.

The district also does not develop multi-year budgets that would assist the district in establishing its long-term goals. The budget process is intended to ensure that adequate resources are available to finance the district's needs, both annually and in the future. The district also does not have a budget planning committee to assist in developing and analyzing expenditures for the overall benefit of the district.

A formal budget calendar is an important planning tool that details specific tasks, responsibilities and deadlines for all committee, central administrative staff and school-level staff. It provides, at a glance, all the necessary steps required to develop and adopt the budget within the time established by law. Although a formal budget calendar is modified each year to give the actual dates, a general guide can be developed to be used year-to-year to ensure that the process is moving forward. Without a formal budget calendar, important dates may be forgotten; important tasks could be overlooked or performed out of sequence, endangering the progress of the entire process. A sample budget calendar is presented in **Exhibit 3-14**.

Exhibit 3-14
Sample Budget Calendar

Scheduled Date	Activity	Responsible Person
September 10, 2002	Establish and conduct the first meeting of the Budget Planning Committee.	Superintendent
September 10, 2002	Prepare a preliminary budget calendar	Budget Planning Committee
September 18, 2002	Present recommended budget calendar and guidelines to the board for approval.	Superintendent
January 21, 2003	Meet with staff to review budget procedures and release of preliminary allocations, and to distribute forms and printouts.	Principals, department heads

February 1-25, 2003	Individual budgets developed and submitted to business office.	Superintendent, principals, administrators
March 15, 2003	Preliminary school and department printouts are completed and delivered to principals and supervisors.	Superintendent
April 1, 2003	School budget reviewed by Site-Based Decision -Making committee for approval of preliminary budgets and submission to business manager.	Principals
April 5, 2003	Budgets reviewed by Budget Planning Committee.	Superintendent
April 15, 2003	Finalize all preliminary budgets and prepare district budget.	Business manager
April 18, 2003	Preliminary budget presented to the board.	Superintendent and business manager
May 15, 2003 - August 2003	Present necessary revised budget to the board.	Superintendent and business manager
August 15, 2003	Present final budget to board for approval.	Superintendent and business manager

Source: Christoval Independent School District Report.

Although the Christoval Independent School District's budget process is relatively effective, other districts have found that involving more staff members enhances the process. When everyone understands where the district's resources are going, it eliminates any misunderstanding that one department is favored more than another. Each member of the team is given the opportunity to set priorities based on the district's overall needs, rather than on the needs of an individual department.

Recommendation 31:

Establish a Budget Planning Committee to identify the district's goals and financial constraints.

A Budget Planning Committee should be established and meet during the first week of the new school year. The committee should be comprised of the superintendent, business manager, school principal, technology coordinator, transportation supervisor, the food services manager and two board members. Preparing a formal budget calendar and distributing it to

all district employees who have budgetary responsibilities should be the first step in the annual budget process.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent organizes the Budget Planning Committee.	September 2002
2.	The superintendent, board and the Budget Planning Committee set goals for the district for next five years.	October 2002
3.	The superintendent prepares a budget calendar with the assistance of the Budget Planning Committee.	November 2002
4.	The budget calendar is distributed to all personnel involved in the budget process.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

C. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is an essential part of school district operations. Rising costs for health, property and liability insurance coverage requires administrators to implement and maintain cost containment programs. Successful risk management programs start with strong support from the governing board, superintendent and senior financial administrators. Commitment from the upper management to the fundamental goals of risk management is essential if risk management practices are to be effective. Sound risk management involves:

- Analyzing alternatives for insurance coverage such as self-insurance and other industry trends;
- Analyzing insurance plans including deductible amounts, co-insurance levels and types of coverage provided;
- Assessing hazards and implementing programs to minimize exposure to potential losses; and
- Continuously monitoring if the district complies with various laws and regulations.

LISD's insurance coverage is managed in the business office. The business manager handles claims processing and all communication with the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) who provides all the district's coverage. The district's coverage is shown in **Exhibit 3-15**. All coverage listed was effective January 7, 2001 and expired January 7, 2002.

Exhibit 3-15
LISD Insurance Coverage
2001-02

Coverage	Limits	Deductible Amount	Premium
Property Blanket Replacement Cost Limit on Buildings, Personal Property and Auxiliary Structures.	\$3,420,831	\$1,000	\$5,884
Includes Wind, Hurricane and Hail Coverage	-	\$10,000	-
Computer Equipment	\$250,000	\$250	\$600

Liability General liability includes personal injury and employee benefits liability	\$1,000,000	\$1,000	\$600
School Professional Liability	\$1,000,000	\$1,000	\$2,500
Fleet liability, collision, and specified perils	\$100,000 a person \$300,000 an accident	\$250	\$2,710
Total Premium Cost			\$12,294

Source: LISD, Contribution and Coverage Summary provided by Texas Association of School Boards, June 25, 2001.

The district has not had a claim for any of the insurance coverages listed in the last five years.

The district offers health coverage and life and accidental death and dismemberment coverage to its employees. The health coverage costs and the amount contributed to the coverage by the district are shown in **Exhibit 3-16**.

Exhibit 3-16
LISD Costs and Coverage of Employee Benefits
2001-02

	Monthly Rate	Employer Contribution	Employee Contribution
Employee	\$392.70	\$100.00	\$292.70
Employee and Spouse	\$780.56	\$100.00	\$780.56
Employee & Child(ren)	\$589.90	\$100.00	\$489.90
Employee and Family	\$977.76	\$100.00	\$877.76

Source: LISD, Premium and Benefit Summary, August 31, 2001.

The district is eligible for the state insurance plan beginning in the 2002-03 school year. The district's health plan coverage through Aetna offers the following services to the employees (**Exhibit 3-17**).

Exhibit 3-17
Aetna Health Plan Benefits
2001-02

Type of Benefit	Paid by Employee
Individual Deductible	\$300
Family Deductible Limit	\$9,000
Coinsurance	80%
Individual Coinsurance Limit	\$1,000
Family Coinsurance Limit	\$2,000
Pharmacy	\$10/\$20/\$35

Source: LISD, Premium and Benefit Summary, August 31, 2001.

The district also pays for workers' compensation coverage for its employees through TASB. The coverage is renewed annually from September 1 through August 31. The annual contribution for the 2001-02 school year is \$23,590 and covers 66 employees. Losses in the last five years have averaged \$2,160 a year.

FINDING

The district has not established a committee to coordinate the implementation of the state health plan. Only 10 of the district's 78 employees participated in the healthcare plan offered by the district during the 2001-02 school year. From the surveys conducted by the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR), 37.5 percent of the teachers answered that the district's health insurance package meets their needs. From the surveys conducted to school administrators, 58.3 percent stated that the plan did not meet their needs. Therefore, the successful implementation of the new insurance plan is critically important to adequately address the insurance needs of district staff.

The 2001 Texas Legislature established a statewide school employee health insurance plan for teachers and other employees of school districts. School districts with 500 or fewer employees, like LISD, will be required to participate in the new state insurance plan beginning in fall 2002.

All full-time employees and those part-time employees who are members of the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) are automatically covered by the basic state plan, which is considered catastrophic coverage. Receiving higher levels of coverage will require additional district and employee

contributions. To assist with these costs, the state will send each district \$75 a month, for each covered employee and will give each employee an additional \$1,000 annually (\$83 a month) to pay for additional employee coverage, dependent coverage, compensation or any combination of the above. Part-time employees who are not TRS members may participate if they or the district pays the full cost.

Districts are required to make a minimum contribution of \$150 for each employee a month. LISD is contributing \$100 for each employee a month. Since the district is not making the required minimum contribution, in the next six years the state will help pay that local district share. The state will phase out this hold harmless aid in the next six years. Districts reaching the Maintenance and Operations tax cap of \$1.50 will also be held harmless for any tax effort more than \$1.50 required to reach their minimum district effort of \$150 a month. LISD's tax rate is \$1.47 for 2001-02.

All of the details of the plan will be subject to contract negotiations with health insurance providers and actuarial estimates, as well as rules and guidelines set by TRS.

Recommendation 32:

Establish a committee of staff and administrators to implement the state health plan for 2002-03.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent establishes a committee of representative teachers and other employees to research the options and prepare recommendations for how the district will approach the new employee health coverage.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent begins to gather information from TRS, Region 1 and the state on how the program should be implemented.	May 2002
3.	The committee examines the information and prepares a plan of action to be presented to the board.	May 2002
4.	The superintendent presents the plan to the board for review and approval.	June 2002
5.	Upon approval, the committee communicates the plan to all members of the staff.	July 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

D. INVESTMENTS

An effective cash management program can provide a district with additional revenues to fund essential programs and operations. Maximizing the return on invested funds while ensuring the safety and liquidity of investments is a high priority. Effective cash management programs provide competitive rates of return using various investment instruments; are based on a comprehensive written investment policy approved by the board; and allow personnel to become skilled in investment procedures and techniques and to stay abreast of current money markets.

Districts with effective investment programs invest excess cash in accounts or instruments that mature or are available in time to meet their anticipated expenses. The goal is to invest all funds until they are needed to maximize interest earnings.

The business manager is responsible for cash management in the district. The district has eight bank accounts with its depository bank. Deposits held at the institution as of August 31, 2001 are shown in **Exhibit 3-18**.

Exhibit 3-18
LISD Bank Accounts
August 31, 2001

Account Type	Balance
Construction	\$53,745
Interest & Sinking Fund	\$11,800
Imprest	(\$1,597)
Local Maintenance	\$12,065
Operating	\$458
Payroll	\$22,029
Student Activity	\$1,087
Tax Clearing	\$48
Total Cash On Hand	\$99,635

Source: LISD, Bank Statements, August 31, 2001.

The district renewed its depository-banking contract with Texas State Bank for the two years beginning September 1, 2001 and ending August 31, 2003. The bank offers the district checking accounts that allow an unlimited number of checks to be written and at the same time pays a variable rate of interest on the collected balance. The interest rate is based on a rate equal to the 91-day U.S. Treasury Bill "asked" rate less 45 basis points as published in the Wall Street Journal section called Treasury Bonds, Notes and Bills as of the first of each month and recalculated monthly thereafter.

The bank does not require the district to hold a compensating balance. The district also does not pay the bank service charges to perform wire transfers, stop payments, telephone transfers, cashier's checks or safekeeping services. The bank pledges securities to the district to adequately protect the funds of the district on deposit with the bank.

On May 6, 2000, the voters of the district passed a bond issue for \$3,000,000 to build a new school. Part of the bonds, \$1.25 million, were sold on October 19, 2000. The proceeds from these bonds have been held with Texas State Bank in certificate of deposits. The district has also had a \$10,000 certificate of deposit since 1981. The interest from the certificates of deposits is paid to the district quarterly. Certificates of deposits held on August 31, 2001 are shown in **Exhibit 3-19**.

Exhibit 3-19
LISD Certificate of Deposits

Certificate Number	Issue Date	Last Renewal Date	Maturity Date	Interest Rate as of 11/06/01	Amount
600003573	01/22/81	07/28/01	11/28/01	3.31%	\$10,000
3008781	10/18/00	10/13/01	11/12/01	2.29%	\$100,000
3008790	10/18/00	10/13/01	12/12/01	2.27%	\$105,000
3008808	10/18/00	10/13/01	04/11/02	2.27%	\$475,000
3008826	10/18/00	06/18/01	02/18/02	3.94%	\$475,000
Total					\$1,165,000

Source: LISD, Bank Statements, August 31, 2001.

FINDING

The district is not maximizing its interest earnings on cash. Funds are held in demand deposit accounts earning approximately 2 percent. TexPool, an

investment pool administered by the State of Texas, has an average yield of about 3.5 percent.

FASRG states that cash and investments often represent one of the largest assets on a school district's balance sheet. The investment of excess school district funds should be made with judgment, care, prudence, discretion and with diligent management. A cash flow projection report is an important management tool that directs decisions about the maturity of various investment instruments, in accordance with projected uses of cash to liquidate financial obligations. The investment of public funds should never be made for speculative purposes, but rather with consideration for the probable safety of principal and return on such investments.

A review of the district's business checking accounts from September 2000 thru August 2001 shows an average ending balance of \$286,226. The interest rate paid by TexPool as of September 30, 2001 was 3.47 percent. Texas State Bank's interest rate as of September 30, 2001 was 2.94 percent. If this excess amount had been invested at a higher interest rate, the district could have earned additional interest income.

Recommendation 33:

Sweep the business checking accounts nightly.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to negotiate with the depository bank or TexPool to sweep checking accounts with excess funds and invest in overnight higher interest yielding investments.	May 2002
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FISCAL IMPACT

The calculation for the fiscal impact is the average balance of all checking accounts multiplied by the difference in the interest rate between TexPool and Texas State Bank as of September 30, 2001. The average ending balance in district checking accounts was \$286,226. The difference between IBC's interest rate and TexPool's interest rate is .53 percent. Therefore, the district could have earned additional interest income totaling \$1,517 ($\$286,226 \times .0053$) annually. If the district invests in overnight certificates of deposit or other higher yielding instruments, the interest earnings will be greater.

The district also sold the remaining bonds on September 27, 2001 and deposited the net proceeds from the sale, totaling \$1.2 million, in an interest bearing checking account earning 2.75 percent. Sweeping these

funds into overnight investments earning 3.5 percent or more will increase the interest earnings to the district above the projections provided.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Sweep the business checking accounts nightly.	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$1,517	\$1,517

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

This chapter reviews the operations of the Lasara Independent School District (LISD) in three sections.

- A. Facilities Use and Management
- B. Food Services
- C. Transportation

One of the key planning roles in any district is in the maintenance and operation of the plant, equipment and service facilities, so that even casual observers come away with the impression of a positive atmosphere for learning within the district.

While the buildings, land and equipment do not make the school, they have a decided impact on the day-to-day operations of the educational process. In a Department of Education study of school districts in three states, a positive relationship was found between school condition and both student achievement and student behavior. Another study, conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), found that students who attended schools in poor condition scored 5.5 percentage points below students who attended schools in fair condition and 11 percentage points below students who attended schools in excellent condition. Finally, a study of working conditions in urban schools, conducted by Corcoran, Walker and White, found that physical conditions can have direct positive and negative effects on teacher morale, sense of personal safety, feelings of effectiveness in the classroom and on the general learning environment.

The role of Facilities and Maintenance management is to oversee the functions associated with repair, replacement and upkeep of all school facilities. Their role in operations is to oversee the housekeeping functions, the performance of scheduled upkeep procedures and plant security for the entire system. Maintenance is concerned with activities required to keep the facilities and equipment in condition, while operations is concerned with keeping those facilities and equipment open and/or ready to be used.

Safe, clean, well-maintained schools enhance student achievement and teacher satisfaction and create community goodwill. Curb appeal can also give the community confidence that the district is using its tax dollars effectively and also help ensure its future support. School districts are realizing that strong community relationships are critical to the schools' growth and health. Although the physical appearance of buildings and

grounds seem like minor factors, they can significantly affect the district's image.

Chapter 4 OPERATIONS

A. FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

LISD facilities are spread out in multiple buildings on 10.37 acres, occupying a total of 61,421 square feet of space.

Exhibit 4-1 details the campus facilities.

**Exhibit 4-1
LISD Facilities**

Facility	Square Feet	Year Built	Age
Auditorium	4,584	1951	50
Covered Pavilion on Auditorium	6,254		
Two classroom buildings	11,114	1959	42
Bus Shed	2,312	1973	28
Bus Shed Addition	2,460	1996	5
Covered Area	408		
Teacher's Lounge	738	1980	21
Cold Storage	198	1979	22
Cafeteria/Tax Office	7,547	1926	75
Junior High Library	2,160	1976	25
Gymnasium	9,332	1983	18
Media and Locker Area	1,824	1960	41
Parental Involvement Building	837	1926	75
District Administration	4,228	1970	31
2 Junior High Double Portables	3,489		
Storage Barn	2,400		
Portable - Elementary Library	1,536		
Total square feet	61,421		

Source: Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Property Appraisal Packet.

The maintenance, custodial and grounds staff totals seven employees. **Exhibit 4-2** shows the highlights of the LISD facilities.

**Exhibit 4-2
LISD Facilities**

Facility Criteria	Quantity
Number of facilities	17
Total square feet to maintain	61,421
Total acres of ground to maintain	10.37
Total maintenance, custodial and construction staff	7
Total 2000-01 annual operating budget	\$218,184

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2000-01.

LISD's Maintenance and Custodial Department consists of a maintenance supervisor, who reports directly to the school principal, and six custodians. Four members of the staff work the entire year, while the others work only when school is in session. The custodians are responsible for cleaning all buildings, doing all yard work, setting up for events and minor repairs such as changing light bulbs.

FINDING

The district is planning to build a new school but has not created a facilities master plan.

LISD held a bond election on May 6, 2000 to authorize the sale of bonds to build a new school. The district published a letter to the community, as well as other questions and answers about the bond election, to encourage citizens to vote in favor of the bond issuance. In the letter to the community, the LISD board president told citizens "*...if LISD holds a bond election now, we will be able to obtain \$1,250,000 by paying just 8 more cents for each \$100 valuation in taxes. These 8¢ will pay about 1.5% and the state will contribute the remaining 85% of the \$1,250,000.*" The letter implies that the money from the state is guaranteed, when the district actually has to apply for and be awarded the money to service its debt.

The Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) program was initially authorized in House Bill 4 by the 75th Texas Legislature in 1997, and became effective on September 1, 1997 providing assistance to school

districts in making debt service payments on qualifying bonds and lease-purchase agreements. The legislature appropriated \$200 million for the program in the 1997-99 biennium and another \$150 million for the 1999-2001 biennium. In order to receive assistance, districts were required to apply to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Applications were prioritized by property wealth for each student in average daily attendance, with adjustments for rapid enrollment growth, lack of pre-existing debt and rejection of previous applications for instructional facilities allotment funds.

In order to qualify for state assistance under the IFA program, districts must make an application for funds after voters have given authority through a successful bond election. Thus, the district could not have known that it would receive state funds before the bond election was even held. The district must make its application for state funds before bonds are sold or before the contract for a lease purchase is authorized. By doing this, it preserves its eligibility for state funds, should they become available in future years and its initial application is refused.

In a letter to the community urging citizens to vote in favor of the proposed bonds, the LISD board president told the community "...our school was built in 1928. It was very adequate for the number of students in 1928, but while serving our district well, our needs and our enrollment have increased and we expect this to continue into the millennium." In fact, at the time of the bond election, the district had a report from Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) that showed the membership projections for LISD decreasing. A Student Membership Projection report was also prepared for Willacy County, which showed its student membership declining over the last seven years and projecting it to continue declining over the next seven years, only then starting to increase again.

No demographic study was ordered nor space-planning analysis performed to determine if a new school was needed. This kind of analysis would look at the number of classrooms the district currently has and the number of students in each classroom to determine if its classes were filled to capacity to help justify the construction of a new building.

Poor utilization of campus facilities represents an invisible cost to districts. According to industry standards, every square foot of indoor space on a campus costs roughly \$3 for each year to heat, light and maintain. Instructional space costs the same, whether it is used six hours a week or 30. Too many campuses operate more space than needed for their programs, spending money that could be used for other purposes.

Recommendation 34:

Develop a facilities master plan.

A district's master facilities plan should include an updated demographic study. The importance of student enrollment projections to the planning process of a school district cannot be underestimated. Such data are necessary for all types of decisions including where and when new school buildings are needed. Population and Survey Analysts of College Station, Texas conduct demographic studies exclusively for school districts. Based on their experience, a school district like LISD with a student enrollment growth rate below that of the 2 percent state average should update its study every four to five years. They recommend updating every year, or even twice a year, for high growth districts.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent appraises the situation, including gathering and compiling data and determining the district's needs, to be used in the planning process.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent prioritizes the needs identified.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent assesses which needs can be met with existing resources and what changes are needed to make that happen	May 2002
4.	The superintendent shows the community the options identified and options are evaluated so that one option can be selected.	June 2002
5.	The superintendent prepares an action plan and hires staff if necessary, initiates capital projects, signs agreements or gets out publicity.	July 2002
6.	The superintendent submits to the budget prioritization process and a request for a demographic study.	August 2002
7.	The district develops an RFP and request bids.	September 2002
8.	The superintendent obtains demographic study.	November 2002
9.	The superintendent evaluates plan and study every five years.	May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

Population and Survey Analysts of College Station, Texas, a provider of demographic information for school districts, estimates a cost of about \$28,000 for a school district the size of LISD. The company also estimates the district should update its study every four to five years.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Develop a facilities master plan.	(\$28,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

FINDING

LISD does not use cleanliness standards to ensure clean facilities and measure its custodial performance.

One method of accountability is following standards for each type of work performed. LISD does not have any custodial standards to ensure that the facilities are maintained to specific expectations and that the district is staffed appropriately.

In interviews with several of the LISD teachers, the review team learned that teachers do a lot of their own cleaning because the rooms are so dirty. One teacher commented about piles of dust and unclean floors. They also expressed concerns about the lack of soap and towels in the restrooms.

A standard of cleanliness must be appropriate to the area serviced, must avoid over cleaning as well as under cleaning and should be based primarily on the service performed, frequency of the service, work skills and the habits of the occupants. It should also be understood that cleaning for appearance is expensive. Frequency determines how often a floor should be swept or scrubbed and how often light fixtures should be cleaned. Time standards should be based on the building (design, use, age, state of repair), custodial facilities, occupant demands and many other constraints. However, based on once-a-day frequency and a five-day school week, an institutional standard of cleaning is possible using 125 to 200 annual work hours for each 1,000 square feet (gross) of floor space.

Recommendation 35:

Prepare a custodial plan to improve school cleanliness.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor establishes cleaning standards for all custodians to follow.	May 2002
2.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor trains staff on the new standards.	May 2002
3.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor performs routine inspections.	June 2002

4.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor uses standards to evaluate performance of custodial staff.	June 2002
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

B. FOOD SERVICES

LISD participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program, which is regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered by TEA. The LISD board, administration, school principals and the Food Services Department share the local responsibility for administration of these programs. As a participant in NSLP and School Breakfast Program, the Food Services Department receives federal reimbursement income and donated USDA food commodities for each meal served that meets federal requirements.

To receive federal reimbursement income as a participant in the NSLP, free or reduced-price lunches must be offered to all eligible children. The meals served also must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend no more than 30 percent of the meal's calories come from fat, with less than 10 percent from saturated fat. School lunches must provide one-third of the reference daily intake for protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories. School lunches must meet federal nutrition requirements, but decisions about which foods are served and how they are prepared are made by the Food Services Department. The USDA works with TEA and the Food Services Department to teach and motivate children to make healthy food choices.

FINDING

The LISD Food Services Department serves almost 300 children breakfast and lunch on a daily basis. The campus has one cafeteria and four food service workers who have each been with the district more than 10 years. The cafeteria operates on a conventional system serving meals prepared "from scratch" on a daily basis. The children arrive at school at 7:15 every morning. Pre-kindergarten through first grade classes are served breakfast in the cafeteria. Grades two through eight receive breakfast in their classrooms starting at 7:30. All grades eat in the cafeteria for lunch beginning at 10:50 and ending at 12:00. Serving times are illustrated in **Exhibit 4-3**.

Exhibit 4-3
Breakfast and Lunch Service Times

	Breakfast Service		Lunch Service	
	Start Time	Stop Time	Start Time	Stop Time

Lasara School	7:30	7:50	10:50	12:00
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Source: LISD Food Services Department.

A la carte menu items are not offered in the cafeteria.

LISD's food service payroll costs comprise 48 percent of its revenue, or 8 percent more than industry standards, as shown in **Exhibit 4-4**.

Exhibit 4-4
LISD Food Service Operating Expenditures as a Percent of Total Revenues
1999-2000

	Operating Expenditures	Total Revenues	Percent of Total Revenues
Payroll Costs	\$79,458	\$165,569	48.0%
Prof and Contracted Services	\$2,556	\$165,569	1.5%
Supplies and Materials	\$92,278	\$165,569	55.7%
Other Operating Costs	\$2,123	\$165,569	1.3%
Total	\$176,415	\$165,569	106.6%

Source: TEA, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 1999-2000.

LISD's payroll costs exceed industry standards because they include the costs for preparing the free breakfasts and lunches served to the community in the summer.

Meals per labor hour (MPLH) calculations are also used throughout the school foodservice industry to ensure proper staffing. MPLH is calculated by dividing the number of meals served by the total number of hours worked over a given time period.

The number of meals served is calculated using a standard industry methodology. Each lunch served equals one meal. Two breakfasts equal one meal. Therefore, to calculate a meal equivalent, divide the number of breakfasts served by two. The total dollar sales for a la carte items is divided by three, since industry standards equate \$3 in sales to one meal.

Exhibit 4-5 shows the calculation of meal equivalents used to determine the meals served each labor hour.

**Exhibit 4-5
LISD Meal Equivalents
October 2001**

Total Lunch Meal Equivalents 1 Lunch = 1 Meal Equivalent	Total Breakfast Meal Equivalents 2 Breakfasts = 1 Meal Equivalent	Total Meal Equivalents	Number of Serving Days in October	Daily Meal Equivalents Served
6,344	2,118	8,462	22	385

Source: LISD National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs Daily Attendance Report, April 2001.

The calculated LISD meal equivalent is 385. This falls into the 301-400 range of meal equivalents according to staffing guidelines for on-site production presented in **Exhibit 4-6**. This meal equivalent range equates to 14 MPLH and 22-29 total labor hours for producing meals.

**Exhibit 4-6
Staffing Guidelines for On-Site Meal Production
Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH) / Total Hours**

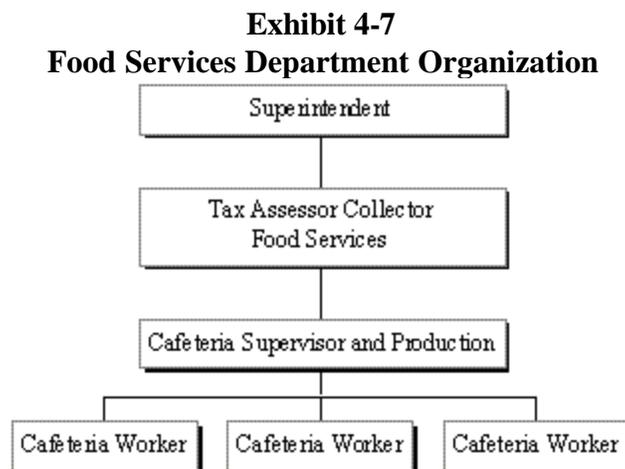
Number of Meal Equivalents	Conventional System MPLH	Conventional System Total Hours
Up to 100	8	9 - 12
101 - 150	9	12 - 16
151 - 200	10-11	16 - 17
201 - 250	12	17 - 20
251 - 300	13	20 - 22
301 - 400	14	22 - 29
401 - 500	14	29 - 35
501 - 600	15	35 - 40

601 - 700	16	40 - 43
701 - 800	17	43 - 47
800 +	18	47 +

Source: Adapted from Pannell-Martin, School Foodservice Management, Fifth Edition, 1999.

Each of the four cafeteria employees works from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM daily, or eight hour workdays. For four employees, this totals 32 daily labor hours. To determine if the district is overstaffed, the standard labor hours of 29 is subtracted from its actual labor hours of 32. The difference is three hours. Therefore, LISD appears to be slightly overstaffed in its cafeteria. The numbers are probably closer than the calculation indicates, since the LISD cafeteria workers also spend time delivering breakfasts to children in their classrooms, which is not taken into consideration in the industry standards.

The Tax Assessor Collector for the district also manages the Food Service operation. Approximately 75 percent of her time is spent managing the tax collecting process. The other 25 percent of her time she spends managing the Food Service operation, including distributing the menus, completing the participation sheets to receive federal funding and scheduling training for the staff in the summers. The Food Service supervisor is one of four production workers in the cafeteria and is responsible for planning the menus, purchasing the food and general cafeteria operations. **Exhibit 4-7** depicts the office's organizational structure.



Source: LISD Interview notes.

The Food Service operation is governed informally based on the extensive experience of the staff. The Tax Assessor Collector has been providing oversight of the cafeteria operations for 30 years. The Food Service supervisor has been with the district for over 30 years. To compliment the staff's experience, every summer they attend three days of training offered by Region 1. The staff is updated on the latest techniques in menu planning, sanitation methods and changing nutritional needs. In addition, the Food Service operation is part of the cooperative buying agreement offered through the Region 1. The Tax Assessor Collector attends the monthly meetings discussing the cooperative agreement at Region 1.

FINDING

The Food Service staff serves breakfast to children in grades two through eight in their rooms every morning. The food is served on disposable plates with disposable utensils. Milk and orange juice are also provided. The serving begins at 7:30 and is completed by 7:50. The teachers report that the children clean up after themselves and the disruption in the classroom is minimal. The children are more alert and attentive in class since they all receive breakfast.

Commendation

LISD serves breakfast to children in the classrooms to ensure that all children eat a nutritious breakfast.

FINDING

LISD is not planning its menus to take advantage of all free commodities offered to them, nor does it use all of its planned- assistance level money. LISD receives food commodities through the Texas Department of Human Services Commodities Distribution program. In fiscal year 2002, for example, it turned down commodities such as blackeyed peas, beef roasts, frozen chicken, frozen orange juice, frozen peaches, canned pears, corn, canned pineapples, frozen pears, green beans, and dried pinto beans, among other items declined.

LISD rolled over \$2,198 from the 2000-01 school year budget. These are funds for unused commodities. LISD is not ordering many items from the commodity distribution list that are available free to school districts.

Adjusting menus to make better use of commodities is the simplest, most direct way to use free commodities. In addition, when at all possible, districts should creatively attempt to adjust menus to use everything they get from the federal government.

Recommendation 36:

Use all available commodity resources to lower food costs to the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the Food Services supervisor to make use of all free commodities and adjust menus accordingly.	May 2002
2.	The Food Services supervisor orders all available free commodities and adjusts menus accordingly.	June 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4 OPERATIONS

C. TRANSPORTATION

LISD has its own bus fleet to transport students to and from school and extracurricular activities. The buses pick up all students in the district and transports them to Lasara Elementary School, where the pre-kindergarten through grade eight students are dropped. The buses then continue on to either Lyford Consolidated Independent School District or Raymondville Independent School District to drop off high school students. Since transportation requires significant initial capital investments and annual maintenance expenditures as well as high safety standards, the review team has evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's transportation operations. **Exhibit 4-8** provides a general overview of the district's transportation operations.

Exhibit 4-8
Size of Transportation in LISD
2000-01

	LISD
Number of buses	4
Annual budget	\$32,350
Annual Ridership	21,060
Miles driven a year	32,040

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01. Interview with Transportation Supervisor.

Exhibit 4-9 shows that the district's transportation expenditures have increased by over 13 percent from 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

Exhibit 4-9
LISD Transportation Expenditures
1996-97 through 2000-01

Year	Expenditures	Annual Percent Change	Total Percent Change
1996-97	\$30,674	-	-
1997-98	\$63,496	107%	-

1998-99	\$50,716	(20%)	-
1999-2000	\$34,800	(31%)	-
2000-01	\$32,350	(7%)	5%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

This increase in transportation expenditures is consistent with the district's overall increase of almost 11 percent in student enrollment for 1996-97 through 2000-01. The change in enrollment is shown in **Exhibit 4-10**.

Exhibit 4-10
Student Enrollment
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Lasara Elementary	280	270	305	287	310	10.7%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

Although LISD's transportation expenditures have increased over the last four years, its transportation operating cost for each student is the lowest when compared to the state and its peer districts. **Exhibit 4-11** shows that LISD spends \$121 for each student on its transportation operations compared to the state average of \$162 and the closest peer, La Villa, at \$149 for each student.

Exhibit 4-11
Comparison of Transportation Expenditures to Total Expenditures
1999-2000

District	Transportation Operating Expenditures	Total Operating Expenditures	Percent of Total Operating Expenditures	Student Enrollment	Cost for Each Student
San Isidro	\$115,449	\$2,735,061	4.2%	263	\$439
Santa Maria	\$50,215	\$4,125,765	1.2%	503	\$100
San Perlita	\$30,407	\$2,517,555	1.2%	298	\$102

Monte Alto	\$73,597	\$3,578,342	2.1%	444	\$166
La Villa	\$95,337	\$6,021,754	1.6%	640	\$149
Lasara	\$34,800	\$2,325,317	1.5%	287	\$121
State*	\$644,558,394	\$24,809,207,472	2.6%	3,990,735	\$162

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1999-2000. TEA, AEIS, 1999-2000.

Note: *Represents transportation operating and total operating expenses.

LISD's transportation operating expenditures as a percent of the district's total operating expenditures are low when compared with the state average and its peers. The district spends 1.5 percent of its total operating budget on transportation compared with the state average of 2.6 percent and only two of its peers spent less at 1.2 percent.

The LISD transportation fleet consists of four buses and two other vehicles as indicated by

Exhibit 4-12.

Exhibit 4-12
LISD Transportation Fleet
2001

Type of Vehicle	Total Number
Regular education buses	3
Spare regular education buses	0
Special education buses	1
Spare special education buses	0
Buses to be auctioned	0
Trucks and other vehicles	2
Total buses	6

Source: LISD Transportation Department.

The district operates one special education bus and three regular education buses. All are gasoline-powered buses except one diesel bus that was purchased in 2000 (**Exhibit 4-13**).

Exhibit 4-13
Summary of LISD Bus Fleet

Vehicle and Number	Type	Number of Passengers	Year Purchased	Fuel Type
Bus 9	Special Education	21	1990	Gas
Bus 10	Regular Education	71	1995	Gas
Bus 1	Regular Education	71	1999	Gas
Bus 8	Regular Education	71	2000	Diesel

Source: Interview with LISD Bus Driver.

The LISD Transportation Department consists of a supervisor who reports directly to the superintendent. The supervisor is in charge of both the maintenance and custodial functions and transportation. Transportation staff include two bus drivers and one paraprofessional who drives part time. The district uses an outside contractor for most of its maintenance.

One indicator of transportation management performance is cost for each mile. **Exhibit 4-14** shows cost for each mile for LISD compared with the state and its peers. As shown, LISD has the lowest cost for each mile for its regular education service, and only one peer has a lower cost for each mile for special education service of those districts that provide it.

Exhibit 4-14
Comparison of Cost for Each Mile for Regular and Special Education
1999-2000

District	Regular Cost for Each Mile	Special Ed Cost for Each Mile
San Perlita	\$2.002	\$0.000
La Villa	\$1.750	\$1.536
Monte Alto	\$1.609	\$1.479
San Isidro	\$1.482	\$0.000
Santa Maria	\$1.100	\$0.490
Lasara	\$0.848	\$1.372

State	\$2.045	\$2.198
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Source: TEA, School Transportation Operation Report, 1999-2000.

Other management indicators include ridership and mileage. Average ridership is the average number of students transported on buses each day, on either the morning or afternoon route. Mileage is the total miles the buses drive over the course of an entire day. As indicated in **Exhibit 4-15**, LISD's ridership and mileage have increased by 18 and 25 percent, respectively, from 1996-97 through 2000-01. The district receives funding from the state based on its ridership and mileage, and this amount has increased by almost 12 percent over the last five years. This is in line with the district's 11 percent increase in student enrollment.

Exhibit 4-15
LISD - Linear Density Calculation
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Average Number of Regular Riders	99	96	94	141	117	18.2%
Approved Daily Route Miles*	143	143	181	178	178	24.5%
Linear Density	0.693	0.530	0.534	0.792	0.657	64.7%
State allotment/mile**	\$0.88	\$0.68	\$0.68	\$0.68	\$0.79	N/A
Annual Mileage	25,704	25,704	32,598	32,040	32,040	24.6%
State Funding Allotment	\$22,620	\$17,479	\$22,167	\$21,787	\$25,312	11.9%
Percent Change from prior year	-	(22.7%)	26.8%	(1.7%)	16.2%	-

Source: TEA, School Transportation Route Services report, 1996-97 through 2000-01.

Note: *Total Annual Mileage divided by 180 days.

**Uses the state allotment calculated from the prior year.

FINDING

LISD does not have a bus replacement policy. As shown in **Exhibit 4-13**, all but one of LISD's buses are less than 10 years old. The oldest, the special education bus travels less than 10,000 miles per year.

While it is important to replace older school buses in order to take advantage of improvements in safety standards and designs, it is also important to have procedures and policies in place to determine when to replace buses, which ones to replace and what to look for when purchasing a new bus.

Based on an analysis of LISD's board policies, there is no policy on bus replacement. LISD has also not established any procedures or criteria for evaluating whether or not to dispose of a bus or for selecting new buses. Determining the bus most suitable and economical for the district requires analysis of the number of children to be transported in the next five to ten years, the density of the present and future population, road conditions, road building or other major changes requiring re-routing, school schedules and fuel use and availability (gasoline, diesel, propane/natural gas). The district purchased a new bus in 2000 to replace one of its older buses. However, the new bus uses diesel fuel instead of gasoline. All previously purchased buses run on gasoline. This will cause problems for the current mechanic who is not experienced in maintaining diesel buses and will not be economical for the district because it will not be able to order standard parts and supplies for its bus fleet.

There are also no guidelines or analysis for determining the best disposal opportunity/price. Finally, the district does not accumulate any maintenance cost history on its buses to help it determine which buses are costing the district too much money and should be replaced. Bus maintenance records can be quite valuable in analyzing which manufacturer's equipment is the most cost efficient for a particular district's operations.

Some factors to be considered in a bus replacement program are safety standards, size, engine type, fuel type and the type of driving that will occur. In 1977, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a set of safety standards for school bus design known as the Post-Department of Transportation bus safety standards. In addition, an analysis should be done of other districts with similar transportation needs to determine what type of bus has proved to be the best for the conditions encountered.

Although multiple buses may serve the needs of a particular district, the district should select the one that is the best fit based on the following:

wheel base and overall size; the manufacturer's rated seating capacity; safety and comfort; initial cost and fuel economy; ease and economy of maintenance; availability of parts and service; maneuverability given road/street conditions; suitability for climatic conditions and terrain; and general ease of driving.

Recommendation 37:

Develop a bus replacement policy.

The district should develop standard procedures on when to replace its vehicles. This should include a certain number of years, total mileage and maintenance costs. It should also look at its criteria for selecting new buses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor identifies the criteria to review when trying to determine whether to retire an existing bus from service.	May 2002
2.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor researches the best way to dispense of out-dated buses to maximize the return to the district.	June 2002
3.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor and the mechanic meet to define the standard requirements for buses to be used in the district.	July 2002
4.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor presents the replacement criteria, cash-flow projections, draft policy and bus dispensing options to the chief financial officer and the superintendent for approval.	August 2002
5.	The superintendent either approves or asks for changes to the proposal.	August 2002
6.	The superintendent presents proposed policy to the board for approval.	September 2002
7.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor writes a procedure to implement the policy within the district.	September 2002
8.	The Maintenance and Transportation supervisor implements the practice.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Appendix A

PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

As part of Lasara Independent School District performance review, a public forum was held in the school cafeteria on October 29, 2001. Members of the public were invited to record comments they have regarding the LISD education system. Community members and school staff who participated in the public forums gave their comments about the 12 areas under review. These comments illustrated perceptions of some 30 members of the community who attended LISD's public forum, and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The comments have been edited for brevity and decorum. The following is a summary of comments received by functional area as well as other comments.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

- I have worked as a para-educator for ten years I have gone to college at night my superintendent/principal have always been very supportive in helping me succeed.
- Hiring practices. Last year we lost an excellent reading teacher. Salary and Staffing. There are certain staff members (Superintendent, Principle, Curriculum Coordinator) all are not certified in the positions they hold, but do receive a large amount of money.
- Underpaid in district. Teacher assistants must have education. Are not paid as teachers when they are doing the teaching.
- They do not hire substitutes. They only use teacher assistants.
- Janitors got better raises than teachers.
- Our school is a good school, but our children need more. We need to restructure it to meet their needs.
- As a staff member, and parent, I feel that Lasara ISD does a great job in recruiting and hiring good people. Salaries are fairly competitive to other neighboring schools. Staff developments are offered regularly.
- Coach needs to have anger management
- Teacher aides credentials are at issue
- Curricula is old
- Teacher pushed into some students.
- Teachers, others getting involved at 8th grade students (principal and teacher)
- Teachers are pulling children's hair/physically get at kids

TRANSPORTATION

- Excellent. Safety always first! However the buses that travel to Raymondville and Lyford are over crowded there's too many students on the buses and no supervision but the bus driver.
- As I do not have any children riding the bus on a daily basis, I cannot truly say what bus safety/scheduling is like. As for field trips, safety is stressed enough times that almost all students follow rules.
- Problem with bus driver. Drivers yell at children and shook my daughter and everyone on the bus was laughing at my daughter. Even neighbors talked about this and not just about my daughter. Called the superintendent but wasn't here and then called the bus department. The director of buses laughed at her and he just hung up on her. Three bus drivers yell.
- Need monitors on buses. If children complain they are kicked off the bus.
- Drivers have 60-65 students. Kids stand in aisles while bus in motion.
- My concerns are when transporting children on the bus, I believe that every bus should have a bus driver and a monitor monitoring the bus while the Bus driver is driving. There is not sufficient monitoring. There is a lot that goes on the bus while the driver is driving, example: kids hitting each other, fighting, etc. Another example children being forgotten on the bus, I understand it can be an honest mistake but it does happen.
- Bus driver shook students
- Need help/monitors on buses to keep order
- Some buses overcrowded
- Some buses late
- Bus driver are another concern. There have been drivers here for fifteen years without a raise. (Why?) (Answer- No money) Why?

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Salaries for teacher's aide are extreme low. I feel their job is just as important as the teacher. The aide support for the teachers is without any doubt extremely important. The teachers would be lost without them. The aides should be respected more and aid more. Why don't aides have contracts?

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- I feel that Lasara ISD offers and enforces fair discipline policies. Their safety and security policies /programs ensure that all students remain risk-free. Even staff members are provided with an

acceptable secure environment. There is a visitor log where visitors must sign in. As a staff member, I try to make sure that all my visitors sign in at the office. Local law enforcement is (ex. Constable, sheriff dept. Fire dept.) Is invited regularly to attend and provide support for our school.

- Student discipline needs to be enforced more often and stricter.

FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

- Restrooms are dirty all the time both Junior High and elementary gym is never cleaned unless a game is going to be held.
- Playground is too old for the pre-K thru 4th grade. Kids are always getting hurt because some are not fixed. I think that they won't replace them until somebody gets hurt really bad.
- Our school is a very old building; I realize that our budget probably has a lot to do with us not having a better building for our kids to learn in. My concerns are the bathrooms for our kids we, or our kids go in there and the bathrooms are nasty smelling, sometimes we do not have soap, paper towels or toilet paper, we're concerned.
- Our bathrooms are horrific. Our bathrooms need to be torn down and reconstructed new. Upon entering the bathrooms the odor of sewage is clearly noticeable.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Because of the size of the community, most if not all community members are involved on a daily basis. Whenever there are any activities involved at the school, there are always parents willing to help teachers and the school. The Community Resource Center is always willing to open its doors for our school.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

- This school district runs a very organized school. The superintendent, regardless of all the negative publicity, does a fair job of running the school. As a teacher and parent, it is very distressing that parents are afraid to voice their concerns because they fear retaliation from teacher. As I have written before, I am a teacher and would not retaliate against a parent.
- District administrators cut a boy's pants legs off because they were too long .
- Staff in district related to board members.
- Money is being mismanaged by the district.
- Electricians have to give to district to get work.

- Parents pay for all trips, equipment is old and broken, facilities (girls no shower curtains) pay for gas.
- Falling
- 8th grade dropouts are now ed. aides.
- Strengthen parents involvement.
- Better organization downward.
- Authority does not flow.
- "My way or the highway" attitude by administrators.
- Special Education may be a problem. Spending
- The superintendent doesn't pay attention when you have a conference. Leaves conferences.

COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

- As a small school, we are not as advanced in computers or technology as other schools. However we do have a very supportive administration who are more than willing and open-minded to offer us as much computer and technology training as possible. We are now, through a technology grant, being supplied with newer more capable computers and software. Technology training is offered one a week for 1 hour after school.
- Computers are outdated
- Our children are falling behind in the technological world. Our classrooms all have computers, but they rarely work. Junior High rooms all have televisions however they are just there as decoration. We have a satellite, never has it been used to benefit the students.

PURCHASING

- I know about purchasing only what I read and follow in our district policy. All purchases are requested through purchase orders.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- This campus has been a recognized school district for 4 years. There is not a single school that does not have its share of concerns. Everything is open for improvement. Overall, this school district provides an excellent education to all its students. The district provides a variety of educational activities to its students. As a parent as well, I feel that my son is provided an excellent education by wonderful and caring teachers. I have worked in another school district and I feel that this school district is a great place to work.

- I believe that we have good teachers and that TAAS is a state law. But I feel as a parent that our children are under a lot of pressure. And as a teacher aid I feel we are under paid.
- Bottom line is there is personal conflict against the superintendent I think its more talk than anything else. It's all politics bottom line all negative this people don't attend are daily PTO meeting. This is a great school and teachers.
- I also have concerns on some teachers, I believe that teaching should be fun for a teacher and fun for a child, my concern is on teachers that yell from the time that children walk in the class till the time that it is time to leave. Children in this particular class that I am concerned about are nervous before they even reach that grade level then once they are in the grade level they are scared around the clock. What can we as parents do to ease our child's minds before they even get there?
- Teachers teach to TAAS
- Old Texts used
- Curriculum Controversial
- Kids not ready for high school.
- Need to teach English & writing & reading
- High school graduate can't read
- Pressure on kids to pass test
- "Children are First"
- Kids are being pressured on the test. Children are anxious
- For kids, if parent doesn't speak English are ignored.
- Counseling - Principal and Ms. Lerma
- No proactive counselors. No counselors
- Is there a counseling budget? Are there job descriptions for the counselors?
- Inadequate counseling curriculum
- Curriculum is speed timed?
- Textbooks are outdated.
- Too much emphasis on TAAS, not learning process
- No emphasis on non-TAAS curriculum
- Children who graduate are not prepared
- Not learning history in junior high
- Children in this district either leave or left behind
- Children are burned out.
- Teachers told that they are to teach to TAAS
- LA teacher - told to teach test, throw out test
- Books are old
- Kids are not ready for high school, even though they pass the TAAS? Many students are not able to handle high school English and they're not ready for college.
- Take 8th graders pass the TAAS and but fail a regular English class

- Kids coming out of high school. who can't read.
- Parent said Admin. says teachers only responsible for the TAAS.
- Kids go to Raymondville and Lyford

FOOD SERVICE

- I also have a concern on Food Service; my concern is if a child has a food allergy or shall I say several food allergies with Dr's written notice, why does a parent have to have to be given a hard time about having a special menu made for this child?
- Mostly homemade and good!
- Excellent! Our children get fed really well. I think our food service is one of the best!

OTHER COMMENTS

- No safety for students on away buses.
- Kids that are shipped to Raymondville, children are being shaken on buses.
- No problems are reported. High school students are lost.
- Children brought tequila to school. Some kids told the principal. Girl threatened by school.
- Play blame the victim in the district. Girl brought knife to school and condom to school. Other children expelled for pocketknife.
- Cut off the pant legs of kid in front of students in auditorium.
- Teachers yell at students. 3rd grade
- Student code of conduct is one way.
- Teachers tell students they are worthless and won't amount to anything. They are, the people hear tonight, labeled troublemakers.
- Problems with school board.
- Board needs to not be elected at-large
- Employees and teachers aides
- Where is money going for books and computers?
- They didn't use GT money except for trips.
- Superintendent wanted parents fingerprinted before they come into the schools. Parents are required to sign in at administration and minimal background checks are performed on them and used to intimidate them.
- Treating the kids as criminals. Parents are not notified when children get hurt or when they get in trouble. Children put in principal's office and left there.
- Kids are sent to Lyford for Special Education.
- Play favorites - children of school board members are part of community they are glossed over. Now connected parent's students are crushed.
- Parental Involvement - parents bicker with each other.

- Insurance for children injured does not cover the actual costs and only certain doctors does not cover
- Incident with child. Achilles tendon cut. Came to talk to superintendent. Child was home because of operation. She tried to get home school. Prior year he was expelled, accident was this year. Thinks they were picking on him because the prior problem (found a knife). Threatened to not let the child graduate. He was doing well in school until then. He would ignore her. No explanation of why he would not provide services. She had someone from the hospital try to help her get services, after awhile got some services. Child was withdrawn without her consent or knowledge. After TAAS they reinstated him. Records were changed to eliminate the withdrawal. This incident led the child to go to Mexico after graduating. He may now come back. Has shaken the kids confidence and is not in high school. Teachers are intimidated. One teacher written up for not smiling at principal. Only certain parents will Superintendent listen too. (and has another child still in district in 4th grade.)
- Tech assistant (demoted to)
- Technology coordinator is related to the superintendent
- Daughter-in-law is the new bookkeeper
- Replaces competent people with unqualified people
- Problems with son in the 4th grade. Came here crying and not want to go to school. Bully bullying him. She talked with the superintendent who wouldn't look at her or make eye contact. (Last year) started again this year. Older child's beaten a younger child and the superintendent said he was going to look into it, but he did nothing, same as last year. Son doesn't want to come to school anymore.
- Child was left back for 4 years. Teacher kept son in 8th grade for 4 years. Parent said the teacher would not let him pass. Son dropped out of school because of embarrassment. Teachers calling children stupid to their faces. The son was told he was just a stupid donkey. [District note: The district dropout rate has been 0 percent for several years.]
- Lots of kids labeled as troublemakers, not allowed to go on any trips.
- The superintendent supposedly instituted parent policies because parents were fighting. District is peaceful now. Feels the superintendent did the right thing.
- Drivers start buses and kids fall down. She can't get the superintendent to do anything. Wants him to look into it.
- Daughter went to clinic needed therapy, talked with daughter has speech impediment. Lip service from the district but they don't do anything. Can't get her enrolled in Head Start.

- Taxes - Superintendent -questioned a person re: Late taxes person felt intimidate school was suing dispute of payment Banned from school property
- As small as we are we shouldn't be having this many problems.
- Bats, Mildew....
- Showers dirty and no curtains.
- Thrown out, alcohol
- Can hire less qualified teachers.
- Nepotism
- Check accident statistics
- Under pay paraprofessionals
- Arbitrary credentials
- LISD don't hire substitutes
- Nepotism in hiring
- One too many "professionals" we need educated and certified administrators to teach our children!
- Playground - old. Made of steel kids get hurt easily
- While 2 or 3 maintenance people are watering the plants, who is keeping the facilities clean. They're going the dump!
- Internal Audit will tell you everything!
- Make it (audit) public where people can feel free to request info without intimidation.
- Duplication in Technology Coordination
- Computers Old
- Superintendent not responsive
- Parent had to locate spec. Ed for child. District would not help.
- No organization due to lack of communication to teachers from administration.

Appendix B

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

N=46
Demographic Data

1. Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Answer				
	26.1%	60.9%	13.0%				
2. Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American		Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Answer
	4.4%	0.0%		80.4%	0.0%	4.4%	10.8%
3. How long have you lived in Lasara ISD?				0-5 years	6-10 years	11 or more	No Answer
				21.7%	6.5%	69.6%	2.2%
4. What grade level(s) does your child(ren) attend?	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third		
	19.6%	8.7%	8.7%	13.4%	10.8%		
	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth		
	19.6%	10.8%	17.4%	34.8%	10.8%		
	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth			
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%			

A. District Organization and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	19.6%	19.6%	15.2%	21.7%	23.9%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	17.4%	19.6%	10.9%	26.1%	26.1%

3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	21.7%	26.1%	4.4%	13.0%	34.8%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	19.6%	19.6%	13.0%	15.2%	32.6%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	The district provides a high quality of services.	21.7%	21.7%	15.2%	28.3%	13.0%
6.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	21.7%	32.6%	4.4%	23.9%	17.4%
7.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	13.0%	13.0%	45.7%	17.4%	10.9%
8.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	8.7%	13.0%	52.2%	17.4%	8.7%
9.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a) Reading	32.6%	34.8%	4.3%	19.6%	8.7%
	b) Writing	32.6%	32.6%	4.3%	19.6%	10.9%
	c) Mathematics	32.6%	41.3%	4.3%	13.0%	8.7%
	d) Science	30.4%	41.3%	2.2%	17.4%	8.7%
	e) English or Language Arts	32.6%	32.6%	6.5%	19.6%	8.7%
	f) Computer Instruction	30.4%	30.4%	10.9%	19.6%	8.7%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	28.3%	43.5%	6.5%	13.0%	8.7%
	h) Fine Arts	26.1%	28.3%	15.2%	21.7%	8.7%

	i) Physical Education	30.4%	34.8%	10.9%	15.2%	8.7%
	j) Business Education	10.9%	13.0%	41.3%	23.9%	10.9%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	13.0%	10.9%	45.7%	21.7%	8.7%
	l) Foreign Language	10.9%	17.4%	47.8%	17.4%	6.5%
10.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	28.3%	37.0%	8.7%	17.4%	8.7%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	21.7%	41.3%	4.4%	19.6%	13.0%
	c) Special Education	19.6%	30.4%	10.9%	23.9%	15.2%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	6.5%	32.6%	28.3%	19.6%	13.0%
	e) Dyslexia program	4.4%	15.2%	30.4%	34.8%	15.2%
	f) Student mentoring program	6.5%	28.3%	30.4%	23.9%	10.9%
	g) Advanced placement program	6.5%	23.9%	32.6%	26.1%	10.9%
	h) Literacy program	17.4%	37.0%	15.2%	19.6%	10.9%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	10.9%	15.2%	41.3%	17.4%	15.2%
	j) Summer school programs	19.6%	47.8%	15.2%	8.7%	8.7%
	k) Alternative education programs	8.7%	28.3%	37.0%	17.4%	8.7%
	l) "English as a second language" program	15.2%	39.1%	13.0%	19.6%	13.0%
	m) Career counseling program	10.9%	17.4%	43.5%	17.4%	10.9%
	n) College counseling program	10.9%	13.0%	47.8%	17.4%	10.9%
	o) Counseling the parents	17.4%	15.2%	28.3%	23.9%	15.2%

	of students					
	p) Drop out prevention program	8.7%	13.0%	45.7%	19.6%	13.0%
11.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	13.0%	17.4%	17.4%	43.5%	8.7%
12.	Teacher turnover is low.	19.6%	19.6%	45.7%	8.7%	6.5%
13.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	19.6%	32.6%	6.5%	19.6%	21.7%
14.	A substitute teacher rarely teaches my child.	15.2%	37.0%	26.1%	8.7%	13.0%
15.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	21.7%	50.0%	21.7%	4.4%	2.2%
16.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	26.1%	39.1%	8.7%	15.2%	10.9%
17.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	34.8%	37.0%	15.2%	10.9%	2.2%
18.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	26.1%	34.8%	13.0%	15.2%	10.9%
19.	The district provides a high quality education.	23.9%	26.1%	15.2%	15.2%	19.6%
20.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	21.7%	19.6%	21.7%	23.9%	13.0%

C. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	23.9%	23.9%	15.2%	21.7%	15.2%
22.	District facilities are	23.9%	37.0%	10.9%	15.2%	13.0%

	open for community use.					
23.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help students and school programs.	19.6%	23.9%	10.9%	19.6%	26.1%

D. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff, and the board provide input into facility planning.	15.2%	23.9%	15.2%	30.4%	15.2%
25.	Schools are clean.	19.6%	37.0%	6.5%	8.7%	28.3%
26.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	21.7%	37.0%	8.7%	6.5%	26.1%
27.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	19.6%	26.1%	17.4%	13.0%	23.9%
28.	The district uses very few portable buildings.	10.9%	45.7%	17.4%	15.2%	10.9%
29.	Emergency maintenance is handled expeditiously.	15.2%	41.3%	17.4%	6.5%	19.6%

E. Asset and Risk Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
30.	My property tax bill is reasonable for the educational services delivered.	17.4%	45.7%	13.0%	15.2%	8.7%
31.	Board members and administrators do a good job explaining the use of tax dollars.	15.2%	15.2%	23.9%	13.0%	32.6%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	13.0%	17.4%	37.0%	17.4%	15.2%
33.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	10.9%	23.9%	23.9%	8.7%	32.6%
34.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	13.0%	15.2%	30.4%	15.2%	26.1%
35.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	8.7%	23.9%	28.3%	10.9%	28.3%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	17.4%	43.5%	6.5%	10.9%	21.7%
37.	Textbooks are in good shape.	17.4%	47.8%	4.4%	8.7%	21.7%
38.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	23.9%	43.5%	0.0%	15.2%	17.4%

H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	My child regularly purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.	10.9%	30.4%	28.3%	10.9%	19.6%
40.	The school breakfast	34.8%	60.9%	2.2%	2.2%	0.0%

	program is available to all children.					
41.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	32.6%	39.1%	2.2%	13.0%	13.0%
42.	Food is served warm.	41.3%	34.8%	6.5%	17.4%	0.0%
43.	Students have enough time to eat.	19.6%	54.4%	8.7%	15.2%	2.2%
44.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	17.4%	60.9%	8.7%	13.0%	0.0%
45.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	17.4%	56.5%	17.4%	6.5%	2.2%
46.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	21.7%	50.0%	13.0%	2.2%	13.0%
47.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	19.6%	45.7%	10.9%	8.7%	15.2%
48.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	30.4%	43.5%	10.9%	6.5%	8.7%

I. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	My child regularly rides the bus.	4.4%	21.7%	37.0%	19.6%	17.4%
50.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	8.7%	19.6%	47.8%	6.5%	17.4%
51.	The length of the student's bus ride is reasonable.	8.7%	19.6%	50.0%	17.4%	4.4%
52.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	13.0%	37.0%	30.4%	8.7%	10.9%
53.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	10.9%	23.9%	54.4%	0.0%	10.9%
54.	The bus stop is within	17.4%	19.6%	47.8%	4.4%	10.9%

	walking distance from our home.					
55.	Buses arrive and depart on time.	13.0%	28.3%	39.1%	15.2%	4.4%
56.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	15.2%	34.8%	45.7%	0.0%	4.4%
57.	Buses seldom break down.	15.2%	19.6%	47.8%	4.4%	13.0%
58.	Buses are clean.	15.2%	23.9%	39.1%	13.0%	8.7%
59.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	17.4%	23.9%	39.1%	6.5%	13.0%
60.	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	19.6%	19.6%	43.5%	4.4%	13.0%

J. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
61.	Students feel safe and secure at school.	37.0%	32.6%	6.5%	21.7%	2.2%
62.	School disturbances are infrequent.	26.1%	41.3%	21.7%	4.4%	6.5%
63.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	43.5%	32.6%	17.4%	4.4%	2.2%
64.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	41.3%	28.3%	10.9%	13.0%	6.5%
65.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	34.8%	28.3%	10.9%	13.0%	13.0%
66.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	23.9%	15.2%	50.0%	0.0%	10.9%
67.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	21.7%	8.7%	56.5%	0.0%	13.0%

68.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	32.6%	34.8%	21.7%	2.2%	8.7%
69.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	32.6%	17.4%	15.2%	19.6%	15.2%
70.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	28.3%	21.7%	23.9%	17.4%	8.7%

K. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
71.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	21.7%	34.8%	19.6%	17.4%	6.5%
72.	Computers are new enough to be useful to teach students.	26.1%	37.0%	10.9%	8.7%	17.4%
73.	The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	26.1%	34.8%	4.4%	10.9%	23.9%
74.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills	23.9%	21.7%	17.4%	13.0%	23.9%
75.	Students have easy access to the internet.	30.4%	41.3%	8.7%	6.5%	13.0%

Appendix B

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The narrative comments below reflect the perceptions and opinions of parent survey respondents.

- I, as a parent, have had my children at Lasara ISD, and attending school here myself. I am very proud of our school district. If I have questions, I can call our principle or superintendent and they have an answer for me, as soon as possible. My child is getting a great education with caring teachers. And, he is getting prepared not only for high school but college.
- Pues, a mi me gusta mucho como trabajan aqui en Lasara ISD los maestros, porque les ponen atención a los niños.
English translation: Well, I like a lot how the teachers work here in Lasara ISD, because they give attention to the children.
- There is so much going on at Lasara ISD that I really can't decide where to start...Among writer's concerns have to do as follows: the 5th grade teachers do not teach English. They tell the students that Social Studies takes place of English. The superintendent has said that they don't need to teach the class because the teachers are responsible for the TAAS only. The Special Education class is also being misused. The superintendent has no knowledge of what goes on with that class. The paraprofessional is left alone with a room full of students. Last year the paraprofessional had a problem while he was all by himself, he had to get a lawyer. The school did not do a thing to help him. The school does not have a counselor. It has two people that are certified to be counselors, but they don't do any counseling. Most if not all the program such as Gifted and Talented, Bilingual Education/ESL, and Career and Technology are not being used properly. I know for a fact that the Gifted and Talented program didn't do anything last year. The only thing they did was taking the students skating at the end of the year. The years before, all they do is cook a meal for the needy during Thanksgiving. The students are only given the title Gifted and Talented because it looks good on paper. ESL is used very seldom, and not in all subject areas or many of the classes. The curriculum director isn't able to provide adequate help to the teachers with leadership on the overall instructional program of the district. She is also the person responsible to order the textbooks, and some of the books are 11 years old and some of the classes don't have enough books for all the students. Some ESL tests given were also outdated. The last one and I could say a lot more, but because of

time and paper I'll stop after this. The board, who should be listening to everyone's concerns can't be of any help to anyone, the board is divided, and three members who have served for 25 years will not guide the new ones. They have managed to involve a fourth member and now that they are in control, they abuse their power. The superintendent calls it "my board," because they listen to only him. The board does not allow anybody more than three minutes to address a problem. They don't care how serious the problem is, so because of this people shy away from even going to the board meetings. Thank you for your time. Please, I beg you, help our small community. The has managed to divide our community because of his involvement in politics.

- Like anything else, I feel there is always room for improvement.
- Lasara ISD is centered in a peaceful community. Where distractions to school officials is minimal. They can concentrate better in other areas. Areas for improvement: Rest Rooms and Library is small not enough books for proper ages, librarian who is competent administration needs to allow teachers input. This might say it all!! When my child tells me that why should he pass a test when the superintendent does not have too?!
- I feel they do a great job with the resources available to them. A new school is on the way. My daughter is in a portable building at this time. Hopefully not for long. Great job LISD.
- The superintendent wants only emphasis on the TAAS; therefore, the important basics of Reading, Writing, Math are not covered. Also, board members have been in the district for too long. Parents are discouraged from community involvement because of the leadership.
- I believe that teachers and the principal and other people in the school should all get along. The superintendent should have more control over the schools and not have favorites.
- I would like to comment that in my opinion, there is no better school in the Valley than Lasara ISD. It was the place where I went to school and it is the only place where I want my children to get their education. The teachers are the best to be found, the facilities are more than adequate, the computer labs are technologically sound and even the cafeteria food is very good. We make it a practice to eat with our children in the cafeteria at least once a month. We have no complaints about the food, the cafeteria staff or the cafeteria itself. It is sad to say, though, that we seem to have a handful of individuals who do not agree with the way situations are handled in the school district. Specifically, they feel the superintendent is not adequate enough to manage his position as head of the school and administration. They couldn't be further from the truth. In my opinion, these people should focus their energy on promoting the school that is teaching and benefiting

their children and grandchildren rather than bashing the school's image into the ground. This negativity will do nothing but eventually hurt the kids. I would also like to comment on the Lasara School Board members. True, some of the members have given over 20 years of their time and devotion for this school. They have the experience necessary to make the proper financial decisions they must ultimately face when running a school. Having these members as part of the board is a valuable asset, not a liability. Experience still does counts, especially when my children's education is at stake.

- Lasara school has high TAAS score and is state recognized. Children love to go to school. Students drop-off zone is not safe or have enough space. Teacher's aides are not qualified.
- Get rid of the school board and superintendent. We are all very worried about our children's education.
- Our superintendent makes our school look bad. Please clean up our school. We are tired of weak excuses. They will let us see the financial reports but they want to know why we want to see them! Some of the cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly, but not all of them.
- Classrooms are being poorly maintained by custodians; teachers have to clean rooms. Playground equipment is not being upgraded. Cafeteria staff is not courteous to students, and teacher assistants. Students are not being served full meals. I feel that a teacher's assistant's yearly salary of \$9,500 is not enough to get by these days for the responsibilities that their left with when the teachers are not around.
- I strongly believe that in order for the students to have respect for their school, they also have to respect their principal and superintendent and I believe that in this school the superintendent doesn't have it (respect) because he doesn't even have the credentials for his position. We at Lasara ISD need a respected, educated, understanding superintendent. (HELP) to better our school. Thank you!
- I am concerned about the unfair treatment that the Superintendent, is receiving. He has pulled the school up and it has been recognized for 4 years in a row. I don't understand why this is necessary.
- To Whom It May Concern, I think the Lasara School should have some classes for the kids that are slow in learning. That way he or she can have more time given to them from the teacher. I know they can learn if given the more time from the teachers. Some kids are smart but not enough time for them to understand.
- It's a great place for my child. She is comfortable and I feel safe at school.

- Lasara school has high TAAS score and is state recognize. Children love to go to school. They feel safe. They are praise and appreciate, but the student drop-off zone is not safe or spacious enabling parents to have easy access to zone.
- Well thank you very much for sending this survey. When I got this in the mail and read it. I was so glad that someone is finally taking action, because we are concerned parents and taxpayers too! I did have a concern and I have got to tell you all about my experience, I have an 8 year old that was left in the school bus last year, he rides or shall I say used to ride the bus from school to daycare everyday until this happened. It was a hot day and the bus is about 45 minutes a ride, my child fell asleep and when they got to the bus stop and daycare, all the kids got off the bus driver nor the daycare caregivers remember my son and went about the routine and he stayed on the bus. Well realized that my son was not there until they made the phone call to the school and realized that my son was still on the bus with the bus driver. He was still asleep and finally the bus driver was being contacted by cell phone, my son was then dropped off after an hour and 15 minutes of riding the hot bus. I have to say that I did see a negligence on both parts. Daycare and the bus driver! As far as educational I feel that this school is doing a good job, of course there are down sides to everything, I do see some concerns and hopefully things will get better for our kids education's sake.
- Pre-K need to have their own play area outdoors. Present playground equipment dangerous for them. As a teacher at Lasara I.S.D. I feel that all our staff genuinely cares about their students. Some teachers go over and beyond their duties. I feel that more programs or incentives need to b put in place to help out low achieving students. More training in ESL for teachers. GT program is in name only Pre-K needs a curriculum to use. Teachers are left to fend for themselves in this grade level. ESL help not enough in elementary. We have a good school. However it is not an excellent school. Our children deserve more! Curriculum and instruction supervisor does not do enough for our students. Our children are falling behind. Teachers need more training in ESL strategies. Incentive programs are greatly needed for positive learning to take place.
- Well for me, I like how they work here in Lasara ISD. The teachers are very attentive. They pay attention to the children.
- I am well satisfied with the Lasara ISD school. They have good teaching staff and all the staff are very friendly.
- The superintendent is not respected, but the board will not get rid of him. They don't hire any substitutes. They have some quality teachers. If you asked for a copy of financial reports you have to involve a lawyer. All students receive free lunches. Few teachers

know how to teach computer science and other technology-related courses.

- I have lived in the Lasara 46 years and also attended Lasara ISD my 5 children also have attended Lasara ISD. I had no problems until the past 6 years since the current superintendent. I have been treated like I was no one, step-on and etc. I have been finger printed, treated liked a criminal and Lasara ISD has some staff that has criminal records. I think Lasara ISD needs new board members, new teachers, principals, parent coordinator (definitely) and especially a new certified superintendent, not like the superintendent not certified for 6 years and the board continues to keep him in the school and feed him with our tax money. The reason I say this is because, before each board meeting, or before people come in (very little people attend) they are having a nice dinner with all the trimmings. We don't have real bad gang members, but our school board and superintendent is a group, or gang group stays together if something or someone says or does wrong to the district they either cover it up or they don't listen to the parent that has a problem. I have even heard them laughing at times, but some situations. They even go against the parent sometimes, the children are treated wrong because the parent spoke up.
- Lasara ISD was once a district that was respected personally and professionally. Currently staff morale to very low and are afraid for their jobs. Teachers don't feel safe exercising creativity. School board is inexperienced in managing the school, as is evident in their support for the superintendent. He has been teaching at the expense of educating children the right way. Bottom line is that he needs to be removed. The boards political games have kept him there too long.

Appendix C

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

N=8
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Answer				
	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%				
2. Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American		Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Answer
	12.5%	0.0%		87.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3. How long have you been employed by Lasara ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Answer	
	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	
4. What grade(s) do you teach this year?	Pre-Kindergarten						
	Kindergarten						
	First						
	Second						
	Third						
	25.04%						
	25.0%						
37.5%							
37.5%							
37.5%							
Fourth							
Fifth							
Sixth							
Seventh							
Eighth							
50.0%							
50.5%							
50.5%							
50.0%							
50.0%							
Ninth							
Tenth							
Eleventh							
Twelfth							
0.0%							
0.0%							
0.0%							
0.0%							

A. District Organization and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%

3.	School board members work well with the superintendent.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
4.	The school board has a good image in the community.	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	62.5%	12.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
7.	Central administration is efficient.	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
8.	Central administration supports the educational process.	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
9.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
11.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
12.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	37.5%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%
13.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%

14.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
15.	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	37.5%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
16.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
17.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a) Reading	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	b) Writing	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
	c) Mathematics	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	d) Science	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	e) English or Language Arts	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	f) Computer Instruction	37.5%	25.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	h) Fine Arts	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	i) Physical Education	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	j) Business Education	12.5%	12.5%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	25.0%	12.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	l) Foreign Language	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
18.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%

	c) Special Education	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	0.0%	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	e) Dyslexia program	25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	f) Student mentoring program	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%
	g) Advanced placement program	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	h) Literacy program	37.5%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	25.0%
	j) Summer school programs	62.5%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
	k) Alternative education programs	12.5%	62.5%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
	l) "English as a Second Language" program	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	25.0%
	m) Career counseling program	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	n) College counseling program	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
	p) Drop out prevention program	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%
19.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	12.5%	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%
20.	Teacher turnover is low.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
21.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	75.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
22.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
23.	Teachers are rewarded	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	25.0%

	for superior performance.					
24.	Teachers are counseled about less-than-satisfactory performance.	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
25.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
26.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
27.	The students-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
28.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	75.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%

C. Personnel Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
29.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
30.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%
31.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
32.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
33.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
34.	The district operates an effective staff	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%

	development program.					
35.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
36.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
37.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
38.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
39.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	25.0%	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	25.0%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
41.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	12.5%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%
42.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
43.	District facilities are open for community use.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%

E. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
44.	The district plans facilities far enough in the future to support enrollment growth.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
45.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
46.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
47.	The quality of new construction is excellent.	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
48.	Schools are clean.	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
49.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	75.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
50.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
51.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
52.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%
53.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
54.	Financial reports are	62.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%

	allocated fairly and equitably at my school.					
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G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
55.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
56.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%
57.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
58.	Vendors are selected competitively.	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%
59.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
60.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	37.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
61.	Textbooks are in good shape.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
62.	The school library meets students' needs for books and other resources.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
64.	Food is served warm.	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

65.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
66.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
67.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
68.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%
69.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

I. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
70.	School disturbances are infrequent.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
71.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
72.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
73.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
74.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%
75.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%
76.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
77.	Students receive fair and	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%

	equitable discipline for misconduct.					
78.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%

J. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
79.	Students regularly use computers.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
80.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
81.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
82.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
83.	The district meets students' needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
84.	The district meets students' needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	50.0%	12.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%
85.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Appendix C

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The narrative comments below reflect the perceptions and opinions of teacher survey respondents.

- The education performance here is great. We all work as a team and are ready to help each other out. Ideas are shared, which helps in all area. Our students are great and eager to learn. We have the utmost respect ad support by our administrators, school board and community. Lasara ISD is a great place to work with. I am proud to be part of this "family"
- I worked in Raymondville I.S.D. for over 20 years then moved to Lasara ISD These past few years here have been my happiest! Although it is a small school it is competitive to any other! Teachers and administrators I've had for nearly 10 years here have been great and caring for the educational needs for our students. Here, we consider our students needs first. This school district is great. It is not perfect, but we manage to take care of situations when they arise. The administration, teachers, and support staff are friendly and helpful. Student needs are not. School board members are visible and accessible in the community. We love our school and appreciate all the financial support we can get.
- Lasara School is a unique school! Amidst the negative publicity it is under at this time. I still think it is a great school with super students, dedicated teachers, and a very supportive administration. As for the educational performance. We must be doing something right because we have been a recognized district for several years. An exemplary status is now our goal and if administration and staff continue to work in the way we have been working, our goal will be reached.
- I think that I have just wasted ink on this survey and that nothing will come from it.
- I taught for ten years in a highly disciplined and drug free school in Dallas before joining the Lasara ISD staff. I am beginning my twenty-fifth year with the Lasara ISD in the same type of environment. I work with the tops in administrators who have been most generous in providing materials and equipment for my elementary science lab. Our district has done well under the leadership of our superintendent.
- I have worked at several school districts before coming to Lasara and I can say that I plan to stay here for a long time. We have things or concerns that come up; however problems are taken care

of right away. These problems are minor compared to the problems of other schools. Teachers and student's needs are first at this school. We have super administration at our campus both superintendent and principal when I want to purchase supplies or want to attend an in service to meet my student's needs I get an O.K. on all that is necessary to help my students succeed!

- Truly "nothing is more important than education. "Our district has wonderful, intelligent educators that are lacking in administrative support. For so long. I have asked the administrative staff for assistance in curriculum development and design as well as schedule changes to accommodate a writing class. I was required to teach English and composition writing on one 45-minute time frame. Things changed last year, and I did get that request but only because four board member's children were in my class...much happened between the inception of my request and the present: I have been severely penalized and just two weeks ago written up for not smiling/greeting them. (I am too broken to do so.) To punish me for requesting to be placed on the school board agenda during the summer my husband, who has been an administrator for the district for years, was demoted to a job held by paraprofessionals. He is now assisting teachers in the computer lab. Luckily, he retained his salary. The superintendent hired his cousin to do the job my husband would do. He must be called to drive in from 25 miles away when our machines are down. There are times when we must wait for days and even weeks for his assistance. The district is spending needless amounts of money to pay (the Superintendent's cousin's wages when my husband who designed the infrastructure sits in a lab. The superintendent and principal who (withdrew from School) dropped a student without parental consent for the sake of better TAAS scores, are not admirable administrators nor are they ethical in several of their practices. PLEASE, PLEASE HELP US!!!!!!

Appendix D

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

N=12
Demographic Data

1. Gender (Optional)						
Male	33.3%	Female	66.7%	No Answer	0.0%	
2. Ethnicity (Optional)						
Anglo	25.0%	African American	0.0%	Hispanic	75.0%	
Asian	0.0%	Other	0.0%	No Answer	0.0%	
3. How long have you been employed by Lasara ISD?						
1-5 years	66.7%	6-10 years	8.3%	11-15 years	0.0%	
16-20 years	8.3%	20+ years	16.7%			
4. Are you a(n):						
a. administrator	25.0%	b. clerical staffer	16.7%			
c. support staffer	33.3%	No Answer	25.0%			
5. How long have you been employed in this capacity by Lasara ISD?						
1-5 years	83.3%	6-10 years	8.3%	11-15 years	0.0%	
16-20 years	0.0%	20+ years	0.0%	No Answer	8.4%	

A. District Organization and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	58.3%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	58.3%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%

3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	58.3%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	58.3%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
5.	Central administration is efficient.	58.3%	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
6.	Central administration supports the educational process.	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
7.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	58.3%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	75.0%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
9.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	66.7%	8.3%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
10.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	33.3%	25.0%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%
11.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	41.7%	25.0%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
12.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a) Reading	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	b) Writing	58.3%	25.0%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
	c) Mathematics	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%

	d) Science	8.3%	50.0%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%
	e) English or Language Arts	50.0%	25.0%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
	f) Computer Instruction	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	h) Fine Arts	50.0%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%	8.3%
	i) Physical Education	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	j) Business Education	25.0%	50.0%	8.3%	0.0%	16.7%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	25.0%	8.3%	50.0%	0.0%	16.7%
	l) Foreign Language	41.7%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	8.3%
13.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	41.7%	25.0%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%
	c) Special Education	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	16.7%	8.3%	58.3%	0.0%	16.7%
	e) Dyslexia program	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%
	f) Student mentoring program	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	g) Advanced placement program	25.0%	16.7%	50.0%	0.0%	8.3%
	h) Literacy program	50.0%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%	8.3%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	0.0%	8.3%
	j) Summer school programs	58.3%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
	k) Alternative education programs	41.7%	16.7%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%

	l) English as a Second Language program	41.7%	25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%
	m) Career counseling program	33.3%	16.7%	41.7%	8.3%	0.0%
	n) College counseling program	16.7%	25.0%	58.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
	p) Dropout prevention program	33.3%	8.3%	50.0%	8.3%	0.0%
14.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%
15.	Teacher turnover is low.	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
16.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
17.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	75.0%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
18.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%
19.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	25.0%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	8.3%
20.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
21.	The student-teacher ratio is reasonable.	75.0%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
22.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
23.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

C. Personnel Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	41.7%	25.0%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%
25.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	41.7%	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
26.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
27.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	25.0%	25.0%	41.7%	8.3%	0.0%
28.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	25.0%	33.3%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%
29.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	41.7%	33.3%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
30.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
31.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	41.7%	16.7%	25.0%	8.3%	8.3%
32.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	41.7%	25.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%
33.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	33.3%	33.3%	33.4%	0.0%	0.0%
34.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	8.3%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	50.0%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
35.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
36.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	41.7%	8.3%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%
37.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	50.0%	25.0%	8.3%	16.7%	0.0%
38.	District facilities are open for community use.	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%

E. Facilities Use And Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	58.3%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
40.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	50.0%	8.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%
41.	Schools are clean.	41.7%	33.3%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
42.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%	16.7%	0.0%
43.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
44.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	58.3%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
45.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	41.7%	16.7%	33.3%	8.3%	0.0%
46.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	41.7%	16.7%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%
47.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	58.3%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%
48.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	50.0%	16.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	58.3%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
50.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	50.0%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	8.3%
51.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	41.7%	33.3%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
52.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	33.3%	33.3%	8.3%	8.3%	16.7%
53.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	41.7%	50.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
54.	Textbooks are in good	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%

	shape.					
55.	The school library meets students' needs for books and other resources for students.	58.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

H. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
56.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
57.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
58.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	58.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
59.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	33.3%	8.3%	58.3%	0.0%	0.0%
60.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
61.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
62.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	58.3%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	8.3%

I. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	Students regularly use computers.	91.7%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
64.	Students have regular	83.3%	8.3%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%

	access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.					
65.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
66.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
67.	The district meets students' needs in computer fundamentals.	75.0%	8.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%
68.	The district meets students' needs in advanced computer skills.	58.3%	16.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0.0%
69.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Appendix D

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The narrative comments below reflect the perceptions and opinions of administrative and support staff survey respondents.

- Lasara ISD is a Recognized District and I'm proud to be a staff member of this campus. Teachers, administrators and other staff members care very much for our students.
- Despite problems with the Superintendent, our teachers have been professional and focused on doing good on the TAAS. Teacher morale is being affected and moral is going down. But we will do our best to be Exemplary!
- I think that the Lasara ISD Community deserves a new school. It also will help the students & teachers to learn and teach better in a better environment.
- We are not getting paid enough. I am a teacher aide and I am doing what a regular teacher does. But I am getting paid as if I was a teacher aide.
- Lasara ISD is a very small but healthy school district that provides students/parents with an opportunity to experience the best possible educational instruction available. As we strive to improve our facilities, we will also continue to improve all aspects of our educational process. Thank you for your time in allowing us to express ourselves.
- Lack of certified personnel for supervision of students during breaks, lunch, bus duty. Duties only assigned to paraprofessionals, not teachers pull any type of duty. Is there some type of requirement that certified staff also be present for duties. What if something goes wrong? Paraprofessional's doing too much jungle (gorilla) work and not being utilized as educational assistants. Salaries for paraprofessionals at very bottom of scale. Teachers overstepping their positions: taking very long breaks and lunch, expecting paraprofessionals to just be passive, after all, they are the one's with certifications.
- I think the Lasara ISD is doing an outstanding job in serving our community. This small school district has been recognized the last four years and I think that should mean a lot for our school staff and students. We all work together for success.
- Our school is small and rural. Many of the students are economically deprived and the school and its personnel afford these students opportunities such as attending plays, visiting sites

on field trip and computer and library access that they would not otherwise have. The district has been recognized the last four years. One of our students was salutatorian of the 2000 class in Raymondville. Our students do very well at the high school level and beyond.