

Venus Independent School District

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

July 21, 2003

The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor
The Honorable David Dewhurst, Lieutenant Governor
The Honorable Thomas R. Craddick, Speaker of the House
Chief Deputy Commissioner Robert Scott

Fellow Texans:

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

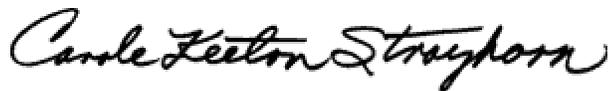
This review is intended to help VISD hold the line on costs, streamline operations, and improve services to ensure that more of every education dollar goes directly into the classroom with the teachers and children, where it belongs. To aid in this task, I contracted with Texas Public School Consulting,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

I have made a number of recommendations to improve VISD'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 56 detailed recommendations that could save VISD more than \$3.4 million over the next 5 years, while reinvesting more than \$2 million to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to more than \$1.3 million that the district can redirect to the classroom.

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

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

Sincerely,



Carole Keeton Strayhorn
Texas Comptroller

c: Senate Committee on Education
House Committee on Public Education
The Honorable Kip Averitt, State Senator, District 22
The Honorable Arlene Wohlgemuth, State Representative, District 58

Venus Independent School District

Executive Summary

Executive Summary Overview

Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation (Exhibit 4)

In March 2003, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn began a review of the Venus Independent School District (VISD) at the request of the VISD board, which agreed to pay for 25 percent of the review cost. Based upon more than six months of work, this report identifies VISD's exemplary programs and suggests concrete ways to improve district operations. If fully implemented, the Comptroller's 56 recommendations could result in net savings of more than \$1.3 million over the next five years.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR)

Soon after taking office in January 1999, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn consulted school district officials, parents and teachers from across Texas and carefully examined past reviews and progress reports to make 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 51 cents of every education dollar is spent on instruction, Comptroller Strayhorn's goal is to drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom. Comptroller Strayhorn 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 Strayhorn has directed TSPR to serve as a clearinghouse of the best ideas in Texas public education.

Under Comptroller Strayhorn'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 Strayhorn 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 VISD

The review began on March 3, 2003, with interviews and a public forum conducted at Venus High School from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Comptroller's office selected Texas Public School Consulting Inc., a San Antonio-based consulting firm, to assist with the review. The district paid \$20,000 of the \$80,000 cost, with the Comptroller's office paying the remainder.

During the process, the review team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents, business leaders and community members. To obtain additional comments, the review team conducted focus group sessions with teachers, principals, parents and community members. To ensure that all stakeholder groups had input, TSPR sent surveys to students, parents, teachers, school and central administrators and support staff. TSPR received 131 survey responses from 15 administrative and support staff; four principals and assistant principals; 23 teachers; 15 parents; and 74 students. Details from the surveys and the public forum appear in **Appendices A through F**.

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

VISD selected peer districts for comparisons based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The selected peer districts were Dublin, Godley, Grandview and Rio Vista ISDs. TSPR also compared VISD to district averages in TEA's Regional Education Service Center XI (Region 11), to which VISD belongs, and to the state as a whole.

During its six-month review, TSPR developed 56 recommendations for improving operations and saving taxpayers more than \$3.4 million by 2007-08. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) could reach more than \$1.3 million by 2007-08. TSPR recommends that VISD reinvest the bulk of the gross savings back into district operations to fund solutions to management challenges, curriculum, business operations and to raise teachers' pay to help reduce turnover to the state average.

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 4**. Many TSPR recommendations would not have a direct impact, but could improve the district's overall operations.

Acknowledgments

The Comptroller's office and Texas Public School Consulting, Inc., wish to express sincere appreciation to the VISD Board of Trustees, Superintendent Dr. Jeri Pfeifer, district employees, students, parents and community residents for their assistance and input during the review. Special thanks go to Dr. Pfeifer, who arranged for office space, equipment and meeting rooms, organized meetings, responded to data requests and accommodated the review team's needs.

Venus ISD

Located 25 miles south of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Venus lies between Alvarado and Midlothian in Johnson County at the intersection of U.S. 67 and FM 157. Once a rural farming community, Venus has become a small suburban community that continues to grow into a small suburb as the Metroplex moves farther south. Although past developments have been primarily mobile homes, future developments will include single-family residences. Student enrollment has doubled since 1996-97, and the district expects to grow another 19.3 percent in the next five years. Since a major obstacle to new developments has been the limited capacity for area water treatment, development should expand significantly once the Trinity River Authority opens the Mountain Creek Regional water reclamation plant in March 2004.

Exhibit 1 details the demographic characteristics of VISD, selected peer districts and the state.

Exhibit 1
Demographic Characteristics
VISD, Peer Districts and the State
2002-03

District	Student Enrollment Number	Ethnic Group (Percent)				Economically Disadvantaged Percent
		African American	Hispanic	Anglo	Other	
Dublin	1,318	0.5%	45.05	54.1%	0.4%	61.8%
Godley	1,377	1.1%	12.6%	85.6%	0.7%	33.5%
Grandview	1,122	3.8%	11.7%	84.2%	0.3%	34.2%
Rio Vista	896	0.1%	6.6%	93.0%	0.3%	31.6%
Venus	1,871	2.6%	32.9%	61.1%	3.4%	62.3%
State	4,259,864	14.3%	42.7%	39.8%	3.2%	51.8%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

In 2002-03, VISD serves 1,871 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 at four schools. Student enrollment consists of 2.6 percent African American, 32.9 percent Hispanic, 61.1 percent Anglo, 0.6 percent Native American and 2.7 percent other. More than 62 percent of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

From 1997-98 until 2002-03, VISD increased enrollment by 44 percent (**Exhibit 2**). District officials expect enrollment to continue to increase by 100 students each year through 2007.

Exhibit 2
VISD Student Enrollment History

School Year	Actual Student Enrollment	Percent Change from Prior Year
1997-98	1,298	N/A
1998-99	1,391	7.2%
1999-2000	1,632	17.3%

2000-01	1,807	10.7%
2001-02	1,851	2.4%
2002-03	1,871	1.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-98 through 2001-02 and PEIMS, 2002-03.

Over the past five years, VISD has improved its TAAS performance by more than eight percentage points. In all tests taken VISD students had an 80.2 percent pass rate in 2001-02. Although this score is an improvement over past performances, the district still falls below the state average at 85.3 percent and regional average at 87.7 percent. In 2001-02, TEA rated VISD Academically Acceptable. TEA also rated all the schools Academically Acceptable, except the high school, which it gave a Recognized rating. The district has 252 employees, 50.9 percent of which are teachers. Teacher salaries rank below all peer districts and the state. While VISD class sizes are generally smaller than state average, the teacher attrition rate, at 32.1 percent, is more than twice the state average of 15.7 percent.

The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs provided information on grade 3 students who took reading TAKS assessment in 2003. The results of this test show that 86 students out of 99 passed the TAKS reading assessment, which constitutes 87 percent of the class.

After lowering its maintenance and operations tax rate in 2001 to \$1.20, which caused VISD to lose nearly \$1.4 million in state aid and local tax revenue in 2001-02, the district increased its tax rate to \$1.35 in 2002-03. The district's total tax rate was \$1.50 per \$100 of valuation.

The district's 2002-03 budgeted total expenditures amounted to \$11.6 million. In 2001-02, the district's fund balance equaled \$2.7 million, or 24.3 percent of budgeted expenditures, above the standard 10 percent. The district spends 52.7 cents of every dollar on instruction compared to the state average of 51 cents. VISD plans to spend \$5,748 per student in operating expenditures during 2002-03.

Although TSPR found many exemplary programs and practices implemented by hardworking district employees, it also noted that VISD confronts a number of challenges including:

- regaining control of district finances and internal controls;
- managing student enrollment growth and improving student performance;
- improving organization and planning; and
- documenting policies and procedures.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Regain Control of District Finances and Internal Controls

Provide board members training to help them fulfill their oversight responsibility for the district's financial resources. When the VISD board lowered the maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate from \$1.47 per \$100 taxable value to \$1.20 per \$100 taxable value for the 2001 tax year, the district lost \$1.15 million in state aid and \$151,173 local tax revenue as a result of the lower M&O tax rate. Board members said they did not understand how the decision would impact the district's revenue and relied entirely upon the former superintendent's recommendation. Even though all board members have exceeded the required board training hours, none reported receiving adequate training on the basics of school funding mechanisms. Additional training on the basics of school funding mechanisms can give the board a better understanding of the financial operations of the district and enhance their decision-making processes.

Eliminate secondary block scheduling and increase the VISD teacher pay scale to improve regional competitiveness and enhance the district's ability to attract and retain highly qualified, experienced teachers.

VISD's block scheduling may have little impact on teaching effectiveness; however, it dramatically increases staffing costs because it requires more teachers. A 1999 Texas Education Agency research study, *Block Scheduling in Texas Public High Schools*, found that factors other than types of schedule have a greater impact on overall student performance. As VISD enrollment continues to increase, staffing costs will also increase. VISD's teacher pay scale ranks significantly below state and regional averages. As a result, the district has experienced a teacher turnover rate of 32.1 percent, which is 16.4 percentage points higher than the state average. The district also has a higher percentage of beginning teachers than its peers and the state resulting in less experience in the classroom. By converting from the block schedule to a modified or traditional seven-period daily schedule with teachers teaching six periods, VISD could hire 12 fewer teachers saving more than \$1.8 million over the next five years and pay teachers a competitive wage, which would help it attract and retain qualified, experienced teachers who can improve the district's performance.

Generate and review budget variance reports and review the coding on the transactions flowing through the accounting system. The district exceeded its overall expenditure budget in the general operating fund by \$139,279 during 2001-02. The district's expenditures not only exceeded the budget at the functional level, but exceeded the total budget as well. According to the district's audit management letter, part of the budget overage was attributed to expenditures being coded incorrectly.

Develop a tax collection policy that sets a 96 percent targeted collection rate. VISD lacks an aggressive tax collection board policy and, as a result, the district is not collecting enough of its property taxes from area taxpayers. From 2000-01 to 2001-02, the district's delinquent roll increased \$143,158. As of March 2003, the district had 823 delinquent tax accounts dating back to 1982. The district's total tax collection rate for 2001-02 was 92.7 percent. TEA's Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) states that a total collection rate of greater than 96 percent is favorable. By increasing tax collection to 96 percent, the district would realize more than \$270,000 in additional revenues over a five-year period.

Develop a procedures manual on handling cash that requires proper internal controls. VISD lacks a cash management procedures manual, resulting in poor cash handling practices and an increased risk of theft and the associated liability. A strong system of internal control formally documented in procedures can help the school district ensure that staff handle and use resources properly and according to management and the school board's directives.

Manage Student Enrollment Growth and Improve Student Performance

Develop and update curriculum guides for all courses and ensure vertical alignment across all grade levels. VISD lacks curriculum guides and a curriculum alignment process to help build instructional knowledge from one grade level to the next. Each school independently establishes its curriculum and curricular materials, which makes transition from school to school and grade to grade more difficult. Developing and vertically aligning curriculum guides at a five-year cost of nearly \$39,000 for all courses will help the district focus its efforts on improving student performance.

Develop an instructional plan that specifically addresses retention levels in middle school students. VISD experiences high retention rates in grades 6 through 8. The district retained 7.7 percent of grade 6 students compared to the state average of 1.5 percent, 5 percent of grade 7 students compared to 2.5 percent for the state and 5.7 percent of grade 8 students compared to 1.9 percent for the state. Studies show that children who fall behind by one or more grades are at a higher risk of dropping out of school. By developing an instructional plan that includes an accountability component to periodically assess strategies used for remediating students in these grade levels, the district will not only be able to bring down the remediating students rates in this area but, more importantly, focus on student success.

Improve Organization and Planning

Reorganize the facilities department to reduce the director's span of control. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation has more direct reports than he can adequately manage and supervise industry standards. In addition to managing the district's facilities, the director oversees transportation without any supervisory or lead person's assistance. Besides handling risk management, the director also serves as textbook coordinator, attendance officer, supervises PEIMS coordinator, AEP coordinator and JJAEP liaison. The director's numerous responsibilities prevent him from addressing some of the Maintenance Department's needs. Shifting some duties to other personnel will give the director necessary time to oversee operational processes ensuring that staff perform quality work and develop an effective maintenance operation.

Implement industry meals-per-labor-hour standards and adjust staffing levels to achieve recommended standards. The district's meals-per-labor-hour (MPLH) ratio is below industry standards, which means that VISD has more staff or hours than needed to prepare the number of meals served. The district can increase MPLH to meet industry standards by reducing the number of hours worked, increasing staff productivity or increasing the number of meals served. Eliminating 55 hours per day could save the Food Service Department more than \$526,000 over five years.

Annually evaluate and set prices for full priced meals to equal the cost of those meals. VISD's low student meal prices, which rank below peer district averages, contributed to the VISD food service deficit of \$271,166 from 1999-2000 through 2001-02. The district forecasts a net loss of more than \$56,000 for 2002-03. While state rules prevent food service operations from earning a profit, districts should set meal prices to recover costs. VISD charges \$0.29 less than the peer district average for the full price student lunch and \$0.23 less than the peer district average for full price student breakfast. Setting meal prices at a cost recovery level could help the district realize additional revenue of nearly \$133,000 over a five year period.

Document Policies and Procedures

Develop written procedures for central administration functions in business, personnel and other administrative functions. No written procedures exist for the operations of business, personnel, fixed asset control or other functions performed by central administration. The lack of written procedures for the functions performed by central administration allows for inconsistent practices and subjective interpretation in administering those functions. A manual would describe the step-by-step instructions for each administrative function and prevent violation of legal and local policies.

Develop and implement a comprehensive purchasing procedures manual for users. VISD does not have a purchasing procedures manual that establishes purchasing controls or provides guidance to campuses and employees in other departments when making purchases. Each employee orders and buys merchandise without knowledge of state purchasing laws and district policy. A comprehensive, up-to-date purchasing procedures manual for users would serve as a guide for district staff to ensure legal compliance and financially competitive purchases.

Develop a contract management policy and procedure that requires legal review and input prior to final board approval. VISD does not have a formal contracting process or policy to ensure that a legal contract expert thoroughly reviews all contracts. No centralized depository or file exists for district contracts, making it difficult to monitor or determine current district contracts or monitor them. For example, contracts that received no legal review or was missing information included the \$298,000 a year custodial services contract, the Multi-Regional Child Nutrition Co-op Interlocal Agreement, the Resolution of the Board of Trustees approving the Interlocal Agreement between Region 4 and the Texas Cooperative Purchasing Network and the Johnson County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding. Without strong contract monitoring efforts, the district may not be receiving the expected high-quality goods and services for which it contracted. Developing a contract management policy and supporting guidelines will reduce the district's exposure to liability, help monitor contract performance, track contract expiration dates and ensure contract completion and enforcement.

Develop new job descriptions for each position in the district and update them regularly to reflect job changes. Not all VISD job descriptions accurately reflect the position responsibilities, and some positions lack job descriptions. Some of the current job descriptions are too general. For example, the accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk's job description incorporates generic job descriptions for an accounts payable clerk and purchasing manager but the individual does not have purchasing responsibilities. No job descriptions exist for food service personnel, bus drivers, mechanics or maintenance personnel. Well-written job descriptions will enable VISD to determine salary and position title/classification as well as the position's designation under the Fair Labor Standards Act and delegate responsibilities within the district's organization.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

TSPR identified numerous "best practices" in VISD. Through commendations in each chapter, the report highlights model programs, operations and services provided by district administrators, teachers and

staff. The Comptroller encourages other school districts throughout Texas to examine these exemplary programs and services to see if they could be adapted to meet local needs. TSPR's commendations include:

- ***Through a partnership between VISD and the city of Venus, district libraries have large, balanced collections and provide a wide variety of services to district students and the Venus community.*** Because it also services as community library, the high school library provides a multitude of services. These services include a summer reading program, Internet access and word processing computers, movie rentals, copy and fax machines, Spanish materials and home access for a virtual library through TexShare, an online database. The library is open to VISD students and the community during and after school hours and on Saturday mornings. Because of this partnership, the library has received \$134,000 in a variety of grants to provide VISD students and the community with many services.
- ***VISD has implemented a recruitment plan to address teacher job vacancies in the district.*** In spring 2002, VISD initiated a recruitment plan to take a more proactive approach regarding district teacher vacancies. The district's annual teacher turnover rate is 32.1 percent. The district's recruitment strategy includes attending job fairs, analyzing applicant source information, quality of applicants, number of hires per job fair and other relevant data. After analyzing relevant information, VISD staff adjusts the district's recruitment efforts. Prior to adopting this recruitment approach, VISD consistently had trouble filling vacant teaching positions because of its low salaries and rural location. An effective recruitment strategy helps VISD meet its staffing objectives.
- ***VISD has taken steps to establish an employee safety program to reduce employee accidents.*** VISD implemented a district safety program to reduce workers' compensation costs and address a previous hazardous employer classification. In 1994, the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission identified the district as a "hazardous employer." The district initiated a safety program to reduce the number of district accidents. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said the commission removed the "hazardous employer" classification in April 1995. The district's ongoing safety program includes monthly building inspections conducted and documented by the school principals and the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation. In addition, the program requires each school administrator to conduct seven-minute monthly safety meetings with employees at each district location.

- *VISD has established a committee to review and update its Emergency Procedures Manual and Critical Incident Plan annually.* After the district experienced a critical incident, it recognized the need to develop a community-wide advisory committee that included members from the law enforcement department, fire department, community and district. The committee provides input and exchanges ideas on how to improve the district emergency procedures.

Savings and Investment Requirements

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

TSPR recommended 56 ways to save VISD more than \$3.4 million in gross savings over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities will cost the district more than \$2 million during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of more than \$1.3 million by 2007-08.

**Exhibit 3
Summary of Net Savings
TSPR Review of Venus Independent School District**

Year	Total
2003-04 Initial Annual Net Savings	\$134,617
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$266,883
2005-06 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$286,588
2006-07 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$289,688
2007-08 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$289,288
One Time Net (Costs) Savings	\$121,791
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2003-08	\$1,388,885

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 4**. 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 VISD 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.

Venus Independent School District

Executive Summary

Exhibit 4 Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	Total 5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1: District Organization and Management							
1 Keep the board updated on the district's financial condition and provide training on school finance to board members. p. 22	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2 Establish a Code of Conduct to complement the board operating procedure currently being developed by the board. p. 24	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3 Adopt a policy that restricts procurement from or contracts with business entities in which a school board member has a substantial interest. p. 25	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
4 Request online policy manual services from Texas Association of School Boards. p. 26	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$3,750)	(\$950)
5 Reorganize central administration. hire a	(\$20,989)	(\$62,968)	(\$62,968)	(\$62,968)	(\$62,968)	(\$272,861)	\$0

	personnel director and realign responsibilities for a more efficient operation. p. 30							
6	Develop written procedures for central administration functions in personnel, business and other administrative functions. p. 33	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
7	Implement a strategic planning process that links existing plans, the budget and performance evaluations into an integrated districtwide strategic plan. p. 37	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
8	Develop a plan to strengthen the school-parent partnership in VISD and track and publish volunteerism statistics quarterly. p. 40	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 1	(\$21,739)	(\$63,718)	(\$63,718)	(\$63,718)	(\$63,718)	(\$276,611)	(\$950)
Chapter 2: Educational Service Delivery								
9	Develop an instructional plan to reduce student retention rates and help promote more students. p. 53	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
10	Increase the number of students taking the SAT and the ACT. p. 55	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
11	Create a multi-year	(\$8,850)	(\$8,850)	(\$8,850)	(\$6,050)	(\$6,150)	(\$38,750)	\$0

	schedule and develop curriculum guides. p. 59							
12	Develop a plan to make special education personnel from VISD and Johnson County Special Education Cooperative accountable for the delivery of special education services as specified in the student IEP plan. p. 70	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
13	Develop a tracking and review process for in-school suspension to ensure that discipline is equitably applied. p. 83	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 2	(\$8,850)	(\$8,850)	(\$8,850)	(\$6,050)	(\$6,150)	(\$38,750)	\$0
Chapter 3: Personnel Management								
14	Develop accurate job descriptions for each district position. p. 95	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
15	Eliminate secondary block scheduling, return to a traditional schedule and increase student-teacher ratios at secondary schools. p. 101	\$0	\$455,568	\$455,568	\$455,568	\$455,568	\$1,822,272	\$0
16	Increase teacher salaries to be more competitive with peer and surrounding districts. p. 103	\$0	(\$378,874)	(\$378,874)	(\$378,874)	(\$378,874)	(\$1,515,496)	\$0
17	Create an equitable	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$250)

25	Develop a tax collection policy that sets the targeted rate of collection at 96 percent. p. 137	\$26,007	\$46,012	\$66,017	\$66,017	\$66,017	\$270,070	\$0
26	Sell district homes, returning the property to the tax rolls. p. 139	\$0	\$0	\$1,992	\$1,992	\$1,992	\$7,968	\$151,151
27	Designate the business manager as the purchasing agent and train the manager and purchasing clerk on state purchasing laws and school district purchasing procedures. p. 143	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$4,000)	\$0
28	Develop and implement a comprehensive purchasing procedures manual. p. 145	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
29	Reduce purchasing costs by engaging in cooperative purchasing. p. 147	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$66,950	\$0
30	Develop a contract management policy and procedure that requires legal review and input prior to final board approval. p. 149	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
31	Develop and implement a textbook inventory and management system. p. 152	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 4	\$25,662	\$42,887	\$62,892	\$62,892	\$62,892	\$257,225	\$153,051

Chapter 5: Asset and Risk Management

32	Designate the	(\$300)	\$0	\$300	\$0	\$300	(\$900)	\$0
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	business manager as the district's investment officer and ensure he receives the necessary training. p. 160							
33	Develop a procedures manual on cash handling to ensure proper internal control. p. 161	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
34	Limit the number of manual checks. p. 162	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
35	Perform cash forecasting on at least a monthly basis. p. 163	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
36	Evaluate and close unnecessary bank accounts. p. 164	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
37	Establish a fee and procedures for collecting non-sufficient funds checks. p. 165	\$1,920	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$11,520	\$0
38	Request proposals for workers' compensation coverage to ensure the district obtains the most comprehensive coverage at the most competitive price. p. 172	\$0	\$13,745	\$13,745	\$13,745	\$13,745	\$54,980	\$0
39	Ensure compliance with Internal Revenue Service rules for cafeteria plans. p. 175	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 5	\$1,620	\$16,145	\$15,845	\$16,145	\$15,845	\$65,600	\$0

Chapter 6: Operations

40	Develop and implement written policies and procedures for food service operations. p. 187	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
41	Implement industry meals per labor hour (MPLH) standards and adjust staffing levels accordingly. p. 190	\$84,318	\$110,630	\$110,630	\$110,630	\$110,630	\$526,838	\$0
42	Develop and implement a financial reporting system to use in controlling costs. p. 194	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
43	Annually evaluate and set prices for full priced meals to equal the cost of those meals. p. 195	\$23,158	\$27,869	\$27,869	\$27,869	\$27,869	\$134,634	\$0
44	Discontinue operating vending machines that compete with meal programs during meal service. p. 197	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
45	Assign the mechanic to full time mechanical duties. p. 203	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
46	Develop a 15-year bus replacement schedule for the VISD bus fleet. p. 205	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
47	Prepare a year-end audit adjustment to allocate transportation costs to the proper function. p. 207	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
48	Replace regular bus	\$33,660	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$310,860	(\$30,060)

	route monitors with video surveillance system. p. 208							
49	Realign the facilities organization to provide adequate supervision of the maintenance and custodial functions. p. 215	(\$4,234)	(\$5,096)	(\$5,096)	(\$5,096)	(\$5,096)	(\$24,618)	\$0
50	Formalize the current informal arrangement between VISD and the City of Venus in an interlocal agreement to share equipment and facility resources. p. 216	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
51	Develop written operating procedures for maintenance processes and performance measures that ensure timely and adequate response to routine maintenance requests. p. 218	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
52	Renegotiate the custodial contract to include standards of performance and criteria for evaluating performance. p. 220	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
53	Monitor energy usage and implement an energy management program in VISD. p. 221	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$5,110	\$0
54	Formalize the relationship with area law enforcement by developing Memorandum of	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	Understanding (MOU) with the Venus Police Department specifying the district's understanding of services provided by the police department. p. 226							
55	Establish a district policy and set of procedures designed to track all district keys. p. 227	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
56	Require all campuses to set their alarm systems when buildings are not in use. p. 228	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 6	\$137,924	\$203,725	\$203,725	\$203,725	\$203,725	\$952,824	(\$30,060)
	Total Savings	\$194,830	\$753,283	\$773,288	\$773,288	\$773,288	\$3,267,977	\$153,051
	Total Costs	(\$60,213)	(\$486,400)	(\$486,700)	(\$483,600)	(\$483,000)	(\$2,000,913)	(\$31,260)
	Net Savings/(Costs)	\$134,617	\$266,883	\$286,588	\$289,688	\$289,288	\$1,267,064	\$121,791

Total Gross Savings	\$3,421,028
Total Costs	(\$2,032,173)
Net Savings	\$1,388,855

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 1 District Organization and Management

This chapter reviews the organization and management of Venus Independent School District (VISD) in the following sections:

- A. Board Governance
- B. District Management
- C. District Planning
- D. Community and Business Involvement

Effective organization and management of a school district requires trust and cooperation among elected members of the Board of Trustees and district staff. The board's role focuses on establishing district goals and objectives in both instructional and operational areas; adopting policies to govern the district; approving plans to implement those policies; providing the funding sources necessary to accomplish board goals and objectives; and hiring the superintendent to manage the district.

District staff implements board-approved plans, manages daily operations to accomplish those plans, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of plan achievement and recommends plan modifications to ensure efficient operation of all district programs and responsibilities. The superintendent recommends implementation and operational strategies, staffing levels and resource amounts required to accomplish the districts' goals and objectives.

A high level of community involvement ensures that school districts obtain valuable public input from those who reside in the district. By providing input on the quality of service provided by the district, the community ultimately benefits from a district that will produce more education citizens and a more capable workforce. The district in turn can better focus its services to more precisely reflect community needs and increase its resource capacity by linking with civic, religious and business interests.

Maintaining a systematic, effective two-way communication process with the community is an integral component to the overall success of a school district. Effective communication includes: opportunities for citizens to contribute ideas or criticism; consistent use of print and electronic media

to disseminate information; and the inclusion of diverse community groups representative of the whole community.

BACKGROUND

VISD serves 1,871 students and is located 25 miles south of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, which lies between Alvarado and Midlothian in Johnson County at the intersection of U.S. 67 and FM 157. Once a rural farming area, Venus has grown into a small suburban community.

In 1881, the Santa Fe railroad built a branch line through the area, connecting Dallas and Cleburne. J.C. Smythe bought 80 acres of land and had town lots surveyed adjacent to the railroad. By the mid-1880s, the Illinois Great Northern railroad had built a north-south branch line through the community, and Venus became a crossroad of rail commerce.

As a result, the community thrived, becoming the largest town in Johnson County with a population of 2,000 prior to 1900. On January 10, 1903, Venus was incorporated as a town.

Founding citizens recognized the need for a school. In 1890, the first school opened with classes taught in Roberts Chapel, a building used by the Methodists for church on Sunday. African-American children were not allowed to attend the school but instead were taught in classes housed in a boxcar. Within a few years, citizens who wanted to build a college in Venus, contributed \$5,000 that was matched with funds from A.D. Leak. On September 7, 1896, Burnetta College opened with four courses of study: primary, intermediate, preparatory and collegiate. A president, a principal and several teachers staffed the college.

In addition to courses required for a bachelor of arts degree, the college offered military and normal courses along with language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art, music, elocution, physical culture, German, bookkeeping, shorthand, penmanship and typewriting. The college consisted of four buildings, including a four-story main building containing a 35-room dormitory. Fire destroyed the main facility. Although another building was erected, the college was abandoned in 1910. The facilities were taken by the public school system.

Mr. Warren served as the first superintendent of the public school system in Venus. In 1914, the school faculty consisted of a superintendent and teacher of mathematics, a principal and teacher of science and history, six classroom teachers and one custodian. In 1922, after a fire destroyed the high school, the Public Works Administration built a three-story brick structure during the depression. A former prisoner-of-war barracks was used as the school cafeteria.

During the depression, school enrollment declined. In the 1940s, Superintendent J. Rice Finley obtained state accreditation for Venus schools. Beginning in the early 1980s, school enrollment began to rise. A new cafeteria building was constructed on the site of the Venus primary school in 1980, and seven portable buildings were added to the school during the next three years. VISD's main school building burned in February 1984. School accreditation was temporarily canceled because of curriculum deficiencies and the lack of facilities. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) appointed a monitor to assist with the curriculum issues and facility decisions. Venus citizens showed their support of a local education system by passing a \$1.2 million bond election to rebuild and maintain the school district. The Commissioner of Education reinstated VISD's accreditation for 1984-85, and VISD opened the doors of a new facility with about 800 students. In April 1985, VISD built an elementary school, which is the present primary school and opened a new high school in August 1985, which is now the middle school.

As growth and the tax base steadily increased within the district, construction continued over the next six years. Ten portable buildings, an administration building, football stadium bleachers and a house for the superintendent were added to the district's inventory of facilities. In 1994, VISD built a new \$3 million high school designed for 385 students. The district converted the former high school to a middle school facility. In 1998 a new elementary school to house 800 students was built and the old elementary school became the primary school. In addition, VISD remodeled the middle school, expanding its cafeteria and office spaces, as well as adding eight classrooms and a science lab.

As the metroplex moves farther south, Venus continues to grow as a suburban community. Past developments have consisted primarily of mobile homes; however, future developments are expected to include single-family residences. Student growth has increased by 71 percent since 1995-96 and is expected to continue to grow significantly.

Developers are expanding the housing market in the area. A major obstacle to new developments has been the limited capacity for area water treatment. On February 26, 2003, the Trinity River Authority (TRA) announced the start of the Mountain Creek Regional Water Reclamation Plant to provide service to the southern portion of Grand Prairie and all of Midlothian and Venus. TRA expects the new plant to begin operating March 28, 2004. The prospect of rapid enrollment growth poses challenges in planning to accommodate that growth. The VISD school board and staff have already developed a master facilities plan with five-year enrollment projections.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 1
District Organization and Management

A. BOARD GOVERNANCE

VISD's board has seven members who serve three-year terms on a rotating basis. All members are elected at-large. **Exhibit 1-1** lists the board members, their titles, term expiration dates, board member tenure and professional occupation.

Exhibit 1-1
VISD Board of Trustees
2002-03

Board Member	Title	Term Expires	Board Tenure as of April 2003	Occupation
Gregory Hoffman	President	2005	7 years	Businessman
Richard Rawlinson	Vice President	2004	5 years	Maintenance Mechanic
Dianne McCormick	Secretary	2004	5 years	Secretary/Receptionist
Robert Shaw	Member	2006	1 year	Prison Warden
Pat Steinke	Member	2004	2 years	Application Support Specialist
Jerry Upchurch	Member	2006	4 years	Trucking
Coleen Wadlington	Member	2005	1 year	Postal Worker
<i>Source: VISD superintendent's office.</i>				

VISD conducts regular board meetings the third Thursday of each month at the high school library. Special meetings are called to conduct public hearings and board workshops, but these meetings are limited in scope and

purpose. The regular meeting agenda provides for public comment to address the board.

The superintendent and the board president develop the agenda for each meeting. Any board member may request an item to be placed on the agenda. Notices of meetings are posted 72 hours in advance, as required by law, at the VISD central administration building, the Venus post office, the city hall and all district schools. The agenda is also posted on the district Web site (<http://www.venusisd.net>). Board members normally receive their board agenda and informational materials several days in advance of the meeting, and all trustees indicated that they had adequate time to review the materials before the meetings. Occasionally, information about an agenda item is handed out at meetings due to time constraints or other factors.

FINDING

VISD uses a consent agenda for routine items on its regular meeting agenda. Use of a consent agenda permits one vote for all listed items instead of voting separately on each item. If a member wants to consider a consent item individually, it is pulled from the consent agenda, discussed and voted on separately. Using the consent agenda for routine items quickens the pace of the meeting and results in a more efficient use of board time. Items typically placed on the VISD consent agenda include minutes from prior meetings, payment of bills and payroll, budget amendments, use of facilities requests and resolutions.

COMMENDATION

VISD effectively uses a consent agenda to conduct efficient board meetings.

FINDING

After an extensive recruitment and selection process, VISD hired a new superintendent in 2002. The employment of a superintendent is a major responsibility of a school board. A Texas Association of School Boards' (TASBs') consultant facilitated the process. Beginning in January 2002, the TASB consultant developed a calendar for the search, conducted profile sessions with community and school groups to build a superintendent profile, developed and printed brochures and application forms, sent materials to candidates, received applications, selected the most qualified applicants for board evaluation, helped evaluate and select candidates for interviews and helped to prepare questions and develop interview procedures. Three board members made a visit to the finalist's home district prior to hiring the superintendent.

Comments from all board members described the board's working relationship with the new superintendent as very good and the working relationship among current board members the best it has been during their tenure.

COMMENDATION

VISD effectively used a Texas Association of School Boards' consultant to facilitate the recruitment and selection of a superintendent to lead the district.

FINDING

VISD board members have not received training on school funding. The VISD board lowered the maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate from \$1.47 per \$100 taxable value to \$1.20 per \$100 taxable value for the 2001 tax year. During 2001-02, state funding decreased by \$1.25 million of which \$1.15 million was directly related to the reduction of the M&O tax rate. Local tax revenue decreased by \$151,173 during the same period as a result of the lower M&O tax rate (**Exhibit 1-2**). Of the seven current board members, five were serving on the board at the time that decision was made. Those members said they were not informed of the financial impact of that decision on district revenue at the time. The board members accepted the former superintendent's recommendation, assuming the superintendent had the expertise to make that recommendation.

Exhibit 1-2
Impact of Tax Rate on VISD Revenues
2000-01 and 2001-02

	2000-01	2001-02
M&O Tax Rate per \$100 Taxable Value	\$1.47	\$1.20
VISD Taxable Value	\$125,245,229	\$133,368,667
M&O Tax Revenue	\$1,651,274	\$1,500,101
General Fund State Revenue	\$8,900,645	\$7,654,622
Total Local Tax and State Revenue	\$10,551,919	\$9,154,723
<p><i>Source: VISD, Annual Financial Reports for Years Ending August 31, 2001 and August 31, 2002.</i></p> <p><i>Note: Total local tax and state revenue equals M&O tax revenue plus general fund state revenue.</i></p>		

While all board members have exceeded the required hours for board member training (**Exhibit 1-3**), none reported receiving adequate training on the basics of school funding or about the impact of board decisions on

finances. The board has relied entirely upon the expertise and recommendations of the superintendent in the past and has not taken an active role in monitoring district finances.

Exhibit 1-3
VISD Board Member Training
March 1, 2002 through February 28, 2003

Board Member	Training Hours	Required Training Hours
Gregg Hoffman	24.8	8
Richard Rawlinson	33.8	8
Diane McCormick	50	8
Robert Shaw	21.5	16
Pat Steinke	89	8
Jerry Upchurch	10.3	8
Colleen Wadlington	21.5	16
<i>Source: VISD superintendent's office.</i>		

The Texas public school funding system is a shared arrangement between the state and local school districts. State and local funds for public education in Texas are distributed through a system of formulas known collectively as the Foundation School Program (FSP). The two-tiered system includes a number of adjustments and weights to distribute funding according to the characteristics of the school district and its students. Tier I is the base or “foundation” funding level in the Texas FSP. Tier II provides equalization funds to school districts beyond the base funding level in Tier I. To participate in the system, school districts must levy a minimum tax rate of \$0.86. The Local Fund Assignment (LFA), the district’s share of the Tier I cost, is the amount that can be raised locally at the \$0.86 tax rate. While districts must levy the LFA to receive state funds, the Tier II tax rate is discretionary.

Tier II provides equalization funds to school districts beyond the base funding level in Tier I. Districts may levy up to \$0.64 of tax rate in Tier II, which generates resources for education in the form of a guaranteed yield. That guaranteed yield for 2001-02 provides that a tax rate of \$0.01 will generate \$25.81 per student in weighted average daily attendance from a combination of local and state sources. Districts can generate Tier II guaranteed yield funds for maintenance and operations, but not capital

outlay or debt service requirements. In 1999, the Texas Legislature appropriated funds to help school districts pay for old debt. As of 1999-2000, school districts could not count the debt service portion of the tax rate for Tier II calculation. Apparently VISD was unaware of that change when it lowered its M&O rate by \$0.27 and raised the debt service rate by the same amount for the 2001 tax year, keeping the total tax rate the same as it had been for the 2000 tax year.

Recommendation 1:

Keep the board updated on the district’s financial condition and provide training on school finance to board members .

In addition to providing monthly reports, the board should be given financial information on each detailed issue that the board is asked to make a decision on.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager provide the board with timely information about VISD's financial condition and discuss the impact of pending board action on district finances.	September 2003 and ongoing
2.	The superintendent identifies training appropriate to the board's role in understanding the impact of its decisions upon district finances and in exercising its financial oversight responsibilities.	September 2003
3.	The superintendent ensures training is scheduled for board members through the regional education service center or another registered provider.	October 2003
4.	Board members receive training and earn board member training credit.	November 2003
5.	Board member training hours are reported at the board meeting.	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

The district annually budgets training funds for board training, therefore, this recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The VISD board has involved itself in personnel hiring, including non-certified staff. The board’s roles involve employing a superintendent to

manage the district, setting policy to guide the superintendent in managing the district in employment and promotion of personnel and voting on the superintendent's personnel recommendations. Board involvement in the employment or promotion of individuals beyond setting policy conflicts with the board's role and weakens staff morale. Interviews with board members and staff indicated that this occurred more during the previous administration, although it continues to a lesser degree in the current administration.

VISD is currently developing board operating procedures in six general categories: communication; meetings; team development; planning; policy; and personnel.

A TASB consultant began helping the board and superintendent in October 2002 to identify operational issues and to set priorities for those issues. Once this process is completed, the procedures will be officially documented.

The Navarro ISD Board of Trustees developed a Code of Conduct to better define its roles and responsibilities and to help the board to work as an effective team. The Code of Conduct addresses four primary educational and ethical standards, as shown in **Exhibit 1-4**.

**Exhibit 1-4
Code of Conduct**

Function	Standard
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures, upholding and enforcing all laws, State Board of Education rules, court orders pertaining to schools and district policies and procedures. • Make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of all children in the district, regardless of ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing. These decisions will put children's needs above the wants of adults.
Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that the board must make decisions as a whole and make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise the board. All action should take place in an official board meeting. • Focus board action on making policy, setting goals, planning and evaluating, and insist on regular and impartial evaluation of all staff. • Vote to appoint the best-qualified personnel available after consideration of recommendations by the

	<p>Superintendent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate authority for the administration of the school to the Superintendent. Board members will not engage in micromanagement. • Hold confidential all matters that, if disclosed, may have an impact on the district. Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law, including closed session agenda items. • Attend all regularly scheduled board meetings, arrive on time become informed the issues to be considered at those meetings. • Make policy decisions only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings, render all decisions based on the available facts refuse to surrender judgment to individuals or special groups. • Refrain from using board position for personal or partisan gain. • Disagree in an agreeable manner. will not hold grudges or question another members vote on an issue, but will respect other views and opinions. • Be firm, fair, just and impartial in all decisions and actions.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the free expression of opinion by all board members. Make a good- faith effort to understand and to accommodate the views of others. • Seek communication between among the board and, students, staff and all elements of the community. • Communicate to fellow board members and the Superintendent, at appropriate times, expressions of public concerns. • The board President shall ensure that community members who address the board follow established guidelines.
Board Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep informed about current educational issues and seek continuing education opportunities such as those sponsored by state and national school board associations. • Disseminate pertinent information gained at training workshops and conventions with the Superintendent and fellow board members.
<p><i>Source: Navarro ISD.</i></p>	

A code of conduct helps boards focus their energy on policy-making and assists board members in policing their own conduct.

Recommendation 2:

Establish a Code of Conduct to complement the board operating procedure currently being developed by the board.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent obtains sample Codes of Conduct from other districts.	September 2003
2.	The board conducts a workshop to review sample Codes of Conduct and to discuss what to include in a VISD board code of conduct.	October 2003
3.	The board drafts a Code of Conduct for VISD board members.	November 2003
4.	The board adopts a Code of Conduct.	December 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Concern exists in the community regarding the appropriateness of board members doing business with the district. In 2000-01 the district contracted with a board member to provide dirt and topsoil. The board member has a signed affidavit on file with the district and did not vote on the contract since it was not presented to the board for approval. After advertising for bids and receiving three, the former superintendent awarded the contact in January 2001 to the board member, who was low bidder. At the March 22, 2001 board meeting, payment for those services was included in the list of local vouchers for approval. Unaware that his payment check was included on the monthly roster of checks, the board member did not abstain and voted their approval. This occurrence was not disclosed in the VISD Annual Financial Statement for the Year Ending August 31, 2001.

VISD Board Policy BBFA (LEGAL) permits a board to contract with a business entity in which a trustee has a substantial interest if the trustee follows the disclosure and abstention procedures. Before a vote or decision on any matter involving the business, the trustee must file with

the district an affidavit disclosing the interest in the business. The trustee must abstain from participation in any action regarding the contract. If these procedures are followed, the district may contract with a business in which a trustee has a substantial interest.

Even with such a policy, the school board can still appear to have a conflict of interest. Even if the policy were being followed, the community perception is that board members may be making biased business decisions.

Recommendation 3:

Adopt a policy that restricts procurement from or contracts with business entities in which a school board member has a substantial interest.

The board should adopt a policy to prohibit members from doing business, directly or indirectly, with the school district. The only exception should be when only one vendor in the community can provide goods or services to the district. However, since VISD is so close to Dallas and Fort Worth, the district should always be able to find other vendors.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and board invite the public to comment on potential concerns with the conflict-of-interest policy.	September 2003
2.	The superintendent obtains information from other school districts about their conflict-of-interest policies.	October 2003
3.	The superintendent and board review other districts' policies, and the board drafts a revised conflict-of-interest policy.	November 2003
4.	The board obtains legal advice about the revised conflict-of-interest policy.	December 2003
5.	The board considers and adopts a conflict-of-interest policy that restricts or prevents the district from contracting with or making purchases from a business entity in which a board member has a substantial interest.	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD distributes hard copies of its board policies. The district currently has 16 manuals that it must update with new policies several times a year. The last update contained 364 pages. The district currently contracts with TASB for policy services. For a fee, TASB provides an online service for any district that subscribes to regular policy for the service. Districts then post their policy manuals on their Web sites, saving time and duplicating costs when updating policy manuals, which makes it easier for the public to search for information.

The online policy manual has an automated search capability, which by typing in a topic keyword, users can find any policy related to that topic. This feature greatly enhances the ability of district management and staff to identify and comply with all district policies.

Lyford ISD contracts with TASB to place its board policies online. The initial set-up costs \$1,700 and \$750 a year for maintenance. The board periodically reviews and updates local policies, and TASB provides the district with required updates. The online policy manual is easy to use and is accessible to all employees and community members with Internet access.

Recommendation 4:

Request online policy manual services from Texas Association of School Boards.

Online policy manual services will provide access of district policies to board members, staff and the public and aligns with the VISD Technology Plan vision statement: “The basic philosophy of VISD includes using technology to enhance student growth, teacher preparedness and administrative efficiency.”

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts TASB to determine the cost for online policy services.	September 2003
2.	The superintendent submits the cost for online services to the board for approval.	October 2003
3.	The superintendent initiates implementation of TASB online policy service.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The initial setup for the TASB online services is a one time cost of \$950, and an annual maintenance fee of \$750.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
One-time set-up charge	(\$950)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Maintenance fee	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)
Net (Cost)/Savings	(\$1,700)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)	(\$750)

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 1 District Organization and Management

B. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

While the school board creates policy, the superintendent carries out policy. The superintendent must manage the district in the most cost-effective and most 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 are directed to the classroom.

The superintendent is the district's chief executive officer. The superintendent recommends staffing and resources necessary to operate the district and accomplish the board's goals and objectives. The superintendent also reports management information to the board and ensures that the district is accountable for its performance against established goals. Section 11.201 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) states that the superintendent:

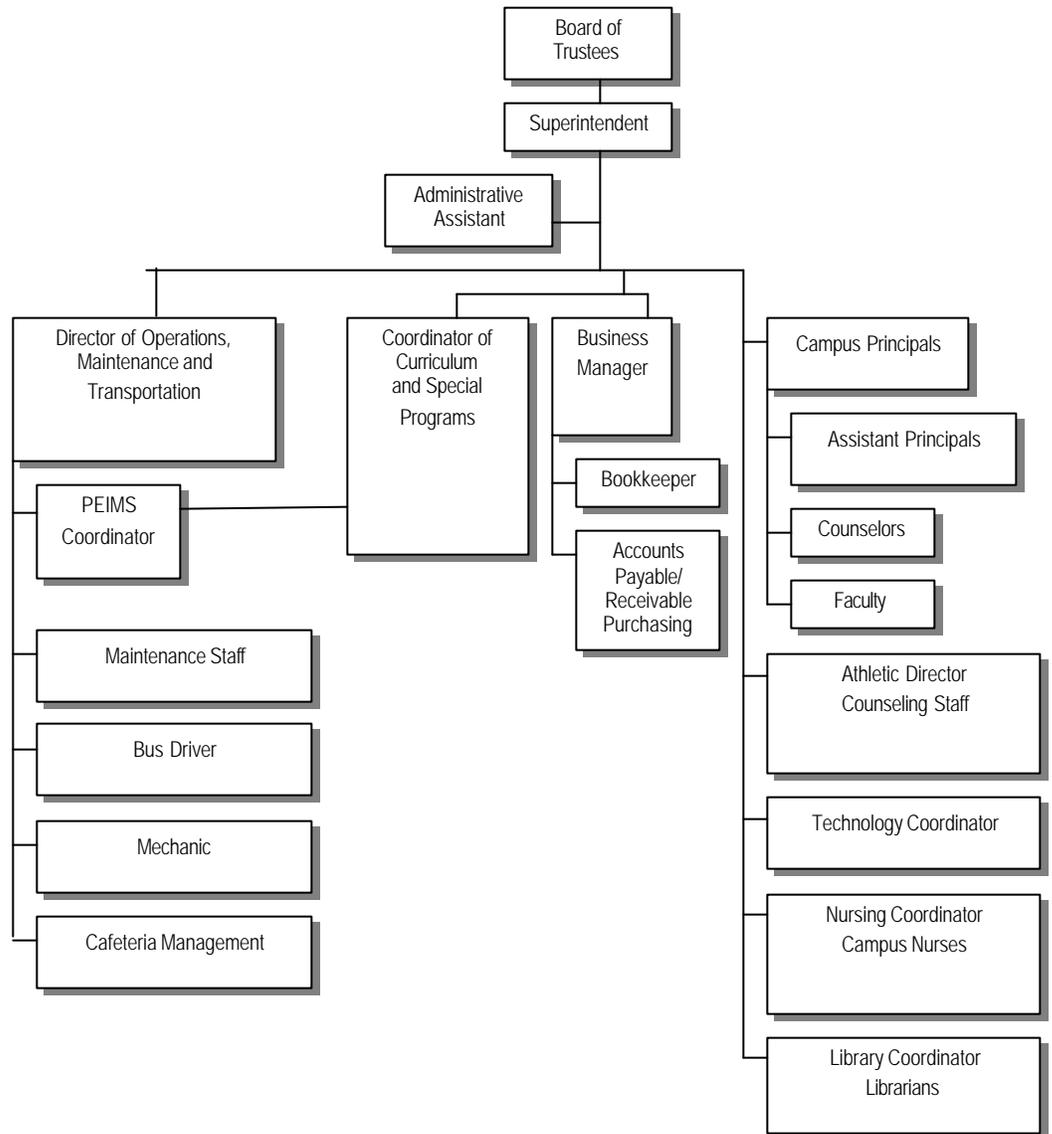
- plans, operates, supervises and evaluates the educational programs, services and facilities of the district;
- assigns, evaluates all district personnel and conducts annual performance appraisals of the staff;
- terminates or suspends staff members or the nonrenewal of staff members' term contracts;
- manages day-to-day district operations;
- prepares district budgets;
- makes policy recommendations for the board and implements adopted policies;
- develops appropriate administrative regulations to implement board policies;
- provides leadership in attaining student performance; and
- organizes the district's central administration.

FINDING

The organizational structure of central administration staff and responsibilities has placed significant workloads on the three

administrators who report to the superintendent. **Exhibit 1-5** presents the current administrative organization of VISD positions.

**Exhibit 1-5
VISD Organization
2002-03**



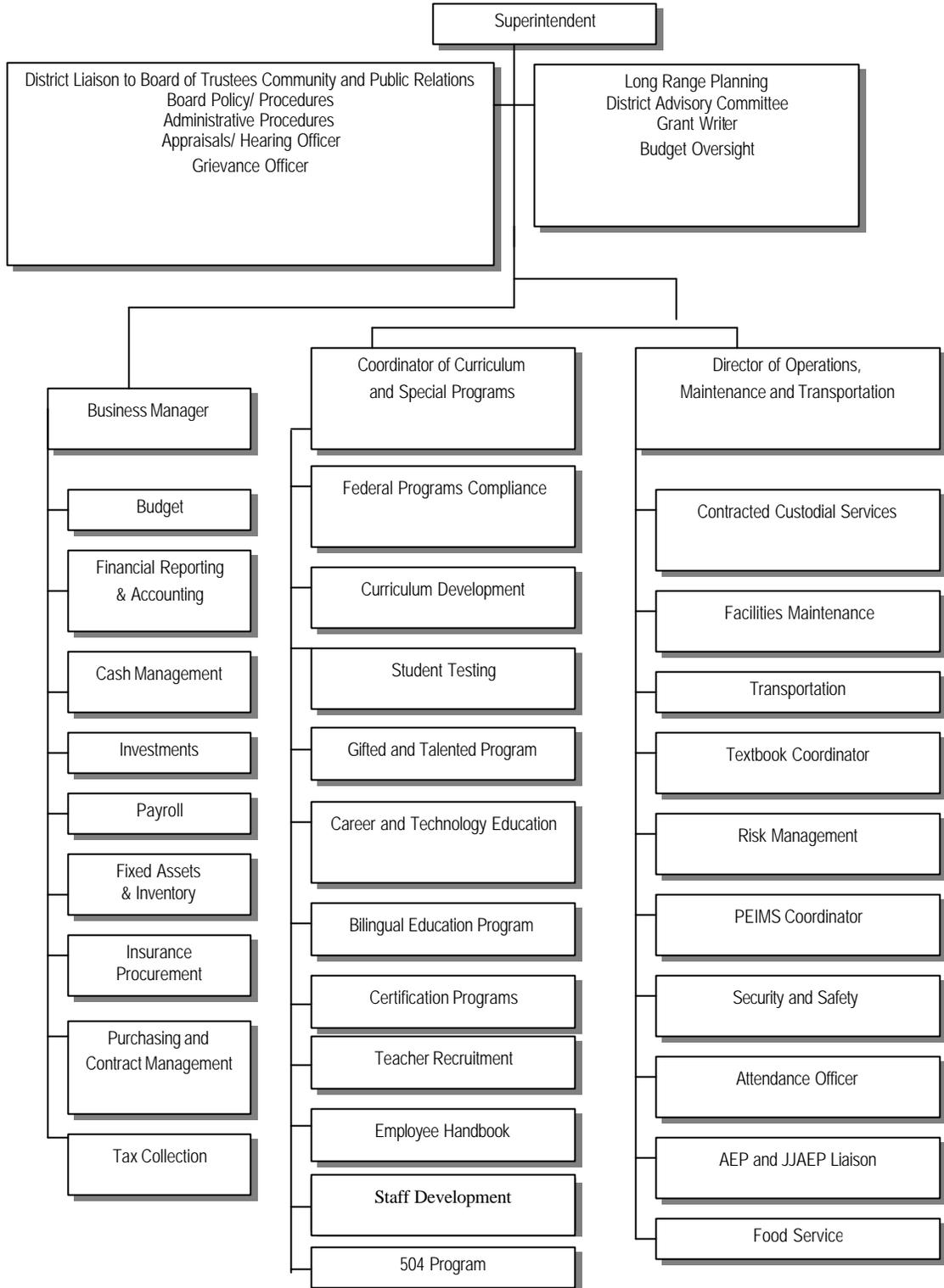
Source: VISD superintendent.

Recent reduction-in-force actions because of financial exigency declared by the board have resulted in two fewer paraprofessional positions at central administration. Although the board approved and filled the business manager position, job responsibilities have not yet been realigned to balance the workload.

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation manages transportation, maintenance, food service, liaison with the custodial contractor, textbooks, risk management, public education information management system (PEIMS) reporting, coordinating the alternative education program (AEP) and liaison with the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs oversees curriculum, testing, federal programs, the gifted and talented program, the bilingual program, district effectiveness and compliance (DEC), staff development and some personnel functions.

Exhibit 1-6 shows the current responsibilities of each central office administrator.

**Exhibit 1-6
VISD Central Office Responsibilities
2002-03**



Source: VISD superintendent, March 2003.

The current organization assigns more responsibilities to administrators than they can reasonably be expected to perform well, and no capacity for assuming more responsibilities as the district grows. The lack of a full-time personnel administrator has required considerable effort on the part of the superintendent to manage many of the personnel functions.

In recent years, the personnel function has evolved to include a broad range of responsibilities and services. A personnel department handles recruiting, hiring and retaining employees; compensation determination and staff planning; position control, leaves and benefits administration; and employee relations. In addition, personnel departments typically ensure compliance with all local, state and federal laws and policies governing personnel issues. By centralizing many of these duties, oversight and accountability can be improved and operations simplified. **Exhibit 1-7** details the responsibilities of the personnel officer in Aransas County ISD (ACISD).

Exhibit 1-7
ACISD Human Resources Coordinator's Responsibilities

Human Resources Coordinator
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess and document teacher credentials.• Process issuance and renewal of state certificates and permits.• Create and revise job descriptions and evaluations.• Plan and recommend contract workdays for district calendar.• Review and distribute employee applications.• Assist principals and supervisors in selection of personnel.• Compile new employee recommendations with supporting documentation for board approval.• Compose and place job vacancy ads and job postings.• Supervise substitute teacher and adult education programs.• Administer Family Medical Leave Act program.• Assist in resolution of employee complaints and grievances.• Assist in Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Title IX and due process investigations.• Assist in creating, revising and implementing policies and procedures according to federal and state law.

- Coordinate placement of student teachers.
- Coordinate records management program.
- Compile department budget information.
- Assist in planning and executing annual Teacher of the Year award banquet.
- Revise and issue Employee and Substitute Handbook on annual basis.
- Revise and issue Emergency Procedures Manual on annual basis.
- Issue Letters of Reasonable Assurance (assures employees that they are full-time despite the fact that they do not work during the summer and prevents them from filing for unemployment during the summer session) to support and substitute personnel annually.
- Revise and reprint professional and support job application forms as necessary.
- Maintain and update employee roster.
- Compile and maintain contract eligibility list for professional personnel.
- Prepare and distribute regular, dual, auxiliary and probationary contracts for all professional personnel annually, and as needed throughout the school year.
- Process request of transfer forms annually.

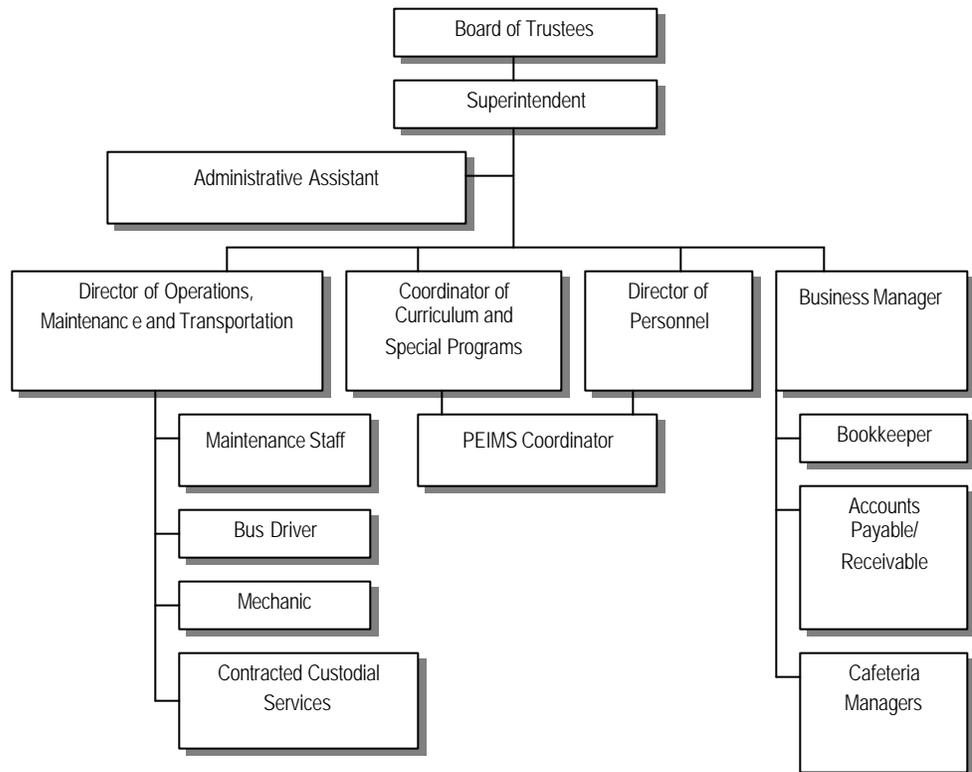
Source: ACISD job descriptions, December 1994.

Recommendation 5:

Reorganize central administration, hire a personnel director and realign responsibilities for a more efficient operation.

Exhibit 1-8 presents a recommended administrative organization structure for VISD, adding an administrative position to handle personnel, staff development and PEIMS responsibilities, as well as reassigning other responsibilities to proposed and existing staff.

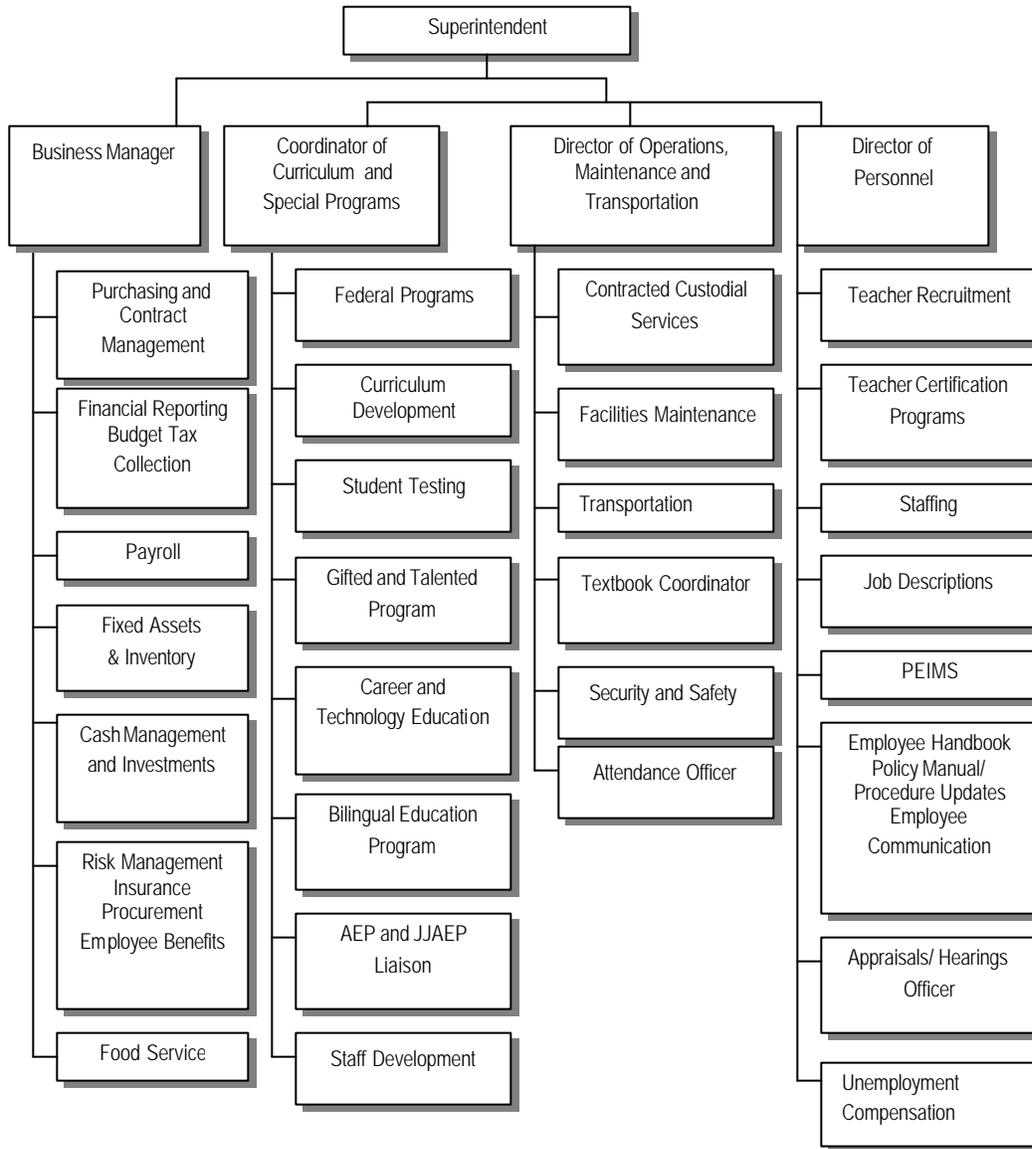
**Exhibit 1-8
Recommended VISD Organization**



Source: Texas Public School Consulting, Inc.

Exhibit 1-9 shows the proposed central office responsibilities as realigned under the recommended expanded and reorganized central administration for VISD.

**Exhibit 1-9
VISD Central Office Proposed Responsibilities**



Source: Texas Public School Consulting, Inc.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent reviews the central administration	September
--	-----------

	organization structure and realigns duties for existing staff and a recommended personnel director position.	2003
2.	The superintendent presents the revised organization structure to the director board for approval.	October 2003
3.	The superintendent advertises the personnel director position.	November 2003
4.	The superintendent screens applicants and interviews finalists for the personnel director position.	February 2004
5.	The superintendent recommends employment of the proposed personnel director to the board.	March 2004
6.	The superintendent hires the director of Personnel, discusses realigned duties with the central administration staff and implements revised organizational structure.	April 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

The average VISD central administrator salary, excluding the superintendent, is currently \$57,244. Using that average for the proposed personnel director position with a 10 percent allowance for benefit expenses results in a cost of \$62,968 (\$57,244 + \$5,724). Since the position would not be filled until April 2004, only a third of that amount would be expensed in fiscal year 2003-04 for a 12-month position ($\$62,968 \times 4/12 = \$20,989$).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Reorganize central administration, hire a personnel director and realign responsibilities for a more efficient operation.	(\$20,989)	(\$62,968)	(\$62,968)	(\$62,968)	(\$62,968)

FINDING

VISD does not have written procedures for central administration functions. VISD subscribes to TASB school board policy services for district board policies, but the district has no defined administrative procedures to implement the policies. VISD has no written operating procedures for the personnel, business or other administrative functions. Although each person understands his or her duties, the lack of written procedures for these functions allows for inconsistent practices and subjective interpretation in their administration. If someone is absent or leaves VISD employment, the lack of documentation limits how well

other employees can perform the tasks or help to perform that person's essential duties or train his or her replacement.

VISD does not have written operating procedures or a contingency plan for the duties performed by district staff. The administrative assistant to the superintendent and the PEIMS coordinator perform many routine tasks related to personnel activities and operations. The administrative assistant to the superintendent handles many employee benefit duties, acts as the benefit liaison for employees, processes enrollment forms and change forms within required time limits to meet payroll deadlines, processes sick leave requests, ensures compliance with Family Medical Leave Act requirements and processes Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and TRS Care forms. The PEIMS coordinator manages workers' compensation claims, PEIMS data, personnel records, teacher applications, criminal record checks and teacher certification, in addition to bus ridership records and the free and reduced-price meal programs. The current workload would not allow either employee to assume other duties, even temporarily.

VISD does not have written procedures to establish controls and provide guidance to staff in the day-to-day operation of its business functions.

Some of the problems that result from a lack of written procedures include: failure to follow provisions in board policy; poor purchasing practices and contract management; and exceeding the 2001-02 budget at the functional and fund level without amending the budget.

In the past, VISD routinely issued handwritten checks, an inefficient use of employee time. New purchasing procedures are being implemented to eliminate handwritten checks.

VISD does not have written procedures for other central administrative functions, including PEIMS and records management. The same issues of inconsistent practice, subjective interpretation of policies and inadequate guidelines for substitute, temporary or other employees are also a concern in those functions. Standard operating procedures facilitate the completion of routine work by temporary employees. These critical administrative tasks are important to the overall effectiveness of the personnel management functions. The district has said that it is developing written procedures in assigned areas.

VISD has no formal mechanism to ensure that board policies are followed. The lack of written regulations for implementing board policies allows individual discretion and subjective interpretation in performing administrative functions.

Lyford ISD maintains a comprehensive operating procedures manual. With TASB's assistance, the superintendent developed this manual in August 2000. The manual contains operating procedures for 70 different areas of district operations, such as budget development, fixed asset inventory, maintenance requests and UIL activities. The manual includes key forms that are referenced in each procedure. The manual serves as an excellent training guide for new employees and a reference tool for all employees. The superintendent's office maintains and updates the manual.

Recommendation 6:

Develop written procedures for central administration functions in personnel, business and other administrative functions.

Written procedures would help train staff to follow and apply the procedures. Cross-training staff in how to perform essential duties could be standardized with staff access to written operating procedures. Written procedures should link to board policies where applicable.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with central administrative staff to begin reviewing current operating practices for personnel, business and other administrative functions and to develop written procedures.	September 2003
2.	The superintendent begins review of board policies to identify those that require administrative regulations.	September 2003
3.	Central administrative staff document current operating practices for assigned personnel, business and other administrative functions and review them for compliance with board policies.	November 2003
4.	The superintendent completes the review of board policies and categorizes the need for administrative regulations by administrative function.	November 2003
5.	The superintendent and the central administrative staff discuss current operating practices to identify effective, efficient practices for VISD.	November 2003
6.	The superintendent discusses the need for administrative regulations, by administrative function and board policy, with the central administrator responsible for that function.	November 2003
7.	Each central administrator develops written procedures for assigned functions, incorporating best practices for effectiveness, response and efficiency.	April 2004

8.	Each central administrator responsible for an administrative function that requires regulations for effective implementation of board policies develops appropriate administrative regulations for each board policy.	April 2004
9.	The superintendent reviews written procedures with the administrators, focusing on consistency, effectiveness and compliance with board policies.	May 2004
10.	The superintendent reviews the regulations with each administrator, focusing on links to and implementation of the respective board policy and on clear, concise, thorough interpretation of the policy's intent and purpose.	May 2004
11.	Central office administrators who implement written procedures for assigned functions train district staff and campus personnel in the procedures.	August 2004
12.	The superintendent publishes and distributes administrative regulations manual to central office administrators and school principals, and distributes individual copies of administrative regulations to other staff members on a need-to-know basis.	August 2004
13.	Central office administrators monitor the effectiveness of and adherence to operating procedures for administrative functions.	September 2004 and Ongoing
14.	The superintendent reviews and updates the regulations as necessary.	September 2004 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

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. Strategic plans with well-defined goals that result from broad-based input can better meet state academic excellence standards. Evaluating programs allows the board and administrators to gauge the success of each program, determining if key objectives and results are obtained and if the benefits merit the costs incurred. Changes can then be made, based on those results.

As part of its planning and evaluation process, VISD developed a district improvement plan (DIP) and a campus improvement plan (CIP) at each school. Every year, each principal works with the site-based decision-making committee to review and revise the CIP, using TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data. The CIP seeks to improve student performance on the state's academic excellence indicators, as well as to improve performance on other performance measures for special-needs populations. The CIP also supports the objectives of the DIP.

The district improvement committee developed the DIP and conducts a comprehensive needs assessment, using district AEIS data and identifying needs for subject areas, grade levels and special programs. In developing the DIP, VISD considers the Effective Schools Correlates: Instructional Leadership, Instructional Focus, High Expectations, School Climate and Parental Involvement. The DIP also addresses the six areas of decision-making: planning, curriculum and instruction, staffing, staff development, school organization and budgeting.

FINDING

VISD has no overall strategic planning process. The VISD board has formulated and approved district goals to guide planning efforts for 2003-04, including development of the DIP. **Exhibit 1-10** shows goals with specific objectives that were approved at a special meeting of the VISD board on February 25, 2003. The goals focus on improving teacher salaries, conducting land studies for potential sites, increasing rigor of the academic curriculum for junior and seniors, enhancing district

communication, increasing student participation and addressing building needs.

Exhibit 1-10
VISD Board of Trustees' 2003-04 Goals and Objectives

Governance: The VISD Board of Trustees will define, review and implement its role as elected trustees.	
Objective IA	The board will review existing policies and procedures regarding role.
Objective IB	The board will develop and implement board/administrative procedures regarding role.
Objective IC	The board will enhance levels of unity, mutual support and respect.
Administration: The VISD administration will implement accountability measures to improve the oversight of district operations.	
Objective IIA:	VISD administration will review available accountability measures such as Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), etc.
Objective IIB:	VISD administration will establish benchmarks in accountability measures.
Objective IIC:	VISD administration will incorporate benchmarks in annual evaluation.
Objective IID:	VISD administration will align curriculum to benchmarks.
Personnel: The VISD will recruit, employ and retain educators and school employees of the highest quality, based on qualifications and successful educational experience.	
Objective IIIA:	VISD will design and implement salary schedules with predictable pay increments for all personnel.
Objective IIIB:	VISD will incorporate highest expectations in hiring, planning, benchmarking and evaluations.
Objective IIIC:	VISD faculty will align curriculum to instruction.
Clientele Parents: The VISD will identify and implement effective parent communication methods.	
Objective IVA:	VISD will design and implement the parent communication system.
Objective IVB:	VISD will increase the level of parental involvement.
Clientele Students: The VISD will encourage the development of student self-esteem based on academic achievement.	

Objective IVC:	VISD will design and implement opportunities to recognize academic achievement.
Objective IVD:	VISD will identify and implement programs to enhance levels of student responsibility.
Clientele Community: The VISD will develop community partnerships to enhance city and school planning and development.	
Objective IVE:	VISD will develop and participate in community partnerships.
Objective IVF:	VISD will participate in community planning and development.
Program: Curricular: The VISD will offer programs that increase the academic rigor of the curriculum.	
Objective VA	VISD will provide opportunity for success on TEKS.
Objective VB:	VISD will provide opportunity for students to earn the Distinguished Academic Diploma.
Objective VC:	VISD will increase course offerings in academic electives.
Objective VD:	VISD will identify and remediate areas of academic weakness in the district.
Extra-Curricular: The VISD will provide extra-curricular programs that provide equity of participation for all students.	
Objective VE:	VISD will demonstrate outstanding leadership and mentoring in all extracurricular programs.
Objective VF:	VISD will increase student participation to 80 percent of the student body.
Facilities: The VISD will develop long -range facilities plan.	
Objective VIA:	VISD will maximize current facility use and longevity.
Objective VIB:	VISD will review potential land purchases.
Objective VIC:	VISD review, edit and propose a long-range facilities plan.
Finance: The VISD will prioritize its budget according to adopted goals.	
Objective VIIA:	VISD will determine cost estimates for special goal implementation.
Objective VIIB:	VISD will prioritize goals based on feasibility and available resources.
Objective VIIC:	VISD will enhance tax collection.
Research/Development: The VISD will make decisions based on available school data.	
Objective VIIIA:	VISD will identify primary indicators of significance in

	school data.
Objective VIII B:	VISD will use available school data in benchmarking and goal evaluation.
Objective VIII C:	VISD will communicate school data effectively and efficiently.
<i>Source: VISD superintendent's office.</i>	

Although VISD has board-established goals for 2003-04, the district lacks the framework for long-range strategic planning. While the 2002-03 DIP for VISD was instructional in nature, the district has started the process of linking the 2003-04 DIP to the board's established goals. Although the 2003-04 planning document includes timelines, persons responsible and budget estimates, the district is waiting for test scores before completing the planning document. The VISD board's goals will be presented to the district improvement committee for incorporation into the 2003-04 DIP.

The district faces significant financial challenges, and the lack of multiple-year planning limits its ability to make the necessary decisions based upon meaningful analysis.

By involving district staff and community members in an extensive long-range planning process, Crystal City ISD successfully drafted a long-range plan that incorporated important information on the district and its resources and identified specific objectives and timelines for implementing improvements.

Recommendation 7:

Implement a strategic planning process that links existing plans, the budget and performance evaluations into an integrated districtwide strategic plan.

Strategic planning should involve the VISD community and its stakeholders and should focus on long-range as well as short-term goals.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent, with the assistance of the district site-based decision-making committee develops a plan of action and expands the district and campus improvement planning process into a comprehensive strategic plan, and links them to the budget.	September 2003
2.	The superintendent presents the new strategic plan for board approval.	November 2003

3.	The board approves the plan.	December 2003
4.	The superintendent and his staff implement the strategic plan.	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 1

District Organization and Management

D. COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Local school districts were established to fill the needs of their community, which includes students, parents, non-parent residents, taxpayers, businesses, other political subdivisions and special-interest groups. If the community is to respond appropriately to district needs and concerns, it must be well informed about issues facing the district. For this reason, districts need to disseminate information and to gather feedback from the community. Effective two-way communication enables school districts to gain the confidence, support and involvement of their local communities. Similarly, school districts need the support of local organizations and businesses to enhance educational programs. An active partnership and outreach program fosters the district's relationship with the community and builds support for school activities.

VISD communicates with its parents and community in a variety of ways. Teachers and campuses communicate with parents through campus newsletters, notices to parents, individual teacher-parent conferences, school signs and campus Web sites. The VISD URL is *www.venusisd.net*. The Web site contains an event calendar for each of the four schools as well as district information about the board, administration, schools and school-year calendar. Links to Web sites that contain employment vacancies and applications, athletic activity schedules, band program information and information regarding the community library. In addition, academic-related tasks are posted also on the VISD Web site.

FINDING

The Joe A. Hall High School and Community Library, created through a partnership between the City of Venus and the school district, is located at the high school and serves both the school's students and the community. The school-community library meets the criteria of the North Texas Regional Library System and the Texas State Library for public library status. As a result, VISD has been able to qualify for and obtain several grants that would not otherwise be available to a school library. The City

of Venus contributes \$1,000 annually to the facility's operation. A director of libraries and three library aides staff the library.

Opened in 1994, the Venus High School and Community Library is one of the few combination high school and community libraries in Texas. The library's selection and services compares to that of libraries in cities much larger than Venus. This combination allows VISD students the use of all resources of the high school library, plus the extra resources of a public library. The library has a completely automated circulation system, Internet access to the library catalogue, TEXSHARE databases, computer and copy services, popular periodicals and more than 14,500 books and videos. The library is open to the public from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. The library Web site is <http://www.venuslibrary.net>.

COMMENDATION

The public library located at the high school serves students and community patrons in a beneficial partnership between the district and the City of Venus.

FINDING

Teachers and administrators perceive a lack of parental and community involvement in the schools. This was reflected in surveys of the teaching, administrative and support staff, in comments from the teacher focus group and in objective IVB of the board's goals to increase the level of parental involvement. The only group that responded favorably to the survey question was the parent group with a 50-percent positive response and a 40-percent negative response. Survey responses to a question gauging the amount of volunteer involvement are indicated in **Exhibit 1-11**.

**Exhibit 1-11
Parental and Community Involvement**

Survey Question: Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs					
Results	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teacher Survey	0%	10%	10%	42%	38%
Administrative	0%	0%	33%	56%	11%

and Support Staff Survey					
Parent Survey	0%	50%	10%	40%	0%
<i>Source: VISD Teacher, Administrative and Support Staff, Parent Survey, 2003.</i>					

The perception of 80 percent of the teachers and the concern of the board that many parents and community members are not actively involved in the school supports staff and board comments from review team focus groups. The disparity between staff perceptions and parent opinions in the survey suggests that, while the majority of the staff wants more parent involvement, more than half of the parents feel that they are adequately involved. Parents can be involved with the schools in VISD through the activities and meetings of parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) at each school, through attendance at athletic and band booster club meetings and activities, at teacher-parent conferences and by volunteering for service at the schools.

A number of comments received by the review team during the on-site visit indicated strong concern regarding lack of parental and community involvement with VISD schools.

- More parent involvement is needed.
- No community involvement.
- Athletic spectator participation is extremely low.
- Lack of parent support at extracurricular activities

VISD's formal effort to solicit volunteers exists in the parent, community and business membership on the district advisory committee (DAC) and the campus advisory committee (CAC) for each campus. The DAC meets monthly, with subcommittees meeting more often to make recommendations to the whole committee. Other volunteer efforts are coordinated at the campus level by each principal and the campus parent organization.

The non-staff membership of each CAC is comprised of two parents, two businesspersons and two community members; each CAC meets once a month for two hours. The CAC at each school is involved with development and review of the campus improvement plan.

In addition to staff members, one parent serves on the Language Parent Advisory Committee (LPAC) at each campus. The LPAC meets as needed for assessment and placement of students who are identified as limited English proficient (LEP) students. At the high school, nine volunteers serve on the Safe & Drug-Free Education advisory committee, 12

volunteers serve on the career and technology parent advisory committee and four volunteers serve on the health advisory committee.

The primary, elementary and middle schools have active PTOs that meet four to five times a year, with more frequent meetings of the PTO executive committees. Membership in the PTOs at the three schools is as follows:

- the primary school PTO has 58 members with four on its executive committee;
- the elementary school PTO has 86 members with four on its executive committee; and
- the middle school PTO has 25 members with five on its executive committee.

The primary school has four to 10 volunteer campus helpers, four days a week for six hours a day. The volunteers read with students, help in the office, supervise students in the cafeteria and otherwise assist teachers and students. Every day, 10 volunteer high school students listen to students read.

At the elementary campus, three volunteers help with the school store for 45 minutes, two mornings a week. Fifteen parent volunteers accompany students on field trips; the school has eight scheduled field trips during the year. For the two classroom parties each year, two parent volunteers help in each of the 39 classrooms. Five parent volunteers assist with the school Field Day, and one to three parent volunteers help out in three school celebrations held during the school year.

The middle school has a volunteer drama coach for 10 practice sessions and three performances. The student council has seven volunteer sponsors for two one-hour meetings a month. Three volunteers operate the concession stand for three hours at 15 ball games a year. At the four school dances, four parents act as volunteer chaperones, and 12 parent volunteers help plan and host the grade 8 picnic.

The high school has a 20-member athletic booster club; 16 members man the football concession stands. The 32-member band booster club staffs the basketball concessions with 22 volunteers during the season. Twelve volunteers chaperone five school dances, and 34 volunteers help on Campus Career Day. A volunteer choir performance accompanist spends about 220 hours a year at all concerts and at solo and ensemble performances and competitions.

Getting input from the community, parents and staff in developing an effective school communication plan can lead to ownership of the plan by

all stakeholders. There is no staff in-service on communications with parents and the community that fosters a positive school-parent partnership.

An effective district community involvement plan should include well-defined goals, measurable objectives and systematic evaluations. It should also outline roles and responsibilities and identify who will be responsible for achieving goals and objectives.

Grape Creek ISD (GCISD) has an active Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) program that involves parent and community volunteers. In 1999-2000, this district of about 1,200 students had 41 who contributed 343 volunteer hours in activities such as:

- tutoring individual students;
- helping kindergarten students take computer tests;
- shelving library books;
- assisting with school picture day;
- running errands for the dental van;
- assisting with vision and hearing screening;
- assisting with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA); and
- helping with University Interscholastic League sponsored activities.

GCISD and the PTA sponsor an awards luncheon each year to honor the volunteers. They also have formal training for new VIPS each fall, using materials from the National Association of Partners in Education, Inc., along with materials the district has purchased. The district trains teachers on how to use VIPS effectively in their classrooms.

Recommendation 8:

Develop a plan to strengthen the school-parent partnership in VISD and track and publish volunteerism statistics quarterly.

The more parents become involved with VISD schools, the more effective the schools will be in educating students. Positive school-home partnership is one of the correlates identified by Effective Schools research. Open communication and positive reinforcement of the school's partnership with parents and the community in the education of their children should be a focus of VISD. A concerted effort by teachers and principals, in conjunction with each school's PTO, can help reach parents who are not actively participating in school activities. More PTO activities involving students can support that effort. VISD's emphasis on the school-parent partnership can be highlighted in a variety of ways. Parent newsletters, school meetings, board meetings, PTO meetings, booster club

meetings, teacher-parent conferences and other opportunities for school-parent communications can help to foster and strengthen the bonds of the school-parent partnership in the VISD community.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board appoints a committee of staff, parents and community members to identify and study issues that affect parental involvement in VISD.	September 2003
2.	The committee reports to the board its findings with suggestions on how to enhance parental involvement.	November 2003
3.	After obtaining committee input, the superintendent and the board develop a plan to strengthen the bonds of school-parent partnership in VISD.	February 2004
4.	The board formally adopts the plan and publicly recognizes the efforts of the committee in providing input.	March 2004
5.	The superintendent implements the plan.	April 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

This chapter reviews the educational service delivery system of Venus Independent School District (VISD) in the following sections:

- A. Student Performance
- B. Instructional Resources
- C. Gifted and Talented Education
- D. Compensatory Education
- E. Special Education
- F. Bilingual/English as a Second Language Education
- G. Career and Technology Education
- H. Library/Media Services
- I. Student Discipline and Alternative Education Programs
- J. Computer Technology

To meet students' needs, a district must have a well-designed and well-managed process for directing instructors, maintaining curriculum, evaluating and monitoring the success of its educational programs and to provide the resources to support them. Educational service delivery includes programs for students with special needs as well as careful adherence to state and federal mandates concerning curriculum. The effectiveness of educational service delivery is measured by comparing the resources placed into a program with the benefits to students. The instructional delivery system includes the board, the central office and school staffing, including teachers and support personnel such as counselors, librarians, nurses and technology specialists.

BACKGROUND

VISD selected four Texas school districts to serve as peer districts for comparative purposes: Dublin, Godley, Grandview and Rio Vista ISDs. To make these comparisons, the review team relied on information supplied by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on state-mandated student achievement test scores, results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and other student performance measures such as college entrance exams and end-of-course exams.

TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports provide demographic, staffing, student performance and financial data for each school district and schools within the district. TEA sends these reports to each district and makes them available on its Web site <www.tea.state.tx.us>. The latest AEIS data, published by TEA in November 2002, includes information from 2001-02. For updated and current 2002-03 school year information, the review team also relied on data available through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) reports. School districts submit data to TEA at scheduled dates and TEA converts the data into the AEIS reports upon completion of the school year. Several charts in this chapter do not include regional information, which was not available through PEIMS at press time.

Exhibit 2-1 presents demographic information for VISD, selected peer districts and the state. For 2002-03, student enrollment in VISD and the peer districts ranged from 896 in Rio Vista ISD to 1,871 in VISD. With a student enrollment of 1,377, Godley is closest in size to VISD. African American student enrollment among the districts ranges from 0.1 percent in Rio Vista to 3.8 percent in Grandview, and 2.6 percent in VISD. The peer districts' share of economically disadvantaged students, students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, ranges from 31.6 percent in Rio Vista to 62.3 percent in VISD. VISD has the largest share of economically disadvantaged students among its peer school district at 62.3 percent.

Exhibit 2-1
Demographic Characteristics
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	Students Enrolled	Ethnic Group (Percentage of Students)				Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students
		African American	Hispanic	Anglo	Other	
Dublin	1,318	0.5%	45.1%	54.1%	0.4%	61.8%
Godley	1,377	1.1%	12.6%	85.6%	0.7%	33.5%
Grandview	1,122	3.8%	11.7%	84.2%	0.3%	34.2%
Rio Vista	896	0.1%	6.6%	93.0%	0.3%	31.6%
Venus	1,871	2.6%	32.9%	61.1%	3.4%	62.3%
State	4,259,864	14.3%	42.7%	39.8%	3.2%	51.8%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

Exhibit 2-2 shows budgeted instructional expenditures for VISD and selected peer districts in 2002-03. VISD spent less per student than any peer district. VISD ranked third among its peer districts on regular education per student expenditures at 72 percent, highest percentage spent on gifted and talented education (G/T) at 1 percent, second in special education spending at 17.2 percent, third in its career and technology program spending at 4.1 percent, fourth in Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) at 0.3 percent and second in compensatory education spending per student at 5.4 percent.

Exhibit 2-2
Budgeted Instructional Expenditures
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

Districts	Total Expenditures	Instruction Expenditures Per Student*	Percent Regular	Percent G/T	Percent Special Education	Percent Career and Tech.	Percent Bilingual/ESL	Percent State Comp Ed
Dublin	\$8,421,128	\$3,851	69.9%	0.9%	11.4%	5.7%	7.2%	4.8%
Godley	\$9,827,976	\$4,104	74.9%	0.1%	18.0%	3.6%	0.8%	2.6%
Grandview	\$8,395,039	\$4,955	78.0%	0.6%	14.6%	3.2%	0.2%	3.4%
Rio Vista	\$6,725,718	\$4,313	67.5%	0.2%	14.1%	4.5%	0.4%	13.2%
Venus	\$11,613,297	\$3,702	72.0%	1.0%	17.2%	4.1%	0.3%	5.4%
State	\$26,202,489,428	\$3,876	66.35%	1.75%	14.45%	3.90%	4.34%	6.74%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

*Includes instruction and instructional leadership expenditures, using functional codes 11,12,13,21 and 23.

As seen in **Exhibit 2-3**, VISD ranked last among its peers in the percentage of its student population enrolled in gifted and talented education programs at 5.1 percent, ranked second in the number of students enrolled in special education at 25.7 percent, ranked third in career and technology at 19.1 percent and second in bilingual/ESL at 9.5 percent.

Exhibit 2-3
Student Enrollment/Percentage of Total Enrollment by Program
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	Gifted and Talented	Special Education	Career and Technology	Bilingual/ESL
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Dublin	92	7.0%	171	13.0%	297	22.5%	171	13.0%
Godley	92	6.7%	391	28.4%	292	20.5%	25	1.8%
Grandview	79	7.0%	203	18.0%	215	19.1%	31	2.8%
Rio Vista	100	11.2%	159	17.8%	162	18.1%	11	1.2%
Venus	96	5.1%	480	25.7%	358	19.1%	177	9.5%
State	332,551	7.8%	492,973	11.6%	841,438	19.8%	322,412	7.6%
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>								

VISD ranked second among its peer districts in the percentage of per-pupil expenditures at 52.7 percent and is 1.9 percentage points higher than the state average of 50.8 percent (**Exhibit 2-4**).

Exhibit 2-4
Percentage of Budgeted Expenditures by Instructional Function
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

Expenditures by Function	Dublin	Godley	Grandview	Rio Vista	Venus	State
Instruction (11,95)	51.9%	49.7%	60.8%	51.9%	52.7%	50.8%
Instruction-Related Services (12,13)	2.9%	2.3%	1.0%	1.5%	1.7%	2.7%
Instructional Leadership (21)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
School Leadership (23)	5.4%	5.5%	4.0%	4.8%	5.2%	5.3%
Support Services-Student (31,32,33)	2.7%	4.2%	3.1%	3.0%	2.7%	4.0%
Student Transportation (34)	2.4%	3.4%	0.7%	2.2%	5.5%	2.6%
Food Services (35)	7.1%	5.1%	3.6%	5.6%	6.6%	4.9%
Co-curricular/Extracurricular Activities (36)	4.6%	3.7%	2.7%	3.6%	3.4%	2.3%
Central Administration (41,92)	4.2%	3.7%	3.7%	5.0%	3.0%	3.6%
Plant Maintenance and Operations (51)	11.2%	11.8%	7.6%	13.0%	9.9%	10.0%
Security and Monitoring	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.6%

Services (52)						
Data Processing Services (53)	1.8%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	1.8%	1.2%
Other*	5.8%	10.4%	12.8%	9.1%	7.4%	10.9%
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>						
<i>*Includes any operating expenditures not listed above and all non-operational expenditures such as debt service, capital outlay and community and parental involvement services.</i>						

Exhibit 2-5 shows the share of professional staff in various categories for 2002-03. VISD has the second highest percentage of teachers among its peer districts and is 2.3 percentage points higher than the state average of 50.4 percent. The district ranks third in its share of school administrators at 2 percent compared to the state average of 2.4 percent. VISD ranks fourth among its peer districts in its share of central office administrators at 0.8 percent, which exceeds the state average by only 0.2 percent. The district has the highest percent of educational aides at 17.1 percent, which exceeds the state average by 6.8 percent.

Exhibit 2-5
Composition of Professional Staff
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

Professional Staff	Dublin	Godley	Grandview	Rio Vista	Venus	State
Teachers	48.3%	51.6%	43.4%	54.2%	52.7%	50.4%
Professional Support	5.9%	5.8%	14.3%	4.9%	3.7%	8.0%
Campus Administration	2.4%	3.2%	1.5%	2.1%	2.0%	2.4%
Central Administration	1.5%	1.6%	3.0%	0.7%	0.8%	1.0%
Educational Aides	15.1%	15.3%	13.8%	9.8%	17.1%	10.3%
Auxiliary Staff	26.8%	22.6%	24.1%	28.5%	23.7%	27.9%
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>						

Exhibit 2-6 shows teacher experience for VISD and its peer districts. Compared to the peer districts, VISD has the highest share of beginning teachers at 10 percent, ranks first with 40.8 percent in its share of one to five years experience; fifth with 19.2 percent in teachers with six to 10 years of experience; fifth with 17.7 percent of teachers with 11-20 years of experience; and third with 12.3 percent of teachers with more than 20 years of experience.

Exhibit 2-6
Teacher Experience
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

	Dublin	Godley	Grandview	Rio Vista	Venus	State
Beginning Teachers	6.1%	6.1%	6.8%	7.7%	10.0%	7.8%
1-5 Years Experience	17.2%	35.7%	22.7%	30.8%	40.8%	28.2%
6-10 Years Experience	21.2%	24.5%	22.8%	21.8%	19.2%	18.3%
11-20 Years Experience	30.3%	23.5%	28.4%	33.3%	17.7%	24.4%
More than 20 Years Experience	25.3%	10.2%	19.3%	6.4%	12.3%	21.3
Average Years of Experience	13.5	8.7	11.2	9.3	7.7	11.1
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>						

Exhibit 2-7 shows the different degree levels held by VISD teachers in 2001-02. With 92.5 percent of teachers with a bachelor's degree, the district ranks second among its peer districts, which is 17.2 percentage points higher than the state average of 75.3 percent. VISD ranks fourth among its peer districts with 7.5 percent of teachers with a master's degree, or 15.3 percentage points lower than the state average of 22.8 percent.

Exhibit 2-7
Teacher Degrees
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2001-02

	Dublin	Godley	Grandview	Rio Vista	Venus	State
No Degree	1.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Bachelors	72.4%	94.2%	85.4%	83.9%	92.5%	75.3%
Masters	26.6%	5.8%	13.4%	16.1%	7.5%	22.8%
Doctorate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
<i>Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.</i>						

When TEA administered the TAAS test as the state’s accountability measure for school districts, the agency assigned annual accountability ratings to each district and their respective schools based primarily upon the test performance results and dropout rates. The accountability system includes five categories for districts: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, Academically Unacceptable and Unacceptable: Data Quality. For schools, the categories are: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable and Low Performing. To receive an Exemplary rating, at least 90 percent of all students, as well as 90 percent of each student group (African American, Hispanic, Anglo and economically disadvantaged) must pass the TAAS reading, writing and mathematics tests. To achieve a Recognized rating, 80 percent of all students and each student group must pass the TAAS reading, writing and mathematics tests. To be rated Academically Acceptable, 50 percent of each student group must pass TAAS. Scores for students with disabilities and from the TAAS Spanish version of reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 6 are included in the accountability calculations. According to TEA, when students fail to meet TAAS standards.

Exhibit 2-8 provides the accountability ratings for VISD and its peer districts from 1998 through 2002. VISD was rated Acceptable from 1998 through 2002.

**Exhibit 2-8
Accountability Ratings*
VISD and Peer Districts
1997-98 through 2001-02**

District	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Dublin	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Godley	Recognized	Acceptable	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized
Grandview	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Acceptable
Rio Vista	Acceptable	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Recognized
Venus	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

**Districts retain the same ratings for 2002-03.*

Exhibit 2-9 shows the accountability ratings for all VISD schools in 2000-01 and 2001-02.

**Exhibit 2-9
VISD School Enrollment and
Accountability Ratings*
2000-01 and 2001-02**

School	Grade Levels	2000-01 Rating	2001-02 Rating
High School	9-12	Recognized	Recognized
Middle School	6-8	Acceptable	Acceptable
Elementary	2-5	Acceptable	Acceptable
Primary	EE-1	N/A	N/A
District	EE-12	Acceptable	Acceptable
<p><i>Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01 and 2001-02.</i></p> <p><i>*Districts retain the same ratings for 2002-03.</i></p>			

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

TAAS performance determined a district's accountability ratings until the end of 2001-02. TAAS was administered in grades 3-8 and 10 in reading and mathematics. Students in grades 4, 8 and 10 were also assessed in writing and grade 8 students were assessed in social studies and science. An exit-level examination was given in grade 10. In addition to completing all other high school graduation requirements, students must pass this exit-level exam to graduate. Students in special education programs may be exempt from the exit-level exam or take the State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA).

In 2002-03, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) replaced the TAAS. The new assessment is more rigorous than the TAAS and will be administered in grades 3 through 11. Math will be assessed in grades 3 to 11. Reading will be assessed in grades 3 to 9 and English Language Arts in grades 10 and 11. Writing will be assessed in grades 4 and 7; social studies in grades 8, 10 and 11; and science in grades 5, 10 and 11. The exit-level examination was administered in grade 11, but will not affect the graduation of high school students until the 2003-04 school year. The spring and summer of 2003 will produce the first set of performance reports for the TAKS assessments and the AEIS reports will include this new data.

The VISD coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs told the review team that even though TAKS will be implemented during 2002-03, districts will retain the TAAS accountability ratings from the previous 2001-02 school year. Therefore, VISD will be rated Acceptable during the 2002-03 school year. The elementary and middle school campuses will continue to be rated as Acceptable and the high school campus will be rated as Recognized.

The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs provided information on grade 3 students who took the reading TAKS assessment in 2003. The results of this test show that 86 students out of 99 passed the TAKS reading assessment, which constitutes 87 percent of the class. Of

the remaining 13 students, four were absent, one became ill during the test administration and eight did not meet the passing standard, which has been set at 55 percent mastery for 2002-03. All of these students will have additional opportunities to take the TAKS reading assessment during spring and summer 2003. The TAAS passing standard was set at 70 percent mastery, which will also become the TAKS passing standard in 2004-05.

One of the ways that VISD addresses student performance issues is through the district improvement plan (DIP). According to goal number one of the DIP “all student groups taking the state reading, writing and math tests will meet or exceed the state standard of 80 percent passing by the year 2004 to achieve a district rating of Recognized and the standard of “90 percent passing for an Exemplary rating by the year 2005.” The strategies listed under goal number one in the district and campus improvement plans (CIP) address the analysis of 2002 TAAS data to determine strengths and weaknesses for all students in reading, writing, math, social studies and science, with a focus on Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) objectives with mastery below 80 percent on the 2002 TAAS test.

Exhibit 2-10 compares 2002-03 TAKS scores for grades 3 through 11 with the state average. This is the first year the new TAKS testing instrument has been in place. Students did well in grades 5,8, and 9 math and in grade 9 reading. However, the district also has other areas needing improvement where large gaps in scores appear compared to the state average, in particular, grade 4 writing, grade 6 reading, grade 7 writing, grade 8 social studies and grade 10 English and math.

The Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee is responsible for making the appropriate assessment recommendations for every student who receives special education services.

Exhibit 2-10
Percentage of Students Passing TAKS
VISD and State
2002-03

	Reading	Math	Writing	Science	Social Studies	English
Grade Level*	2002-03	2002-03	2002-03	2002-03	2002-03	2002-03
Grade 3						
VISD	86%	86%				
State	89%	90%				
Grade 4						

VISD	77%	82%	66%			
State	86%	88%	86%			
Grade 5						
VISD	75%	89%		69%		
State	80%	86%		74%		
Grade 6						
VISD	69%	72%				
State	86%	74%				
Grade 7						
VISD	79%	60%	68%			
State	88%	73%	85%			
Grade 8						
VISD	79%	75%			74%	
State	88%	72%			93%	
Grade 9						
VISD	87%	71%				
State	82%	63%				
Grade 10						
VISD		56%		62%	79%	53%
State		71%		69%	86%	72%
Grade 11						
VISD		66%		58%	86%	60%
State		68%		67%	90%	69%

Source: VISD, coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs.

Note: Shaded areas show where tests are not administered at particular grade levels.

FINDING

VISD retention rates in grades 6, 7 and 8 are significantly higher than the state averages and the averages of selected peer districts. The VISD middle school principal and teachers interviewed attribute the high retention rate for grade 6 to a number of factors. Many students entering middle school have difficulty meeting higher academic standards. During the shift from elementary to a middle school, teaching methods become faster paced. Students take cumulative and comprehensive tests or semester tests that require retention of a larger volume of material than in

grade 5. Also, as students become involved in competitive extracurricular activities, they have to manage their time more effectively.

VISD board policy states “promotion is based on overall average of 70 on a scale of 100 based on course-level, grade-level standards for all subject areas.” The district retains students who fail English, reading, math, science and social studies if they do not meet the promotion criteria. For all students at risk of failing, the middle school principal implemented an extended-day tutorial program two afternoons a week for all core subjects and the computer lab. The district provides transportation for all students who need to attend. In addition, every student who does not pass English and/or math is placed in a double block class schedule for English, math or both courses.

The middle school Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) lists several strategies for helping students succeed, including benchmark tests given to identify areas of weakness, TEKS reading skills taught across the curriculum, practice TAKS. However, TAKS scores for reading in grade six; 69 percent, show a 17 percentage point gap compared to the state average of 86 percent.

In addition, the CIP does not include specific strategies for grade 6 teachers to use to help grade 5 students transition from elementary to middle school. The district does not have a coordinated approach that uses all available resources to allow teachers in grades 5 and 6 help students who need to catch up with their peers.

Exhibit 2-11 shows VISD’s overall retention rates for 2001-02 compared with its peer districts and the state. Grades 6, 7 and 8 all have retention rates higher than those of the state average; grade 6’s retention rate is 6.2 percentage points higher than the state, grade 7’s is 2.5 percentage points higher and grade 8’s is 3.8 percentage points higher. In addition, VISD has the second-highest overall retention rates among its peer districts. Retention rates for 2002-03 were unavailable during the review teams onsite work. Studies show that children who fall behind by one or more grades are at a higher risk of dropping out of school.

Exhibit 2-11
Retention Rates by Grade*
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2001-02

Grade Level	Dublin	Godley	Grandview	Rio Vista	Venus	State Average
1	19.0%	0.0%	7.0%	5.1%	3.3%	5.8%

2	14.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	4.8%	3.5%
3	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	2.5%
4	2.4%	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	3.7%	1.4%
5	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
6	4.8%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	7.7%	1.5%
7	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%	2.9%	5.0%	2.5%
8	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	5.7%	1.9%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.

*Does not include Special Education students.

Ingram ISD has developed a set of promotion competencies for grades K through 12. All students must exhibit these competencies prior to promotion to the next grade level. This set of competencies provides clear guidelines to teachers regarding what students need to know when they complete each grade, and also helps teachers and administrators make promotion and retention decisions. These competencies are included in the district and campus improvement plans along with the budgeted funds allocated for their implementation.

Donna ISD established a broad-based committee including elementary and secondary administrators and reduced the number of students not promoted. The strategies include preparing students and staff for the transition from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school, a schedule for vertical meetings between elementary-middle and middle-high school teachers as well as professional development.

Recommendation 9:

Develop an instructional plan to reduce student retention rates and help promote more students.

The plan should consider both the short- and long-term effects of academic failure that result in retention and provide periodic assessment and the implementation of elementary to middle school strategies, starting in grade 5. For example, grade 5 teachers should teach organizational and time management skills, gradually increase student accountability through the year, raise expectations regarding late or redone work or extra credit and conduct cumulative and comprehensive tests. An instructional plan for students at risk of academic failure in middle school should provide both grade 5 and middle school teachers with a resource that targets those students specific needs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs forms a committee with teachers for grades 5 and 6 and their principals to review successful strategies for preparing elementary school students to middle school.	September 2003
2.	The committee develops a plan with specific strategies aimed at students at-risk-of academic failure in middle school.	October 2003
3.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs presents the plan to the superintendent for approval.	November 2003
4.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs provides staff development and training to district staff to use the strategies.	November 2003 Ongoing
5.	Principals monitor the implementation plan and the progress of students identified as being at risk of academic failure in middle school.	December 2003 Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district has the lowest percentage of students taking college entrance examinations among its peer districts. VISD's percent of students taking college entrance exams is nearly 15 percentage points below the state average. **Exhibit 2-12** shows that VISD students have the lowest participation rate in the Academic College Test (ACT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) among its peer districts, the region and state. In VISD, 48.3 percent of students take the SAT and ACT which is 14.6 percentage points lower than the state average of 62.9 percent and 17.1 percentage points lower than the region average of 65.4 percent. The VISD peer districts range from 56.7 percent to 76 percent of students taking the SAT and ACT exams.

Exhibit 2-12
College Entrance Examination Scores
VISD, Peer Districts, Region and the State
2001-02

	Percentage of Students Taking Examinations	Percentage of Students Meeting the Criterion	Average SAT Score	Average ACT Score
Dublin	66.7%	23.7%	926	19.3
Godley	56.7%	20.6%	926	20.4

Grandview	64.0%	21.9%	1,010	21.8
Rio Vista	76.0%	26.3%	957	23.2
Venus	48.3%	17.9%	1,032	19.5
Region 11	65.4%	32.4%	1,020	21.1
State	62.9%	26.9%	987	20.2
<i>Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.</i>				

TEA set the scores of 21 on the ACT and 1110 on the SAT as the minimum criterion for student scores acknowledged in a district's accountability rating. VISD students in the class of 2002 averaged a score of 19.5 on the ACT below the state average of 20.2, and 1.60 percentage points below the 21.1 percent regional average. VISD's average ACT scores rank second lowest among its peer districts. The average SAT score of VISD is 1032, which is 45 points higher than the state average score of 987 and 12 points higher than the region average score of 1020. VISD's SAT scores are also the highest among its peer districts. A district's SAT or ACT score relates to the percentage of students taking either test. In general, the higher the percentage of students taking the examinations, the lower the scores will be. Only 17.9 percent of students who took the tests met the criterion in 2002.

The ACT includes questions covering English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning, with scores ranging from 1 to 36 on each component. The ACT composite score is the average of the four component scores. The SAT includes a verbal and a mathematics component. Scores range from 200 to 800 for each test component. The combined total is the reported score and ranges up to a maximum of 1600.

The district's high school addresses this issue in its 2002-03 campus improvement plan: "Venus High School will emphasize preparation for post-secondary education." The strategy states, "Increase the number of students taking the college entrance exams by offering Peterson's SAT Preparation course to juniors and/or seniors and Princeton Review ACT materials in regular junior and senior English class." The high school improvement plan also includes a strategy to offer the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) to all sophomores and juniors free of charge to give students the experience of test-taking, as well as a score that can be used as a guide for improvement. By waiving the PSAT test fees, VISD makes it possible for all students to participate. However, the district has not alerted students and parents concerning the importance of the SAT and ACT exams in the post-secondary education and career opportunities for students graduating from high school.

Some Texas districts offer mini-camps for students and sessions involving teachers and parents to prepare students for college admission, including sessions for test-taking skills improvement and for preparation for the ACT/SAT. These programs give students the experience of taking tests, as well as a score that can be used as a guide for improvement when they are in high school. Some districts have also aligned their curriculum with the SAT.

Recommendation 10:

Increase the number of students taking the SAT and the ACT.

Although the high school’s CIP strategies take a step in the right direction, the district should also use multiple strategies to enhance student and parent awareness of the ACT and SAT exams importance to post-secondary education and career opportunities and of available instructional and financial resources. As part of a broader plan to prepare students for post-secondary education and career opportunities, VISD should start this awareness process in middle school and continue it throughout high school.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs, the high school principal and the counselor obtain information from several districts that have successfully increased student participation in college entrance examinations.	October 2003
2.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs forms a committee with the middle school and high school principals and counselors to develop a plan for increasing parent and student awareness of the importance of ACT and SAT participation and presents the plan to the superintendent for approval.	November 2003
3.	The middle school and high school principals and counselors implement the plan to increase parent and student awareness of the importance of ACT and SAT exams.	December 2003 Ongoing
4.	The principals and counselors monitor student participation in the ACT and SAT exams.	May 2004
5.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs meets with the committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and makes any changes that seem useful and prepares a report for the superintendent.	June 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

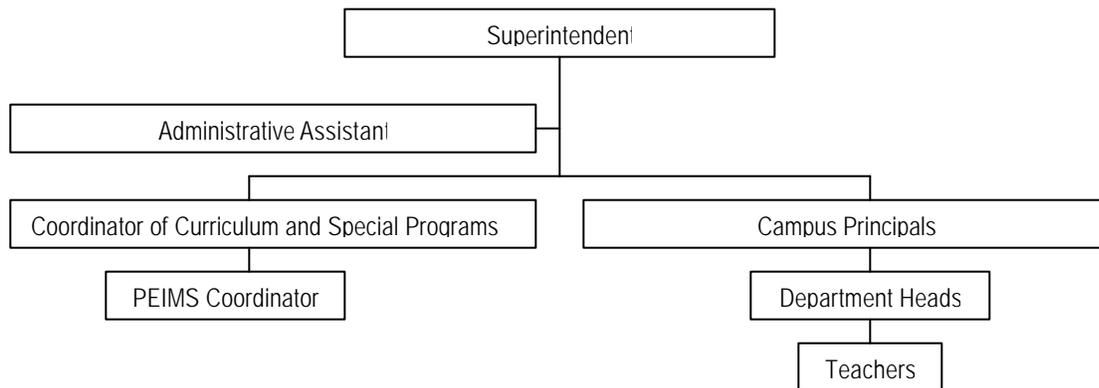
Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery

B. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

A high-quality curriculum spells out what students need to learn at each grade level. That includes long- and short-term goals; a description of instructional strategies; suggestions for instructional materials, textbooks and supplementary materials; and assessments used to measure progress toward learning the content. Basically, curriculum describes what to teach and how to teach it. Instructional resources are the materials needed to ensure successful learning, including financial and human resources, as well as instructional materials and direction.

Exhibit 2-13 presents the VISD organizational chart for educational service delivery. In addition to other job assignments, the coordinator for Curriculum and Special Programs oversees all issues related to curriculum and instruction.

Exhibit 2-13
VISD'S Educational Service Delivery Organization
2002-03



Source: VISD Organizational Chart, 2003.

FINDING

VISD lacks curriculum guides to serve as work plans for classroom teachers. Curriculum guides provide teachers with direction concerning student objectives, assessment methods, prerequisite skills, instructional materials, resources and classroom strategies. To be most effective, user-friendly curriculum guides should be easy to translate into day-to-day lessons and must remain current. They also contain:

- clear and valid objectives;
- a curriculum relevant to the assessment process;
- delineation of grade essential skills, knowledge and attitudes;
- delineation of major instructional resources; and
- clear approaches for classroom use.

VISD's curriculum is based on TEKS, which was implemented by the state in 1997. TEKS provides a blueprint of curriculum in all subjects taught in Texas public schools. One of the components of curriculum guides is the alignment of what is taught in the courses with the TEKS objectives and the new TAKS. The district has not developed a scope and sequence, which basically describes what to teach and how to teach it. The

district started a TEKS vertical alignment process for the English/language arts content areas in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 during August 2002. The proposed alignment schedule prepared by VISD administration shows that math, social studies and science will also be aligned during the school year, with the final alignment meeting scheduled on June 2004.

VISD administrators and teachers recognize that the district is not effectively monitoring and improving its curriculum. In the absence of curriculum guides, district schools work independently on curriculum and use different curricular materials, making it impossible to have a consistent curriculum and instructional standards. Since the new superintendent's arrival in summer 2002, the district has started to rectify this situation. The DIP states that VISD will "align district curriculum both vertically and horizontally in grades pre-kindergarten to 12." Under this objective, the DIP lists the following strategies: "develop scope and sequence in core subject areas in grades pre-kindergarten to 12, vertical teaming between grade levels, train selected staff in curriculum development competencies, use selected staff members as curriculum writing teams for all core subjects and develop a district assessment plan and calendar."

Reading instruction is of particular concern in VISD. In 2002-03, VISD set a goal to begin implementing a balanced approach to reading instruction. In August 2002, the district started to participate in various training opportunities that focus on successful reading initiatives and strategies. VISD is also working on plans for consistent implementation of the reading initiatives throughout the district, with particular focus at the primary and elementary schools. However, the 2002-03 TAKS scores indicate a significant gap in grade 6 reading. The district scored 69 percent passing or 17 percentage points below the state average of 85 percent. In addition, grade 10 also indicated a 19 percentage point difference in English, 53 percent passing, compared to the state average of 72 percent.

In another comparison, shown in **Exhibit 2-14**, VISD's class of 2002 ranked second among its peer districts with 64.3 percent of students passing Algebra I. The district ranked fourth with 76.2 percent of students passing Biology I, fifth in English II with 68.6 percent of students passing and fourth in U.S. History with 68.8 percent of students passing the end-of-course exams. Algebra I is the only course in which VISD's scores are 0.4 percentage points higher than the region average of 63.9 percent and 6.5 percentage points higher than the state average of 57.8 percent.

VISD Biology I scores are 6.3 percentage points lower than the region average of 82.5 percent and 3.6 percentage points lower than the state average of 79.8 percent. English II scores are 3.2 percentage points lower than the region average of 71.8 percent and 0.4 percentage points lower

than the state average of 69.0 percent. U. S. History scores fall 7.8 points lower than the region average of 76.6 percent and 5.1 percentage points lower than the state average of 73.9 percent. While districts will no longer take end-of-course exams in these areas, the scores are indicative of a need for further guidance.

Exhibit 2-14
End-of-Course Examination Scores
Percentage of Students Passing
VISD, Peer Districts, Region and the State
2001-02

District	Algebra I	Biology I	English II	U.S. History
Dublin	76.4%	83.5%	53.8%	88.0%
Godley	43.4%	82.1%	80.8%	80.9%
Grandview	44.2%	82.5%	69.9%	88.1%
Rio Vista	46.1%	75.5%	68.9%	41.0%
Venus	64.3%	76.2%	68.6%	68.8%
Region 11	63.9%	82.5%	71.8%	76.6%
State	57.8%	79.8%	69.0%	73.9%
<i>Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.</i>				

Glen Rose ISD developed curriculum guides for kindergarten through grade 12 following a five-year schedule detailed in a curriculum planning guide. Initial priority for curriculum development focused on the core subject areas. The curriculum planning guide provides information on curriculum-related tasks to be implemented each year and specifies criteria for developing curriculum guides. District administrators and principals meet with teachers and go into classrooms to confirm that teachers use the curriculum guides.

Kerrville ISD (KISD) has curriculum guides for each grade level and subject area, with aligned student objectives, instructional strategies, instructional resources and assessments. The curriculum is aligned with ACT/SAT and PSAT objectives, national standards and TEKS objectives. The curriculum writers align instructional materials, activities and strategies considered best practices to KISD curriculum objectives.

Some districts in the state have also developed a multi-year plan for developing curriculum guides for grades K-12. This plan's first phase includes the writing of curriculum guides for grades K-8, with focus on core subject areas. The second phase of the plan focuses on grades 9-12 and career and technology (CATE) courses. Districts can purchase CATE

curriculum guides and updates as needed from region service centers and universities. These districts also use consultants to conduct training in curriculum guide writing, to review of the writing process and to critique the curriculum guides.

Recommendation 11:

Create a multi-year schedule and develop curriculum guides.

VISD should design and implement a curriculum development schedule/and cost estimates for the multi-year project, with initial priority given to the core subject areas for grades K-5. After completing this process, the district should focus on curriculum guides for middle school, which includes grades 6-8, and for high school, which includes grades 9-12.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent assigns responsibility for the curriculum guides development to the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs.	October 2003
2.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs forms a curriculum guide writing committee including principals, assistant principals and teachers.	November - December 2003
3.	The curriculum committee develops a plan with a schedule and detailed cost estimates for the development or acquisition of curriculum guides for all district courses.	January - February 2004
4.	The curriculum committee submits the plan to the superintendent and the superintendent submits it to the board for approval.	March 2004
5.	The committee selects teams of teachers and principals for curriculum guide development in accordance with the approved schedule.	April - May 2004
6.	The curriculum writing teams develop or purchase curriculum guides in accordance with the approved schedule.	June - July 2004 Ongoing
7.	Teachers test the curriculum guides and provide feedback for further modifications.	August 2004 Ongoing
8.	The curriculum guide committee modifies the process and schedule for curriculum guide development as needed based on the feedback and presents all modifications to the superintendent.	October 2004 Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The core subjects include English/language arts, math, social studies and science. The first phase of the development for 24 curriculum guides for grades K-5 should be completed before 2005. During the following two years in the summer months, VISD should start developing 23 curriculum guides for the courses taught in middle school and 57 curriculum guides for the courses taught in high school. The guides can be created during the summer.

The first phase of the curriculum writing process for grades K-5 will start in the summer of 2003-04. The fiscal impact for this phase assumes that two teachers per grade level for each core subject area for grades K-5, six grade levels, will provide input into the curriculum writing process during a two-year cycle. Twenty-four teachers will develop language arts and math curriculum guides, six teachers for language arts and six for math. The same process will be followed in summer 2004-05 for science and social studies. This estimate assumes that each teacher will receive a \$100 stipend a day for five days during the summer months (six teachers at \$100/day x five days = \$3,000 for language arts and five teachers at \$100/day x five days = \$3,000 for math), for a total of \$6,000 for summer 2003-04.

In addition, a curriculum consultant will need to conduct a one-day training in curriculum guide writing, a one-day review of the writing process and three-day critique of the guides, for a total of five days. The consultant will receive \$400 per day plus the state rate of \$80 per day for lodging and \$30 per day for meals for a total cost of \$510 per day x five days = \$2,550. The total for 2003-04 is \$8,850 (\$6,000 + \$2,550).

This formula is also applicable for the development of the 12 curriculum guides for science and social studies in 2004-05 (\$6,000 + \$2,550).

The cost for 23 curriculum guides for the middle school to be developed in summer 2005-06, will be \$6,000 (six teachers at \$100 per day x five days) and \$2,550 for consultant services, a total of \$8,850. Teams of two teachers each per grade level will develop four curriculum guides each and one team will develop three guides.

The high school curriculum guides will be developed in two summers. In summer 2006-07, 28 guides will be developed by seven teachers each writing four guides in five days, at \$100 per day (seven teachers x \$100 per day = \$700 for five days = \$3,500) and \$2,550 for consultant services for a total of \$6,050 (\$3,500 + \$2,550 = \$6,050).

In the summer of 2007-08 the district will develop the remaining 29 guides using the same formula from the summer of 2006-07 with the exception of one teacher writing five guides giving that teacher one additional day to develop the extra guide for an additional cost of \$100 (seven teachers x \$100 per day = \$700 for five days = \$3,500) and \$2,550 for consultant services for a total of \$6,050 (\$3,500 + \$2,550 = \$6,050) plus an additional \$100 for the extra day to develop the last guide for a total of \$6,050 + \$100 = \$6,150.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Create a multi-year schedule and develop curriculum guides.	(\$8,850)	(\$8,850)	(\$8,850)	(\$6,050)	(\$6,150)

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

C. GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

Texas state law requires all school districts to identify and provide services for gifted and talented students. In 1990, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted its *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*, a guide for meeting the law's requirements. In 1996, SBOE updated the to plan ensure accountability for state-mandated services for gifted and talented students.

VISD defines gifted and talented as students “who excel consistently or who show the potential to excel in any one or combination of the following: general intellectual ability, specific subject matter aptitude, creative and productive thinking ability, leadership ability, ability in the visual and performing arts and psychomotor ability.” The mission statement for the VISD’s Gifted and Talented (G/T) program states that it will, “provide a differentiated curriculum that supports and challenges each identified Gifted/Talented student to reach their maximum potential.”

With 5.1 percent of VISD students identified as G/T students, **Exhibit 2-15** shows that VISD ranks the lowest among its peer districts. The district’s share of G/T expenditures per student is 0.6 percent, the highest percent of G/T expenditures per student among the peer districts.

Exhibit 2-15
Number and Percentage of Gifted/Talented Students and Teachers
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	G/T Student Enrollment		G/T Teachers		Total G/T Expenditures	Expenditures for G/T	
	Number	Percent**	Number*	Percent**		Amount Per Student	Percent***
Dublin	92	7.0%	1.8	1.8%	\$45,864	\$499	0.5%

Godley	92	6.7%	0	0.0%	\$2,550	\$28	0.0%
Grandview	79	7.0%	0	0.0%	\$36,578	\$463	0.4%
Rio Vista	100	11.2%	1	1.3%	\$9,951	\$100	0.2%
Venus	96	5.1%	0	0.0%	\$68,213	\$711	0.6%
State	332,551	7.8%	6,662.0	2.3%	\$348,603,099	\$1,048	1.75%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

*Expressed in Full Time Equivalents.

**Percent refers to G/T students as percentage of all students, percentage G/T teachers as percentage of all teachers.

****Total budgeted expenditures dividedly by G/T budgeted expenditures.

VISD begins screening students for G/T services in kindergarten and offers G/T services in kindergarten through grade 12. Students can be nominated at any time. According to the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs for VISD “prior to entering the process for the VISD G/T program, students in grades kindergarten through second grade participate in a talent pool. This pool was established to provide younger students with the gifted experiences in the classroom and to better prepare them for the qualification process. Teaching strategies focus on higher level thinking experience and prepare students to be independent problem solvers and to develop academic skills. Credit by exam is an option for K-2 students.” Successful completion of credit by exam allows students to skip a grade and enter the next grade level.

The district’s G/T program serves students in the top 5 to 8 percent of students enrolled in grades 3 through 12. Second grade students receive intellectual and academic assessments in the spring for placement in the G/T program in the third grade. Students in grades 3 through 12 are also given these assessments when nominated. In addition, students in grades 5 through 12 take intellectual, leadership and artistic ability assessments. The district tests students in grade 5 in the spring, so they start receiving the appropriate G/T services when they enter middle school in grade 6. G/T transfer students who present supporting documentation from the previous school district do not have to qualify again for the G/T program.

G/T students receive a variety of services. The district places all G/T students in regular classrooms rather than a pull-out program because all district teachers are trained to teach G/T classes. In addition to the trained classroom teacher, a G/T teacher also serves students at the primary school one day a week and spends four days a week at the elementary school. Middle school gifted students attend honors G/T courses in English, math, science, social studies and computer applications. G/T students in grade 7 take pre-algebra classes and eighth graders take Algebra I.

The VISD coordinator for Curriculum and Special Programs said that teachers modify honors curricula to challenge G/T students. High school students are served through Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement (AP) classes in English, math, science and social studies. Information provided by the high school principal said that advanced students also are able to obtain dual high school/college credit courses in English, government and economics through the College Connections Program offered through Hill College. A distance learning computer lab funded by a technology grant through Region 11 gives students the opportunity to tie into the network to get access to these college classes. VISD pays the tuition and students pay for the required textbooks for these college courses.

FINDING

The district requires all VISD teachers to complete 30 hours of G/T training. TEA's District Effectiveness and Compliance (DEC) visit during 2001-02 cited the lack of trained G/T teachers as a discrepancy and required a corrective action plan to remedy this situation. VISD has complied with all the training requirements according to documentation provided by the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs. As reflected in teacher employment contracts, all district teachers meet this requirement.

In 2002-03, all classroom teachers in the district completed the state mandated 30 hours of G/T training. All VISD teachers hired in summer make a commitment to attend G/T training for one week in June at Region 11 or in July at the Ellis South Dallas Consortium through Region 10. Region 11 also offers additional G/T training dates during the school year for teachers hired after the summer training dates. VISD provides substitutes for teachers attending these G/T training sessions. The district also offers after school book study sessions to teachers who need to complete the G/T training.

Teachers who had previously met the state standard for training must attend six hours of advanced G/T training. VISD provides this G/T training at the beginning of the school year during staff development days. The secretary to the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs provided the names of teachers, dates of training and hours of completed training. She also keeps monitors the advanced G/T training hours and teachers who require training updates.

COMMENDATION

VISD requires all teachers to complete 30 hours of state-mandated G/T training and provides numerous opportunities for teachers to achieve this goal.

FINDING

VISD uses a number of strategies to encourage students to take AP courses. During freshmen orientation, the district makes students and parents aware of the advantages of taking the high school's AP courses. In addition, high school teachers and counselors encourage students to take AP courses and exams. They emphasize the low cost of the AP exams, the value of receiving college credit before of high school graduation and the district's fee exemptions. The AP program provides college-level courses to high school students easing the transition to college. According to the College Board, the number of advanced courses that students complete is one of the best predictors of success in college.

Exhibit 2-16 shows that the number of VISD students completing AP courses increased 8.1 percentage points from 1999-2000 to 2000-01. The district has the highest percent of students completing advanced courses among its peer districts, which range from 13.3 percent to 18.9 percent in 2000-01. VISD is 13.8 percentage points above the state average of 19.3 percent and 15 percentage points above the region average of 18.1 percent.

Exhibit 2-16
Percentage of Students Completing Advanced Courses
VISD, Peer Districts, Region and State
1999-2000 and 2000-01

Districts	1999-2000	2000-01
Dublin	5.9%	13.4%
Godley	5.1%	13.3%
Grandview	29.5%	27.1%
Rio Vista	15.9%	18.9%
Venus	25.0%	33.1%
Region 11	18.0%	18.1%
State	20.1%	19.3%

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

COMMENDATION

VISD has instituted successful programs that have resulted in students completing advanced placement courses at a higher rate than peer districts, the region and the state.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

D. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

The federal government provides compensatory education funding for students who do not meet performance standards. In addition to a regular classroom instruction program, other instructional programs provide special support for students at risk of dropping out of school and those not performing on grade level. The Texas Legislature created compensatory education for Texas 1975. In 1997, Section 42.152 of the Texas Education Code was amended to require reporting and auditing systems verifying the appropriate use of state compensatory education allotment funds. The audit report for 2001-02 says that the district complies with the mandates that govern state compensatory education funds. TEA conducted a DEC visit to VISD during the spring 2002. The DEC report also states that the district complies with the state compensatory education guidelines.

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, provide funds for programs that help students meet performance standards. Title I funds are sent to campuses by TEA based on their number of economically disadvantaged students or those eligible for free and reduced price lunches or breakfasts. The students served, however, are selected on educational need rather than economic status. Title I funds are supplemental; they must be added to the regular program and must not take the place of regular funds. House Bill 1126 requires that state compensatory funds, like Title I funds, must be supplemental. State rules, however, allow for a great deal of flexibility in identifying students and creating successful programs.

The No Child Left Behind Act allows a school to be designated as a schoolwide Title I, Part A campus if 50 percent or more of the students come from low income families. In Title I, Part A schoolwide programs, funds can be used throughout the school to assist the entire educational program as long as the school meets the needs of students at risk of failing out of school. All VISD schools are Title I, Part A schoolwide campuses because more than 50 percent of the students at each school are economically disadvantaged.

State compensatory funds, like the equivalent federal funding, are distributed based on the number of economically disadvantaged students in a district. Compensatory education funds, however, are distributed based on students' educational needs, not economic status. These students must be designated as "at risk."

Exhibit 2-17 provides the number and share of economically disadvantaged students in VISD and in each of its schools as well as compensatory education instructional operating expenditures for 2002-03. The allocation of the compensatory education funds complies with the program guidelines because these funds support Title I schoolwide campuses. At the primary school, 69 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, as are 62 percent at the elementary school, 65 percent at the middle school and 59 percent at the high school. About 62 percent of the students in the district receive free or reduced-price meals.

Exhibit 2-17
VISD Economically Disadvantaged Students
Compensatory Education Instructional Expenditures
2002-03

School	Number of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Compensatory Education Instructional Expenditures	Percentage of Total Compensation Education Expenditures
Primary	282	69.0%	\$75,622	19.9%
Elementary	325	62.0%	\$83,816	22.1%
Middle School	258	65.0%	\$115,051	30.3%
High School	300	59.0%	\$105,041	27.7%
District	1,105	62.3%	\$379,530	100.0%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, VISD Student Management System (SMS) Report, 2002-03.
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

TEA's criteria for identifying at-risk students is listed in its *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG). These definitions do not imply that state compensatory education programs are restricted to the exclusive benefit of these students.

Pre-K - Grade 6 for at-risk students:

- did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test at the beginning of the school year;
- did not perform satisfactorily on TAAS;
- is a student with limited English proficiency;
- was sexually, physically or psychologically abused; or
- engages in conduct described by Section 51.03, Texas Family Code.

Grades 7 - 12 Criteria:

- was not advanced from one grade level to the next for two or more school years;
- has mathematics or reading skills two or more years below grade level;
- did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 in two or more courses;
- is not maintaining an average equivalent to 70 in two or more courses;
- is not expected to graduate within four years of beginning grade 9;
- did not perform satisfactorily on TAAS; or
- is pregnant or a parent.

FINDING

VISD implements a variety of educational support programs targeted for students at risk of failing in school. **Exhibit 2-18** lists several programs that are available in the district to meet students' educational needs.

Exhibit 2-18
VISD Sample of Compensatory Education Programs
2002-03

Program
Pre-K for 3 and 4 Year Old Children
Reading Recovery
Optional Extended Year
English as a Second Language
Student Assistance Team
Ninth Grade Initiative
Drug-Free Schools
Alternative Behavioral Learning Environment

Accelerated Cooperative Education
Full Day Kindergarten
Parent Education and Pregnancy
Migrant Education Program
<i>Source: VISD Curriculum and Special Programs coordinator.</i>

The district provides supplemental staff and services to students at risk of failing, and complies with the state mandates for expenditures of state compensatory education funds. The state compensatory education audit report titled “Independent Auditor’s Agreed-Upon Report on VISD’s Compliance with State Compensatory Education Requirements” for the year that “ended August 31, 2002,” states that VISD complies with the laws governing this program. In 2001-02, the district dedicated 85 percent of its state compensatory education funds to direct instructional services to VISD students.

VISD evaluates programs in accordance with the guidelines governing each program and submits the evaluations to TEA. Economically disadvantaged students are included in all district measures to improve student performance in all state-mandated assessments and initiatives.

COMMENDATION

VISD has implemented a comprehensive state compensatory education program to meet the needs of its students, including those at risk of failing or dropping out of school.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery

E. SPECIAL EDUCATION

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), districts must provide appropriate public education for all children with disabilities regardless of their severity. The act requires districts to provide educational services in the “least restrictive environment” and to include students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs.

Districts also are required to develop an individual education plan (IEP) for each of these children with input from regular education teachers. The IEP must provide special education students with curricula related to those of children in regular education classrooms.

The IDEA says an effective special education program provides the items listed as follows:

- *Pre-referral intervention in regular education.* When a student experiences an academic problem in the regular education program, the regular teachers should intervene and attempt to solve the problem. If the regular education teacher cannot solve the problem, it should be referred to the special education staff.
- *Referral to special education for evaluation.* Referrals to special education require an official request supported by documentation. The referral information must explain the steps that have been taken in regular education to solve the student’s problem before the referral.
- *Comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation.* Once a student has been referred, the district must provide a comprehensive, nondiscriminatory assessment within a prescribed amount of time.
- *Initial placement through an Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee.* After the evaluation is complete, an ARD committee meets to discuss the results of the evaluation; decide if the student qualifies for special education services in one of 12 federal special education categories; and, if so, write a plan for the student’s education.
- *Educational services and supports according to a written Individualized Education Plan.* The individualized education plan developed by the ARD committee includes information about classes, subject areas, developmental areas and/or life skills

courses in which the student will be instructed; the amount of time that will be spent in regular education; and related needs such as speech therapy or counseling.

- *Annual program review.* Each year after a student’s initial qualification and placement, an ARD committee reviews the student’s program to ensure it remains appropriate.
- *Three-year re-evaluation.* Every three years, the student undergoes a comprehensive individual assessment. The ARD committee meets to discuss the results of the re-evaluation and determine the student still qualifies for special education services in the same category.
- *Dismissal from the special education program.* If and when a student no longer meets the eligibility criteria, he or she is dismissed from special education. The ARD committee must make this decision.

VISD has a pre-referral process to determine if students require special education services. This process includes several intervention strategies that address student needs before referral for special education services. Student assistance teams at each school meet regularly to discuss student remediation prior to special education referral. The district places special education students new to VISD in the special education program if they have been receiving special education services in their prior school district. VISD honors all ARD placements from other school districts. The district evaluates the documentation received from other school districts and holds a transition ARD meeting to make sure that transferring special education students’ needs will continue to be met in accordance with the ARD recommendations.

Exhibit 2-19 shows that VISD ranks fourth among its peer districts in its special education per student expenditures. VISD ranks second with 25.7 percent of its students in special education.

Exhibit 2-19
VISD Budgeted Expenditures for Special Education
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	Number of Students Enrolled	Percent	Budgeted Special Education Expenditures	Percent of Budgeted Expenditures	Per Special Education Student Expenditures
Dublin	171	13.0%	\$612,353	7.3%	\$3,581
Godley	391	28.4%	\$1,110,175	11.3%	\$2,839
Grandview	203	18.0%	\$945,082	11.3%	\$4,656

Rio Vista	159	17.8%	\$745,949	11.1%	\$4,692
Venus	480	25.7%	\$1,196,309	10.3%	\$2,492
State	492,973	11.6%	\$2,877,983,372	10.98	\$5,838

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

VISD provides special education services through the Johnson County Special Education Shared Services Arrangement. This agreement established the Johnson County Special Education Co-operative (Johnson County Co-op) for VISD, Godley, Grandview, Keene and Rio Vista ISDs. Each district pays a proportionate share of the coop employees' salaries. Special education resource teachers and their special education aides are not considered co-op employees and are paid by their respective school districts.

Exhibit 2-20 shows that the three-year average cost to VISD equals \$192,833 per year and \$16,069 per month for Johnson County Special Education Co-operative instructional and administrative services.

Exhibit 2-20
VISD Special Education Costs
Johnson County Cooperative
2000-01 through 2002-03

Contract Cost	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	3 Year Average
Annual Contract	\$169,586	\$201,472	\$207,441	\$192,833
Monthly Payment	\$14,132	\$16,789	\$17,287	\$16,069

Source: VISD Business Office, March 2003.

The Johnson County Cooperative provides a wide range of services to VISD that include initial student assessment, psychological evaluations, equipment, orientation and mobility specialists, personnel units, staff training, software and legal updates. In addition, the cooperative contracts with three diagnosticians, one assessment clerk, two special education counselors, three speech aides, one speech therapist, one occupational therapist, one therapist for visually impaired students, one psychiatrist, psychologists as needed, one coordinator for Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) and Vocational Adjustment Class (VAC) and one teacher for homebound students. The administrative staff at the cooperative consists of one director, one supervisor and four office auxiliary positions. These individuals take care of all special education administrative and fiscal

duties for VISD. All personnel and services are provided to VISD for the cost of the annual contract.

Exhibit 2-21 presents the number of VISD students enrolled in special education by disability. The largest student enrollment in special education involves the speech impairment category with a total of 196 students. The learning disabled category has the second largest enrollment with 183 students.

Exhibit 2-21
VISD Students Enrolled in Special Education
Student Enrollment by Disability
2001-02

Disability	Primary School	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total Students
Other Health Impairment	*	*	7	*	16
Auditory Impairment	*	0	*	*	*
Mental Retardation	*	*	*	8	15
Emotional Disturbance	*	*	*	7	15
Learning Disability	*	63	59	59	183
Speech Impairment	150	39	6	*	196
Non-categorical Early Childhood	*	0	0	0	*
Total Enrollment in Special Education	161	111	81	80	433

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

**Indicates 5 or fewer students. Their numbers have been included in the total enrollment columns.*

VISD serves special education students in a variety of instructional arrangements:

Mainstream. To determine the least restrictive environment for each student, district personnel first must consider providing services in regular education with supplementary aids. Students with disabilities who spend all of their classroom hours in a regular classroom are “mainstreamed.” VISD provides two types of mainstreaming: mainstreaming with content

support and mainstreaming with a co-teacher or an aide. Content mastery services are available at all schools to all students with disabilities. Special education teachers go into regular education classes and join the regular education teacher in teaching, working particularly with the special education students.

Resource. The ARD committee recommends assigning students to a separate, special education classroom. These resource classes are offered in the two core subjects of language arts and mathematics. Social Studies and science are mainstreamed with the appropriate modifications. Students may be placed in one or more of these classes based on their abilities. Resource classes are correlated with the TEKS and follow the students' IEPs as well as the sequence of study in the regular classes. Students in this category take a combination of regular classes and resource classes. The district places a majority of VISD's special education students in this instructional setting for language arts and math instruction and it mainstreams them for the rest of their school day.

Vocational Adjustment Class. This class provides educational and vocational services, including training in job readiness skills, to eligible secondary students.

Self-Contained Classes. VISD students with severe disabilities who cannot get a satisfactory education in a regular classroom are served in a separate, "self-contained" classroom.

Life Skills Classes. Life skills classes provide training in skills needed for everyday functioning.

Adaptive Physical Education. These classes provide specialized physical education instruction for students who are unable to participate in regular physical education. Following an initial evaluation by the physical therapist, physical education teachers provide these classes in VISD.

Homebound. This program provides at-home services for students in all grades (not necessarily special education) who cannot attend school because of illness, injury or expulsion.

Pre-school. VISD provides a preschool program in which children with disabilities are included in classes with regular students. Students with disabilities who participate in the preschool program move to pre-kindergarten classes where special education and regular education teachers work in a co-teaching arrangement.

In each of these settings, VISD provides appropriate curriculum modifications and services. ARD committees composed of parents and

professional staff members determine program eligibility and participation, draft individual educational plans and place or dismiss students from special education.

Exhibit 2-22 shows VISD has 21.8 percent of students placed in special education programs. VISD has the lowest percentage of special education teachers among its peer districts at 12.1 percent.

Exhibit 2-22
VISD, Peer Districts and State
Special Education Students and Teachers
2002-03

District	Percent of Students	Percent of Teachers
Dublin	13.0%	16.2%
Godley	28.4%	12.9%
Grandview	18.0%	43.6%
Rio Vista	17.8%	16.0%
Venus	21.8%	12.1%
State	11.6%	10.3%
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>		

The district offers a range of instructional intervention options before teachers refer students to the special education program. Students who experience difficulties in the classroom are provided with content mastery or other assistance, Creative Education Institute labs, summer school classes, tutoring and reading recovery. VISD trains its regular education teachers to identify students who need special education services. VISD also offers training in topics such as blending cultures together and non-biased assessment strategies to ensure that minority and economically disadvantaged students who experience learning difficulty are referred appropriately. Before a teacher refers a student to special education, the child’s teachers, counselor and principal share information to ensure the appropriate decision is made.

FINDING

While the district provides special education students with a variety of programs through the Johnson County Special Education Cooperative, the district does not monitor the program for effectiveness. District parents expressed concerns regarding the implementation of special education programs. These concerns were also shared with the DEC peer review

team in spring 2002. Interviews with district staff and feedback received from community and parent forum meetings during the TSPR visit to the district also indicate concerns over the special education program.

The TEA's DEC special education report states that there is a "significant communication barrier between parents and district representatives in coordinating the delivery of special education services." Interviews with the superintendent and district staff reflect concerns about the delivery of special education services by the Johnson County Special Education Cooperative staff. The review team learned that no communication methods exist between VISD and the cooperative staff to address issues as they arise. The implementation and monitoring of special education programs is the school district's responsibility.

Eagle Pass ISD has established a Student Review Committee (SRC) at each school as a problem-solving entity to address special education student needs and concerns. SRC team members include the principal, counselor, special education teachers, classroom teachers and parents. Other members are added as deemed necessary, such as nurses, diagnosticians, therapists and others. The SRC team strives to ensure success for all special education students through reviews of special education services, interventions and parent involvement.

Recommendation 12:

Develop a plan to make special education personnel from VISD and Johnson County Special Education Cooperative accountable for the delivery of special education services as specified in the student IEP plan.

VISD must hold all special education personnel accountable for the delivery of services to special education students as specified in their student IEP plan. This includes special education teachers and aides hired by the district as well as Johnson County Special Education Cooperative staff. To address these concerns, VISD must create a plan with effective monitoring strategies to ensure that all special education services and staff meet standards set by the special education IEP plan.

This plan must address important issues such as the responsibility of district and Johnson County Special Education Cooperative special education staff to meet all program requirements the district must also maintain ongoing and open communication between VISD and the cooperative and conduct ongoing evaluation of special education services as well as establish effective communication with parents of students in special education.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs forms a committee of district staff to include principals, counselors, special education teachers and parents and Johnson County Special Education Cooperative staff to review the delivery of services to VISD students.	September 2003
2.	The committee identifies areas of concern, gathers data and develops a plan to address the concerns.	October 2003
3.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs presents the plan to the superintendent for approval, and the superintendent presents the plan to the board.	November 2003
4.	The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs and the committee inform district staff and community about the plan through meetings.	December 2003 Ongoing
5.	The district implements the plan with principals monitoring implementation.	January 2004 Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery

F. BILINGUAL/ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) education seeks to enable Limited-English proficient students (LEP) to become proficient in the comprehension, speaking, reading and composition of English through the development of literacy and academic skills in the primary language and in English. TEC, Chapter 29 requires all school districts with an enrollment of 20 LEP students in the same grade level to offer a bilingual/ESL or an alternative language program. The law specifies that districts provide bilingual education in pre-kindergarten through the elementary grades and that bilingual education, instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) or other transitional language instruction approved by TEA is provided in post-elementary grades through grade nine. For students grades 9 through 12, only instruction in ESL is required. A LEP student is defined as one whose primary language is other than English and whose English language proficiency limits the student's participation in an English-language academic environment.

School districts must identify LEP students and provide bilingual or ESL programs as an integral part of the students' regular educational programs. They must hire bilingual and ESL-certified teaching personnel to ensure these students have full educational opportunities.

The district meets the criteria for establishing a bilingual education program to serve its LEP student population. To attract and hire bilingual and ESL certified teachers, VISD has joined Region 11 recruiting service; advertises with other area and regional school districts; posts job vacancies on local, state and national Web sites; and conducts recruiting visits to major universities. These recruiting visits have not produced adequate numbers of bilingual-certified applicants or candidates to fill the available bilingual teaching positions. Because of its rural setting and poor economic status, VISD has a difficult time hiring and retaining teacher applicants. Neighbor school districts offer higher salaries and the larger, affluent districts in the Dallas metroplex offer high stipends to bilingual and ESL teachers. For all these reasons, VISD has filed a bilingual exception with TEA because of its lack of qualified bilingual instructors.

VISD has received TEA’s approval to implement an accelerated ESL program for its LEP student population as a way for non-English speaking students to quickly acquire the skills necessary to become successful learners in an English-speaking environment. This program capitalizes on the students’ strengths in their native language and uses those existing skills to develop proficiency in English.

The district’s accelerated ESL program considers the LEP students’ native language, culture and knowledge to be the foundation for academic and social growth. The program also integrates language and literacy skills across the state-adopted curriculum and provides students with the opportunity to acquire a high level of literacy in English within a nurturing and supportive school environment.

In VISD, the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs coordinates the accelerated ESL program for grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12. A document provided by the coordinator states that the ESL program provides an accelerated curriculum that supports and challenges each identified ESL student to reach his or her maximum potential in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12. It also says that VISD remains committed to providing the resources and training to meet the needs of these students in the “ever changing 21st century technological society.” The district has two certified ESL elementary teachers in every grade level from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The middle school offers an ESL class with an ESL-certified teacher. High school offers English I and English II with modifications for ESL students, when necessary.

The education of LEP students is an important task for Texas public schools. The State Board of Education’s *Long-Range Plan for Public Education 2001-06* states “enrollment in the state’s bilingual education program is projected to increase by 22 percent over the next five years.”

Exhibit 2-23 compares bilingual/ESL enrollment and expenditure data for VISD and its peer districts. The district ranks second among its peer district in the ESL program student enrollment. VISD and Grandview rank second in their share of 0.5 percent of budgeted expenditures for ESL students.

Exhibit 2-23
Bilingual/ESL Student Enrollment and Expenditures
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	Students Enrolled in Bilingual/ESL	Percent of Total Enrollment	Total Budgeted Expenditures	Percent of Budgeted Expenditures*	Per Student Expenditure
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Dublin	171	13.0%	\$369,083	4.4%	\$2,158
Godley	25	1.8%	\$44,762	0.5%	\$1,790
Grandview	31	2.8%	\$14,127	0.2%	\$456
Rio Vista	11	1.2%	\$15,000	0.2%	\$1,364
Venus	177	9.5%	\$57,915	0.5%	\$327
State	572,319	13.5%	\$865,615,663	4.3%	\$1,512
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>					
<i>*Total budgeted expenditures dividedly by Bilingual/ESL budgeted expenditures.</i>					

FINDING

Each VISD school offers an ESL program to meet the needs of the ESL students in the district. The district has 177 students in the ESL program during 2002-03.

The primary school ESL program includes a Pre-Kindergarten component. Both primary and elementary schools serve ESL students in their regular classrooms for the entire school day rather than pulling them out of the classroom. Current research in educational best practices strongly recommends this approach. All teachers with ESL students either have ESL certification or are receiving such certification. The primary school houses Pre-Kindergarten through grade 1. There are two ESL-certified classroom teachers at each grade level to serve the needs of these students in the classroom. The elementary school, which houses grades 2 through 5, has two ESL-certified classroom teachers per grade level. The middle school and high school each have one ESL-certified teacher. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs said “by the time the ESL students reach middle school, they are ready to successfully exit the ESL program, based on the result of assessments.”

All improvement plans in the district address the ESL program. An ESL-certified teacher coordinates the middle school ESL program. The DIP and CIPs provide ESL students with the same opportunities for success as all other student groups. These plans also include the identification and placement in ESL components as required by TEC, Section 29.062. The ESL program periodically assesses student progress through TAKS practice tests and provides a technology-based instructional program developed by Computer Curriculum Corporation that allows individualized instruction; reading placement tests; math unit tests; and the Oral Language Proficiency Test (OLPT) in English.

The middle school ESL program has one ESL-certified teacher. The program consists of language arts ESL classes. ESL students are assigned to this class for one period a day. The high school ESL program offers

English I for freshman credit and English II for sophomore credit. Teachers modify the curriculum as necessary to meet the needs of the ESL students.

ESL teachers prepare annual reports on each ESL student, documenting test results and making recommendations concerning student ESL placements. VISD's Language Proficiency Assessment Committees (LPAC) identify, classify and place LEP students in the ESL program. The district's LPAC consists of a school administrator, an ESL teacher, a parent of a LEP student, a counselor, a classroom teacher, the LEP student and his parents. The LPAC reviews students' testing data and teachers' recommendations regarding placement in or exit from the ESL program.

A TEA accountability team visited VISD in spring 2002 to determine whether the district's ESL program complies with state requirements as outlined in the Texas Education Code, Section 29.062. The DEC peer review team stated that VISD complies with the requirements.

COMMENDATION

VISD offers an accelerated ESL program serving the needs of ESL students.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

G. CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

All students, whether they continue their education after high school or not, will eventually enter the workforce. The *State Plan for Career and Technology Education 2000-2002*, required under TEC Section 29.182, was developed as a guide to assist school districts in their efforts to offer effective career and technology education programs that prepare students for further education and eventual employment. Based on the premise that a rigorous academic foundation contributes to success in school and in life, the plan seeks to provide all students equal opportunities to succeed, and ensure that career and technology education enabling students to apply academic principles to a variety of community and career situations.

Exhibit 2-24 shows that VISD offers 28 Career and Technology Education (CATE) classes representing four career clusters. These clusters include agriculture education; business education; family and consumer science; and technology education. The high school offers CATE courses based on student interest. The high school provides a list of courses to its students, who express their interests during registration time. Students in grades 8 through 11 receive a course survey asking them to express areas of interest and to evaluate existing CATE courses. The student survey conducted in spring 2002 showed high student interest in adding courses in Agriculture Education. VISD added CATE courses to the high school offerings for 2002-03, as a result of the student interest survey comments.

Exhibit 2-24
VISD School to Career Program Offerings by Career Clusters
2002-03

Career and Technology Classes
Agriculture Education
Introduction to Agricultural Mechanics
Agricultural Structures Technology

Agricultural Metal Fabrication Technology
Personal Skill Development in Agriculture
Home Maintenance and Improvement
Wildlife and Recreation Management
Career Connection
Business Education
Keyboarding
Introduction to Business
Business Law
Banking
Business Computer Information Systems
Business Multimedia
Webmastering
Family and Consumer Science
Personal Family Development
Apparel
Textile and Apparel Design
Nutrition and Food Science
Food Science and Technology
Individual and Family Life
Family and Consumer Science
Child Development
Family Health Needs
Housing
Technology Education
Communications Systems
Communications Graphics
Computer Applications
Architectural Graphics
Communication Graphics
<i>Source: VISD 2002-03 CATE reports and high school master schedule.</i>

Exhibit 2-25 presents VISD and peer district CATE enrollment and expenditure information. VISD lies in the middle of its peer districts in its share of student enrollment at 19.1 percent, second in teacher FTEs at 5.7 percent and fifth in its share of budgeted CATE expenditures at 2.6 percent.

Exhibit 2-25
Student Enrollment and
Budgeted Expenditures in Career and Technology
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	Number of Teachers*	Student Enrollment		Budgeted CATE Expenditures	
		Number	Percent of Total	Expenditure	Percent of Instructional Budget**
Dublin	4.9	297	22.5%	\$351,954	4.2%
Godley	6.9	282	20.5%	\$262,041	2.7%
Grandview	3.7	215	19.1%	\$181,865	2.8%
Rio Vista	3.3	162	18.1%	\$182,407	2.7%
Venus	5.7	358	19.1%	\$284,842	2.6%
State	N/A	841,438	19.8%	\$777,845,249	3.9%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

*Expressed in Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs).

**Total budgeted expenditures divided by CATE budgeted expenditures.

FINDING

VISD is taking the right steps to prepare students in several career areas that will enable students to get jobs or continue their post-secondary education.

TEC Section 29.181 states that “Each public school student shall master the basic skills and knowledge necessary for managing the dual roles of family member and wage earner; and gaining entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job or continuing the student’s education at the post-secondary level.” The Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 74, Subchapter A requires school districts to offer “Programs of study for broad career concentrations in areas of agricultural science and technology, arts and communication, business education, family and consumer science, health occupations technology, trade and industry and technology education that

will prepare students for continued learning and post-secondary education in employment settings.”

The high school houses VISD’s CATE program. Five full-time equivalents (FTE) units offer CATE classes at the high school. VISD entered a partnership with Hill College to offer two dual-credit CATE classes, welding and cosmetology, which are two-year certification courses. Welding students are served through the agriculture courses. VISD pays the tuition costs and provides transportation services to the students.

VISD serves as the fiscal agent for the CATE Cooperative that includes member districts Godley, Keene, Grandview and Rio Vista ISDs. This cooperative was formed because each district receives less than \$15,000 per year in Carl Perkins funds. Godley, Keene, Grandview and Rio Vista pay VISD \$300 per year for the fiscal services they receive. The VISD business manager coordinates the fiscal duties for the CATE Cooperative.

In addition to the course offerings and the partnership with Hill College for dual-credit CATE classes, VISD is negotiating an articulation agreement with Mansfield ISD (MISD) to expand CATE course offerings. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs says that these courses will offer non-traditional two-year programs for students working toward the acquisition of skills. Because of a great demand for health care related jobs in the geographic area, health sciences are of particular interest to VISD. Other courses being considered in this partnership agreement include auto mechanics, computer programs and electrician and travel agent training. The partnership with MISD expands the choices currently available in the DIP and high school CIP and addresses various areas of the CATE program to prepare work-bound students for employment.

VISD administrators and staff acknowledge that the lack of industry in Venus presents a major post-secondary employment challenge for students who are not college-bound. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs said that the district “will continue to seek support agreements with industries in the area to build partnerships” to provide students with additional opportunities for employment. The district is considering options within a 15-mile radius to the east, west and north of Venus. There are no opportunities to the south of Venus. Negotiations are in progress with the North Texas Consortium, which includes Tarrant, Dallas and Navarro Community Colleges,

After the peer review team visit, VISD finalized an agreement with Tarrant County Community College south campus in Mansfield. This agreement allows CATE students who complete any CATE tech prep class

with an 80 average to receive high school and college dual-credit. The high school students receive an opportunity to register online for these courses as they complete them successfully. The registrar's office at Tarrant County Community College will keep in its files all documentation of credits earned submitted by the students through their years in high school. This will ensure that the correct number of credits are available to the students when they enter college for either traditional or non-traditional programs.

COMMENDATION

VISD works collaboratively with colleges and neighboring school districts to provide students with improved resources for career and technology training and opportunities.

Chapter 2
Educational Service Delivery

H. LIBRARY/MEDIA SERVICES

In May 1997, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission adopted a series of recommended standards published as *School Library Program Standards: Guidelines and Standards*. The school library programs, as outlined in the *Guidelines and Standards*, seeks to ensure that students and staff become effective users of ideas and information and become literate, life-long learners. To accomplish this task, the library program provides instruction in research; evaluation of resources; individual guidance; and access to materials in multiple formats. The guidelines offer criteria that identify library programs as Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable or Below Standard in the areas of the library-learning environment, curriculum integration, resources, library program management and facilities.

Exhibit 2-26 shows the funding allocated to each one of the four VISD schools during the current school year. The high school librarian also serves as the district library coordinator.

Exhibit 2-26
VISD Library Budget
Books, Media, and Materials
2002-03

	Primary School	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Library Books and Media	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$6,000
Reading Materials	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
General Supplies	\$4,500	\$3,000	\$4,200	\$7,200
Total	\$8,500	\$10,000	\$10,200	\$14,200

Source: VISD Library coordinator.

FINDING

VISD, through a cooperative interlocal agreement with the City of Venus, operates a dual public school and community library. In 1995 Venus' City Manager and the then VISD superintendent entered into an agreement wherein VISD opened its public school library to the community while the City of Venus provided funding to operate the library and add materials to

the library collection that appealed to a wide range to citizens. The agreement stated, in part, that the district, by operating a public library, would “promote community interaction with the district’s schools and ...promote increased community support for the schools” while the district and city could also conserve scarce public resources. The agreement outlined who would provide the facility, how the library would be operated and maintained, how it would be overseen by a public library board, and how funding would work.

The district is responsible for providing the building and maintaining it and also providing for staffing. The city funds the library to be open a minimum of 20 hours a week. By keeping the library open 20 hours, VISD is also responsible for “setting policies that govern the schedule, programs and the materials” in the library.

VISD libraries contain large collections of books, software and electronic resources. The *School Library Standards* define Acceptable resources as a balanced collection of at least 9,000 books, software, as well as electronic resources such as Internet access, at schools with more than 600 students. Recognized resources are defined as a balanced collection of at least 10,800 items. The state standards do not specify a recommended collection size for libraries in smaller schools.

Exhibit 2-27 shows the size of the library collections in each VISD library. The primary school library meets the Below Standards category because of the lack of physical space in the school facility to house more books and resources. The elementary and middle school libraries meet the standard for Recognized. The high school library meets the Exemplary standard.

Exhibit 2-27
Library Collection Standards and VISD Library Collection
2002-03

School	Acceptable Collection Size	Recognized Collection Size	Library Collection Size	Meet Standards
Primary	9,000	10,000	6,000	Below Standards
Elementary	9,000	10,800	11,000	Recognized
Middle School	9,000	10,800	10,000	Recognized
High School	9,000	10,800	14,000	Exemplary

Source: VISD Library coordinator.

The district is a member of the Texas Library Connection and has access to multiple online databases.

Exhibit 2-28 provides information about the wide variety of programs offered by both the VISD school and the community library located at the high school. Grants totaling approximately \$134,000 make it possible for the library to provide several of the services listed in this exhibit. A grant from the Bill Gates Foundation paid for state-of-the-art computers.

Exhibit 2-28
VISD Library Services and Grants
2002-03

Summer Reading Programs - nine weeks
Internet Access and Word Processing Computers
Movie Rentals
Story Time - after school and summer
Incentives and Awards
Free Books - three times a year
14,000 volume book check-out and research center
Copy and Fax machines
Educational Children's Software
Spanish Materials
Parenting Collection
Adult and Children's Audio Books
Educational and Popular Videos
Home Access for TEXSHARE online database system
Approximately \$134,000 in Grants
<i>Source: VISD School and Community Library, 2003.</i>

The nine-week summer reading program gives VISD students the opportunity to continue developing their reading skills. Students and community patrons check out books for summer entertainment. This program began in 1999 and is supported by VISD, two large factories, American National Power and Texas Industries, various small companies and donors in the community. High school students have a summer reading list to complete for their English classes. Since the library stays open during the summer, they can check out their books and test over them before the school year begins if they wish to do so.

According to library circulation reports, 427 patrons visited the library in June 2002 and 569 visited in July 2002. The library coordinator said that these circulation numbers exceed last year's figures by 50 percent. The library remains open to VISD students and the community after school hours and on Saturday mornings.

Because it is a community library and a public school library, the library receives a multitude of grants and services. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that fosters innovation, leadership and a lifetime of learning, supports the North Texas Regional Library System (NTRLS) through the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. The VISD library is a member of the NTRLS, which offers many benefits and advantages such as services from the Texas State Library System and the North Texas Regional Library System, approximately \$134,000 in a variety of grants from different sources, technology hardware and software, equipment, shelving and access to TexShare, a \$100,000 online database system provided by the Texas State Library. The Venus community library patrons and VISD students can access TexShare at home. This remote access provides homes with access to a virtual library with thousands of the most current documents on a wide variety of subjects.

A partnership agreement with the Inexpensive Book Distribution Program administered by Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) makes it possible for the VISD school library to give each district student a book three times per year. The grant pays 75 percent and VISD pays for the remaining 25 percent of the cost of books for pre-kindergarten through grade 10.

The library provides an attractive trifold pamphlet in English and Spanish explaining the available offerings and schedules for high school students and community patrons. This pamphlet also includes video and Internet policy, other rules for programs and services available, library schedule and map, address, phone numbers, web page, names and positions of library staff. The library pamphlet explains "The library serves as the high school library during school hours and as a public library during the evenings, all day Thursday and Friday and on Saturday morning. This combination allows students the use of all the resources of a high school library plus the extra resources found in a public library. At the end of the school day, the library opens to the public. With the library's close ties to the school district, it is able to provide a completely automated circulation system, Web site, Internet and copier services as well as 15,000 books and videos. These services are available with the Venus Community Library Patron Card. This card may be obtained by filling out a simple application form available at the circulation desk. As a community patron, members also have access to the TexShare program."

COMMENDATION

The VISD school and community library provides a wide variety of books, media and services to district students and the community.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

I. STUDENT DISCIPLINE AND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The U.S. Department of Education's publication *Early Warning, Timely Response*, defines a properly functioning school as one that fosters "learning, safety and socially appropriate behaviors." These schools have a strong academic focus and support students in achieving high academic standards, foster positive relationships between school staff and students and promote meaningful parental and community involvement. Most prevention programs in effective schools address multiple risk factors and recognize that safety and order are related to children's "social, emotional and academic development."

Texas public schools must provide standards for conduct and discipline in a student code of conduct. VISD provides an annual Student Code of Conduct to students and parents. An acknowledgement that the rules were read and understood accompanies the code.

Unless a student's behavior violates the penal code or Code of Conduct, discipline is initially administered at the student's home school. Principals and/or assistant principals serve as the first decision-maker on whether a student should be referred to In-School Suspension (ISS) or a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). Certain misbehaviors identified in

Exhibit 2-29, require removal to the DAEP. At that level of misbehavior, the principal or other appropriate administrator refers the student to a hearing. The principal or other administrator reviews the facts with parents before deciding if removal to an alternative education program is appropriate. The student can appeal a hearing ruling. There are three levels of grievance appeals. The superintendent serves as the hearing officer at the second level, the board at the third level. VISD uses the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) model for the due process on student discipline.

The district contracts for additional placement services at the Johnson County Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). No VISD students are placed at JJAEP at this time.

The Alternative Behavioral Learning Environment (ABLE) Learning Center, which is the DAEP program, separates students with discretionary placements from students with mandatory placements. Discretionary placements result from actions such as disruptive behavior; violations of the student code of conduct; possession, purchase or use of tobacco products or school-related gang-related activities. Mandatory placements result from conditions such as conduct punishable as a felony; possession and use of alcohol or controlled substances; public lewdness or indecent exposure; retaliation against a school employee; or a terrorist threat or assault.

The ABLE Learning Center DAEP offers a highly structured learning environment that focuses on helping students take responsibility for their actions. Instruction must be individualized and computers are available for all students. The students use the Plato Learning System, a computer-assisted learning resource. The district pre-tests students at their time of arrival so they can be properly placed. They are also tested at the completion of their assignment to the DAEP to assess and document progress. Each student follows an individualized lesson plan. Counseling services are also available to students.

The following support services provided to VISD students: character education, conflict resolution, intervention and violence counseling, life skills program, peer mediation, student assistance program, student leadership, student leadership training, teaching tolerance and tobacco prevention. The VISD program implements the following Title IV goals: decrease substance abuse, increase community and parental involvement, raise the level of student achievement, reduce violence in school, increase student involvement in school and improve attendance.

FINDING

VISD provides district students and parents a detailed and comprehensive Student Code of Conduct. The district publishes and distributes VISD's code to principals, teachers, students and parents at the beginning of each school year to ensure everyone is familiar with the district's disciplinary process and the consequences for misbehavior. The code is printed in English and it includes a statement that a Spanish-speaking interpreter will be available upon request. District students and parents are responsible for reading and understanding it and providing written confirmation of their commitment to the code.

The code includes:

- a letter to parents and students with agreement form;
- an introduction;
- levels of offenses;
- definitions and terminology;
- procedural information;
- the student dress code; and
- information on the discipline of a student with a disability.

COMMENDATION

VISD has a comprehensive, well-written Student Code of Conduct.

FINDING

VISD has no review process for In-School Suspension (ISS) to ensure that students receive the same consequences for the same code of conduct offenses. VISD Student Code of Conduct specifies “General misconduct identified in the list of prohibited behaviors will result in application of one or more discipline management techniques consistent with law and the Student Code of Conduct. State law requires that the violation be reported to the principal or other appropriate administrators, who will send notification to the parent or guardian within 24 hours of receiving the report.” ISS is one of the consequences listed to address student offenses. VISD does not consistently enforce ISS offenses throughout the district.

The board also has a discipline management plan that provides guidelines and appeals processes for levels of disciplinary action. The Student’s Code of Conduct addresses student removal to the DAEP: “Continued misconduct identified in the list of prohibited behaviors will result in application of one or more discipline management techniques. After reasonable techniques have been imposed and the principal and/or other appropriate administrator determines that the student’s presence in the regular classroom program or at the home campus presents a danger of physical harm to the student or to other individuals; or that the student has engaged in serious or persistent misbehavior that violates the previously communicated standards of student conduct, the administrator must remove a student to an alternative education program DAEP.”

The district has several levels of disciplinary alternatives. Students may be removed from regular classes to a disciplinary alternative learning area at their home school, which is generally referred to as ISS. Or students may be suspended and placed in a DAEP at the Learning Center, an alternative education cooperative. The shared services agreement of this cooperative includes five school districts: Godley, Grandview, Keene, Rio Vista and

VISD. Keene ISD houses the Learning Center cooperative and serves as the fiscal agent of the member districts. The programs housed at the Learning Center are the ABLE, the DAEP and the Accelerated Cooperative Education (ACE). For felony offenses, a student may be expelled and placed in the Johnson County JJAEP.

VISD divides its Student Code of Conduct into two categories: behaviors and consequences. The behaviors list begins with general misconduct. Behavior that may result in suspension appears next, ending in behavior that requires expulsion. **Exhibit 2-29** presents examples of behaviors and consequences as defined in the code of conduct.

Exhibit 2-29
Categories of Offenses Outlined in VISD’S Student Code of Conduct
2001-02

Behaviors	Consequences
<p>Examples of behaviors that may result in removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal mischief • Felony conduct not on school property or school event • Fighting • Hazing 	<p>Suspension, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program</p>
<p>Examples of behaviors that may result in removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeatedly violating classroom standards of behavior • Stealing from students, staff or the school • Possessing or using fireworks of any kind • Possessing air guns, ammunition, mace or pepper spray • Discharging a fire extinguisher 	<p>Suspension, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program</p>
<p>Examples of behaviors that must result in removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False alarm or report (including bomb threat) or a terrorist threat involving a public school • Felony conduct on school property or school event 	<p>Disciplinary Alternative Education Program</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assault on school property or school event • Indecent exposure and/or mooning • Sale, delivery or use of controlled substance • Sale, delivery or use of alcoholic beverage • Under the influence of inhalants • Using the Internet to threaten students, employees or cause disruption to the educational programs • Engages in expellable conduct between ages of six to nine 	
<p>Behavior requiring expulsion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possession of the following as outlined by the Texas Penal Code: firearm, an illegal knife, a club, a prohibited weapon such as an explosive weapon, a machine gun, etc. • Behavior containing elements of the following under the Texas Penal Code: aggravated assault, arson, murder or attempt to commit murder, aggravated kidnapping, indecency with a child, retaliation against a school employee or volunteer with one of the above listed offenses 	<p>Disciplinary Alternative Program, Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program</p>
<p><i>Source: VISD Student Code of Conduct, 2001-02.</i></p>	

Community forum and focus group comments revealed that parents and staff believe that discipline is administered through politics, not fairness. The comments reflect perceptions that teachers and administrators inconsistently enforce the code of conduct rules, based at times upon student connections. The TSPR review team requested documentation and records on in-school suspension for current and previous years by schools. During an interview with the superintendent, the review team learned that the information on in-school suspensions is not provided to central administration to ensure principals administer discipline fairly or comply with the code of conduct. Although schools report information for the “Student Disciplinary Action Detail Report” for PEIMS, no documentation was provided on in-school suspension for the current year.

Effective districts administer ISS consequences to the same offenses in a consistent matter and in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct guidelines. These districts focus on ISS goals and objectives and the qualifications of staff administering consequences. In addition, effective districts provide adequate discipline and classroom management training,

encouragement to apply techniques and monitoring to ensure that Student Code of Conduct guidelines are followed.

Recommendation 13:

Develop a tracking and review process for in-school suspension to ensure that discipline is equitably applied.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent designates staff to develop procedures for reporting all in-school suspension on campus to central office.	September 2003
2.	The superintendent assigns responsibility for the review to the principal.	November 2003
3.	The principal reviews and reports information to the superintendent.	December 2003
4.	The principal monitors and makes corrections where necessary.	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 2

Educational Service Delivery

J. COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

The Texas Legislature has long recognized technology's importance in education and administrative support. In 1987, the Legislature directed the State Board of Education to develop a Long-Range Plan for Technology. This plan called for the establishment of a statewide electronic transfer system (TENET), expansion of integrated telecommunications systems (T-STAR) and a center for research in educational technology (TCET).

Subsequent legislation has created funding to help districts meet the state goals for technology. The technology allotment provides approximately \$30 per student per year in state funding for technology. House Bill 2128 of the 1993 Legislature created the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF).

This fund derives revenues from the Telecommunications Utilities Account and the Commercial Mobile Service Providers Account to provide \$150 million in grant funds each year for 10 years to public education, higher education and telemedicine centers for computer infrastructure, distance learning and training.

Another grant fund that is available to public school districts is the Technology Integration in Education (TIE) grant, which provides funding for teaching and learning, educator preparation, administration and support and technology infrastructure. This state-level focus on technology in education has allowed some of even the smallest school districts to develop state-of-the-art computer networks and computer labs. VISD, its four peer districts, 32 other districts and seven colleges worked with Region 11 in a cooperative effort to receive a TIE grant to establish a distance learning program through the Region 11 Telecommunications Network (RETN). The RETN allows VISD students to take advanced math, science and foreign language courses. In addition, the RETN allows students to take dual-enrollment courses. To date, 34 students have completed dual enrollment courses and received college credit prior to graduating from high school.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 includes provisions for schools to receive special rates for telecommunications services. VISD qualifies for an 80 per cent discount on basic phone service, data circuits and Internet service.

VISD has a technology coordinator who oversees the district's technology program and the campus technology coordinators. As a former language teacher, the technology coordinator understands the classroom needs of the teachers and works with them to solve their problems. The technology coordinators at the schools are teachers, aides or other members of the school staff. They receive a stipend for work as technology coordinators at their individual schools. The backgrounds and interests of the VISD technology coordinator and the technology coordinators at the individual schools enable the technology staff to understand and concentrate on fulfilling the needs of the students and teachers.

The VISD technology committee members come from administration, the classroom, library, the district staff and the community. To ensure that the VISD technology plan they developed was complete, they reviewed the Texas State Long-Range Plan for Technology; the State Board of Educator Certification: Technology Applications Standards for All Teachers; and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. The school board approved the plan on February 20, 2003.

Technology programs progress through the following phases: needs assessment, design and maintenance. The needs assessment phase determines the feasibility, value and the expected outcome of a potential program. The design phase consists of preparing plans and the acquisition costs and maintenance cost of the potential program. The maintenance phase involves the continued support and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. All evaluations are tied to outcomes contained in the needs assessment.

The VISD is connected to the Internet by a T-1 data line capable of transmitting 1.5 million bits of digital electronic data every second, which is 24 times as much data as a typical telephone line. Region 11 provides this line and it is connected at Venus High School. The middle school is connected to the high school by a fiber optical cable. The primary school, elementary school and the district offices are connected to the high school through a wireless communications link.

To protect the district from computer viruses, the Technology Department has anti-virus software on all computers and servers. In addition, all e-mail coming into the district must pass through Region 11 where it is scanned for viruses. The region strips the e-mail of any virus and passes the message on to the district.

Each school has a secure computer server located on site for storing data that is backed-up daily onto a tape. In addition, a weekly backup is made the last workday of the week. An annual backup is made at the end of the last school day for the year. All backup tapes are stored off site to ensure their safety.

In 1998, VISD had only a few Mac computers for use in the Special Education Department. In 2003, the district has 11 computer labs with 226 computers, 32 computers in the libraries and 426 computers in classrooms. With an enrollment of 1,871 students, the district has an average of 4.3 students per classroom computer, which is close to TEA's School Technology and Readiness (STaR) recommended ratio of 4 or less students per computer and only slightly higher than the state average of 4.1 students per computer.

VISD evaluated the current status of technology within the district by using TEA's Texas School Technology and Readiness (STaR) program developed by the state Educational Technology Advisory Committee. The STaR program helps determine a district's progress toward achieving the goals outlined in the four key areas of the Texas Long-Range Plan for Technology. **Exhibit 2-30** provides the results of the VISD self-evaluation and shows how VISD compares with Region 11 and state averages.

Exhibit 2-30
VISD Technology Progress Scores and
Comparison with Region 11 and State Averages
2002-03

Long Range Plan for Technology Key Areas	Teaching and Learning	Educator Preparation and Development	Administration and Support Services	Infrastructure for Technology
VISD*	8	7	11	8
Region 11 Average Score**	12	12	12	12
State Average Score*	12	12	11	12
Maximum Possible Score**	24	24	20	20

*Source: VISD Technology Plan, 2003, and Texas STaR Chart, 2002.

**Source: TEA Texas STaR Chart Region 11 Summary.

FINDING

VISD allows teachers and staff to improve their technology skills. Additionally, the district consistently upgrades Internet connectivity and expands the availability of computers for student use.

The results of STaR self-evaluation show that VISD ranks highest in the administration and support services areas. This is due to the district's Internet connectivity and speed, as well as the district's Local Area Network/Wide Area Network. These two items allow VISD to reach higher levels of technology and attain the goals of the Texas Long Range Plan for Technology. Future applications for state-funded technology grants will request a completed campus or district Texas STaR Chart profile to be filed with the application as an indicator of current status and progress.

VISD has used a variety of funding sources to buy computers and associated training for the teachers, administrators and staff. The district applied for and received a number of grants from the TIF Program. **Exhibit 2-31** shows the amounts of the TIF grants received by VISD and the peer districts.

Exhibit 2-31
Amount of TIF Grants Received
VISD and Peer Districts
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	Number of TIF Grants Received	Total Amount Received
Dublin	5	\$326,013
Godley	5	\$316,040
Grandview	4	\$690,000
Rio Vista	4	\$757,003
Venus	5	\$401,889
Peer Average	4.5	\$522,264

Source: <http://www.whattifhasdone.org>.

These grants enabled VISD to move from below the state average of students per computer to almost equal to the state average in just five years. The funds have been used to pay for online technology training for all middle and high school teachers. The district added its own funds to extend this online technology training to all primary and elementary school teachers. This online training called, "Learn at Gateway" provides intensive instruction in many different software applications. Employees

are required by the district to meet minimum program training requirements in Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint. However, employees may continue to take additional courses until the end of the program. This program, which began in August 2002 and is available through August 2003, provides teachers the opportunity to receive instruction, demonstrations and critiques in a self-paced format that can be completed at their convenience. This flexibility allows the training to be completed at a time convenient to the employee rather than having to conform to a rigid formal training schedule.

COMMENDATION

VISD initiatives provide all teachers and staff members the opportunity to improve their technology skills, upgrade the district's Internet connectivity and buy computers for student use to achieve key focus areas in the Texas STaR Program.

FINDING

The VISD has implemented several innovative programs to improve the use of technology in the classroom. The elementary school campus technology coordinator was one of two teachers from the VISD selected to participate in the "Teach to the Future" program sponsored by Intel Corporation. After receiving complimentary training and equipment at Intel Corporate facilities, these teachers are training 20 VISD teachers per year for the next two years. To make this training more effective, an experienced teacher who understands TEKS and curriculum is teamed with one of the newer teachers who usually have a broader range of computer skills. This teaming concept facilitates the cross-transfer of experience between the two individual teachers and enhances the learning experience for both. This effort works toward two of the VISD technology plan goals: goal two "continued staff development for integrating technology into existing curriculum" and goal three "meeting the needs of professional staff development for integrating of the emerging TAKS."

The middle school technology coordinator has reconfigured old computers that were no longer being used to provide resources for a new science class computer lab. Refurbishing the older computers enabled the students to use the CDs that came with the new science books. This reuses excess equipment and allows full use of the new science texts to enhance science learning. This effort works toward the eventual satisfaction of goal one: "increase the student per computer ratio in the classroom from 20 students per computer to four students per Internet-connected computer" and goal four in the VISD technology plan: "provide all students with proper instruction and access availability in advanced technologies and usage."

The high school multi-media class uses its computer technology to prepare a videotape every morning that contains all of the announcements and notices for the day. This announcement is played over the school TV system so that every student sees and hears the announcement simultaneously. This use of computer technology enhances the learning experience by giving the students a real world application as opposed to a more traditional classroom exercise. This application works toward the eventual satisfaction of goal four: “provide all students with proper instruction and access availability in advanced technologies and usage.”

The distance-learning lab at the high school allows the students to take dual credit courses. This provides students an opportunity to experience the collegiate environment and earn college credits prior to graduating from high school. Of the 34 students who have taken dual-credit courses, 31 students have continued their studies in college. This application works toward the eventual satisfaction of goal four: “provide all students with proper instruction and access availability in advanced technologies and usage” and goal six: “continued support and upgrade of the existing wide area network to provide enhanced performance, reliability and scalability.”

COMMENDATION

By providing continued professional development for the faculty and innovative learning opportunities for the students, the VISD classroom and technology staffs are working to achieve the goals stated in the district’s technology plan.

Chapter 3 Personnel Management

This chapter reviews the personnel management functions of Venus Independent School District (VISD) in the following sections:

- A. Organization and Management
- B. Salaries and Compensation
- C. Recruitment and Retention
- D. Staff Development

School districts depend on qualified and talented employees to achieve their educational and operational goals. On average, personnel costs account for 80 percent of a district's total expenditures, its largest expense. Personnel management includes staffing analysis, recruiting, hiring, salary and benefit administration and performance evaluation. Effective personnel management requires compliance with equal employment opportunity statutes and other federal and state laws. Establishing fair and workable policies, procedures and training programs are important for recruiting and retaining competent staff.

BACKGROUND

VISD employs 245 full-time equivalent employees, of which 129 are teachers. VISD allocated 79 percent of its 2002-03 budget for payroll costs and professional and contracted services.

Exhibit 3-1 summarizes VISD's 2002-03 budgeted funds by expenditure category:

Exhibit 3-1
VISD Budgeted Expenditures
2002-03

Category	Dollar Amount	Percent of Budget
Payroll Costs	\$8,248,310	70%
Professional and Contracted Services	\$1,105,850	9%
Supplies and Materials	\$1,140,750	10%
Other Operating Costs	\$521,711	4%
Debt Service	\$839,111	7%
Capital Outlay	\$9,000	0%

Total	\$11,864,732	100%
<i>Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 2002-03.</i>		

Exhibit 3-2 compares VISD's general fund budgeted payroll to its peer districts for 2002-03.

Exhibit 3-2
General Fund Budgeted Payroll Costs
VISD and Peer Districts
2002-03

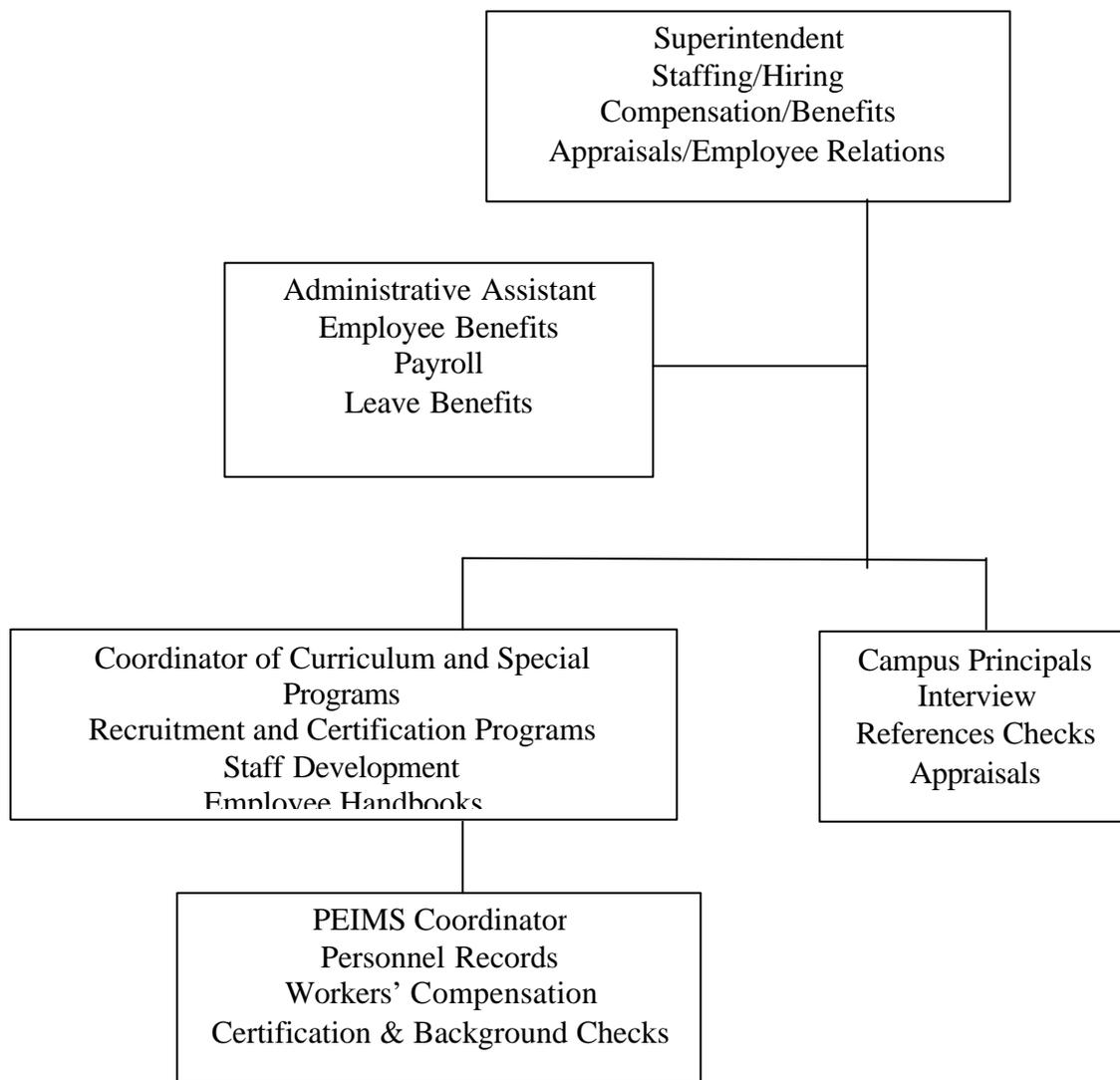
District	Payroll Costs	Total Budget	Percent of Budget
Venus	\$8,248,310	\$11,864,732	70%
Dublin	\$6,355,965	\$8,593,128	74%
Godley	\$6,591,125	\$10,033,588	66%
Grandview	\$6,017,455	\$8,765,039	69%
RioVista	\$4,753,458	\$6,832,143	70%
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>			
<i>Note: VISD contracts its custodial services and one principal position, reducing the district's percentage of payroll costs.</i>			

Chapter 3 Personnel Management

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Successful management of personnel includes efficient recruiting, hiring, classification and compensation, benefit administration, training and development and performance evaluation. Compliance with equal employment opportunity statutes and other applicable federal and state laws and the establishment of workable policies, procedures and training are important for the recruitment and retention of competent staff. The district superintendent oversees personnel functions at VISD. Personnel responsibilities are shared between the superintendent, coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs, administrative assistant to the superintendent, PEIMS coordinator and the campus principals as shown in **Exhibit 3-3**.

**Exhibit 3-3
VISD Personnel Organization
2002-03**



Source: VISD superintendent and staff.

The VISD superintendent handles staffing, salaries, policy development and appraisals for administrators and other direct reports. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs coordinates employee handbook updates, staff development, new employee orientation and recruitment. The principals interview applicants, conduct reference checks and perform appraisals for school staff. The administrative assistant to the superintendent manages employee benefits, payroll and coordination of

leave benefits. The PEIMS coordinator processes employment applications, maintains personnel and certification records, prepares recruitment packets and administers workers' compensation reporting and tracking activities. Each of these employees performs these responsibilities in addition to other duties as assigned while working in their full-time positions.

FINDING

The district publishes an employee handbook for its staff. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs and the PEIMS coordinator update the handbook annually. Employees must sign an acknowledging receipt of the handbook. The handbook summarizes district personnel policies and other terms and conditions of employment with the district. The handbook also includes VISD's mission statement and each school's individual mission statement. The employee handbook includes the following information:

- employment;
- compensation and benefits;
- employee relations and communications;
- complaints and grievances;
- employee conduct and welfare;
- general procedures;
- termination of employment; and
- student issues.

COMMENDATION

VISD updates and distributes a comprehensive employee handbook annually.

FINDING

Not all VISD job descriptions accurately reflect duties performed and some positions lack job descriptions. Some of the job descriptions in the central office were based on Texas Association of School Board (TASB) generic job descriptions, including the positions of administrative assistant to the superintendent, PEIMS coordinator, business manager, bookkeeper, accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk, coordinator for Curriculum and Special Programs and director for Operations, Maintenance and Transportation. The generic job descriptions, which are designed to serve as guides, do not provide an accurate description of a position's responsibilities.

Further, the job descriptions provided to the review team and in use by VISD are a combination of multiple TASB generic job descriptions that have not been combined or collapsed into individual job descriptions with individual titles that accurately describe the position's current responsibilities. The job description for the director for Operations, Maintenance and Transportation did not reflect the position's essential job duties, including textbook coordination, truancy administration, alternative education program liaison, food services, transportation and security oversight, energy management or maintenance duties.

The job description for the PEIMS coordinator, who is also secretary to the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation and the coordinator for Curriculum and Special Programs, consists of four TASB generic job descriptions. The composite of job descriptions includes one job description for administrative secretary; another with a title of certification specialist; the third is a title of PEIMS coordinator; and the fourth, a workers' compensation specialist, each of which lists a series of specialized duties. However, the composite job description still does not include essential job functions performed by the coordinator related to preparing recruitment packets, processing contracts, maintaining transportation ridership records or handling recordkeeping duties for the free and reduced-lunch program.

Similarly, the job description for the administrative assistant to the superintendent is a hybrid of three separate TASB job descriptions, including secretary to the superintendent, payroll clerk and employee benefits specialist. The accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk's job description includes the TASB generic job descriptions for accounts payable clerk and purchasing manager, even though the clerk does not serve as the district's assigned purchasing agent. No job descriptions exist for food service personnel, bus drivers, mechanics or maintenance personnel.

A well-written job description distinguishes essential and non-essential job responsibilities and provides an overview of the work performed in a position. A job description also establishes information to use in determining salary and proper position title/classification as well as the position's designation under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Accurate job descriptions identify and delegate responsibilities within an organization and help ensure consistent job analysis and comparison for compensation purposes. The Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM), noted authority on human resources practices, provides information and examples of job descriptions on its Web site. TASB also provides assistance to districts in developing job descriptions by providing generic job descriptions as a guide for districts to use as guides.

Employees can perform more effectively and efficiently if they properly understand their job responsibilities. A well-crafted job description also reduces a district's liability in the pre-employment selection process by focusing hiring representatives on legitimate and non-discriminatory job-related requirements. The definition of essential and non-essential job functions in job descriptions is also important under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The delineation of essential and marginal functions in job descriptions serves as employers' "good faith" practice to promote equal access in employment to employment opportunities to qualified individuals without regard to disabilities. The employer's distinction enables a disabled individual who is otherwise qualified for the position to determine whether the individual can perform all of the essential job duties with, or without, reasonable accommodation by the employer. The ambiguity in job descriptions may lead to duplication of efforts, ineffective deployment of personnel and other operational inconsistencies. Well-written job descriptions clearly communicate performance standards and expectations to all employees and reduces confusion regarding responsibilities.

In simple and clear language, using action verbs, job descriptions document the major job duties and the following elements: a single job title that best depicts the complexity, specialization or generalist nature of the job; department; title of the supervisor to whom the position reports; pay grade; FLSA status; explicit summary of the job description and measurable work outcomes; essential duties and responsibilities; supervisory responsibilities, if any; minimum qualifications; education and/or experience required; language skills necessary; mathematical skills needed; reasoning ability; and physical demands. Some job descriptions also include preferred qualifications.

Spring ISD (SISD) maintains updated and accurate job descriptions. SISD provides employees a guide for understanding their role and responsibilities and updates the guide regularly to reflect changes in responsibilities. The Personnel/Support Services department creates and updates job descriptions after holding focus group sessions with employees in each position. A job analysis is completed through the cooperative effort.

Recommendation 14:

Develop accurate job descriptions for each district position.

Concisely-written and accurate job descriptions provide essential information needed to validate selection criteria for jobs and allow a district to maximize its use of human capital by avoiding organizational redundancies. In addition, well-written job descriptions clearly

communicate performance standards and expectations to all employees and designate specific points of responsibility districtwide.

A job analysis committee should be formed to coordinate the development of the job descriptions. The district should develop central administration job descriptions, then job descriptions for all campus positions. Employees should submit a detailed list of the duties that they perform to their supervisor. Supervisors will amend duties to fit district needs and submit the list to the committee.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent assigns the business manager, coordinator for Curriculum and Special Programs and director for Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to a job analysis committee to review and develop job descriptions in two phases for all district personnel.	September 2003
2.	The superintendent informs all district employees of the job description project and directs employees to submit a detailed list of duties performed to their immediate supervisor.	September 2003
3.	Upon receipt of the job duties, each supervisor prepares a job description summary including standards of performance and submits the draft summary to the committee.	September - October 2003
4.	The committee develops uniform procedures and identifies a format for all district job descriptions using generic job description samples as a benchmark and communicates the format to all VISD supervisors.	October - November 2003
5.	The supervisors submit job summary drafts to the committee in the agreed format.	November 2003
6.	Each employee reviews and proposes revisions to the job description draft as appropriate in collaboration with the employee's immediate supervisor.	December 2003
7.	The committee makes final revisions to the job description drafts as needed and submits final draft job descriptions to the superintendent for review and approval.	January - February 2004
8.	Upon the superintendent's approval, the committee finalizes the job description documents and distributes them to all central office supervisors for distribution and discussion with individual employees.	February 2004
9.	The superintendent assigns the school principals to the job analysis committee to develop school-based job descriptions.	February 2004
10.	The committee identifies all positions at the schools for job	February -

	descriptions and follows the same implementation strategy and procedure described in steps one through six above, with the objective of distributing updated and accurate job descriptions for distribution to all school-based employees.	May 2004
11.	The job description committee convenes to determine an ongoing process, procedure and policy for all job descriptions to be developed and/or updated regularly and submits a policy and procedure draft to the superintendent for review and approval.	May 2004
12.	The superintendent communicates the district's final policy and procedure governing job descriptions to all employees, identifying and designating a point-of-accountability in central administration to ensure ongoing and timely update and accuracy of all job descriptions in the district.	May 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 3

Personnel Management

B. SALARIES AND COMPENSATION

Salary administration involves developing district pay practices; recommending appropriate structures for all classifications of personnel; implementing a regular schedule of salary surveys; recommending necessary adjustments to the compensation structure; and conducting analyses of the impact of proposed salary and wage increases.

In the summer of 2002, the district declared financial exigency. Financial exigency is an event that creates a need for the district to reduce financial expenditures for personnel. It may result from a decline in the district's financial resources; a decline in enrollment; cut in funding; decline in tax revenues; or any unanticipated expense or capital needs. Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code states: "(a) the board of trustees may terminate a term contract and discharge a teacher at any time for; (1) good cause as determined by the board; or (2) a financial exigency that requires a reduction in personnel." During the district's 2002-03 budget review, VISD's new superintendent identified a shortfall in the 2001-02 fund balance audit report. As a result of declaring financial exigency, the district eliminated seven positions: three new middle school teachers; one elementary school aide; one primary school aide; and two paraprofessionals. The superintendent contacted neighboring school districts to help the employees find other employment. In addition to reducing staff, the district did not fill positions for an aide or a teacher position that became vacant in August. Using funds from the fund balance to cover the salary and expenses for the remainder of the year, the district created a business manager position in February 2003.

Exhibit 3-4 shows average teacher salaries for VISD, selected peer districts and the state. VISD ranks lowest among its peers in average teacher salaries. The highest average teacher salary rate among the group is Mansfield ISD, which pays its teachers an average of \$7,056 more per year than VISD. VISD teacher salaries fall below the state average by \$5,459 annually.

Exhibit 3-4
Average Teacher Salaries
VISD, Peer Districts and State
2002-03

District	Average Salary for Teachers
Venus	\$34,513
Godley	\$34,626
Dublin	\$36,728
Grandview	\$37,020
Rio Vista	\$34,736
State	\$39,972
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>	

Exhibit 3-5 shows average teacher salaries for VISD and surrounding area districts. VISD ranks the lowest among the surrounding area districts in average teacher salaries. The highest average teacher salary rate among the surrounding area districts is Joshua ISD, which pays an average of \$6,406 more annually than VISD. According to district administrators who were interviewed by the review team, VISD occasionally has lost teachers because of higher salaries paid by other nearby districts, including Midlothian ISD and Mansfield ISD.

Exhibit 3-5
Average Teacher Salaries
VISD and Surrounding Districts
2002-03

District	Average Salary for Teachers
Venus	\$34,513
Alvarado	\$37,415
Burleson	\$40,045
Cleburne	\$40,248
Godley	\$34,626
Grandview	\$37,020
Joshua	\$40,919
Keene	\$35,198

Average	\$37,498
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>	

Exhibit 3-6 compares 2002-03 VISD teacher salaries with those of its peers sorted by years of experience.

Exhibit 3-6
Average Teacher Salary by Years of Experience
VISD and Peer Districts
2002-03

Years of Experience	Venus	Godley	Dublin	Grandview	Rio Vista
Beginning Teachers	\$26,940	\$27,241	\$26,620	\$26,760	\$25,316
1-5 years	\$29,271	\$29,377	\$27,816	\$29,590	\$28,998
6-10 years	\$35,803	\$34,691	\$33,115	\$36,547	\$34,047
11-20 years	\$41,624	\$40,279	\$39,551	\$40,122	\$40,988
More than 20 years	\$45,561	\$44,735	\$44,258	\$45,580	\$46,793
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>					

Exhibit 3-7 shows that in 2002-03 VISD ranks second in average salaries for administrators compared to its peers, but pays less than the average state administrative salary.

Exhibit 3-7
Administrative Salaries
VISD and Peer Districts
2002-03

2002-03	Number Assigned to Administration	Average Salary for Administration
Venus	7	\$58,444
Godley	9	\$56,065
Dublin	8	\$58,207
Grandview	10	\$52,987
Rio Vista	4	\$62,500
State	19,740	\$64,259
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>		

Exhibit 3-8 describes the number of full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) employed by the district for 1999-2000 through 2002-03, compared to the number of students.

Exhibit 3-8
VISD Staff FTEs and Total Students
1999-2000 through 2002-03

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	Percent Change
Student Enrollment	1,632	1,807	1,851	1,871	14.6%
Staff	217	237	261	245	12.9%
Student/Staff Ratio	7.5	7.6	7.1	7.6	1.5%
Teachers	108	124	133	129	19.4%
Student/Teacher Ratio	15.1	14.6	13.9	14.5	(4.0%)
Educational Aides	54	50	68	42	(22.2%)
<i>Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>					

FINDING

VISD’s use of block scheduling at the high school increases teacher-staffing costs. The term “block scheduling” refers to restructuring or organizing at least part of the school day into a larger block of time, such as changing a seven-period day to a four-period day. The theory behind the block schedule is that the schedule contains fewer classes per day, enabling teachers and students to focus more time and energy on each lesson and to cover subjects in greater depth. VISD uses an accelerated block. Under the accelerated block concept, the standard 180-day school year is divided into two 90-day semesters. Each semester students attend four 90-minute classes each day. Students complete the course in a semester instead of over the entire year.

The use of block scheduling increased significantly during the past decade in the United States. The theory was that block scheduling would:

- improve school atmosphere;
- cause fewer dropouts;
- allow teachers to use creative teaching strategies;
- reduce the emphasis on memorization;
- produce higher grades;
- benefit at-risk students; and
- reduce classroom administrative time.

Students like block scheduling because of the additional electives or work-study programs available to them while many teachers prefer the additional planning time they receive under block scheduling. For example, secondary teachers receive a 90-minute planning period while their elementary colleagues receive only 45 minutes.

Recent studies have found that block scheduling has not improved academic performance. Some teachers find a lack of time to cover course content because what teachers are expected to know and do has increased in amount and intensity. Given the typical attention span of an adolescent, it may be hard for teachers to engage teenagers for an extended block of time. Some block schedules compress learning into one semester and they go a whole year before the subject is covered again. In subjects that build on previous knowledge, the scheduling gap may pose a problem to students' retention.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) Office of Policy Planning and Research, Division of Research and Evaluation conducted an evaluation of block scheduling and published the results in September 1999 in the Policy Research Report 13, *Block Scheduling in Texas Public High Schools*. The study examined the relationships between different types of schedules and overall student performance in Texas public high schools. Overall performance was measured in terms of dropout rates, grade-level retention rates, campus-level results for the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills and participation and performance on college admission tests and advanced placement exams. TEA findings suggest that several district characteristics are more closely related to overall student performance than the particular types of schedules. For example, campus characteristics and student demographics appear to be more closely associated with overall student performance than the types of scheduling. TEA said that "available data on high school schedules used in Texas public education do not systematically explain or account for variation in overall school performance." The study went on to say, "that school context is much more closely related to overall student performance than the particular types of schedules high schools used."

When the contextual features and performance measures were considered collectively, the following characteristics were found to be associated with overall student performance:

- average student attendance rate for the campus;
- percentage of students enrolled on campus who were economically disadvantaged;
- campus enrollment;
- education service center region;
- district type: urban, rural;

- percentage of students enrolled on campus who were ethnic minorities; and
- percentage of teachers on campus who were ethnic minorities.

In addition, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools Accreditation Standards 2000 recommends: grades 9-12 have a maximum of 35 students per class with a maximum teaching load of 750 students per week and middle schools grades 5-8 have a maximum of 30 students per class.

Texas school districts are re-evaluating block scheduling from both economic and academic standpoints and returning to traditional six- or seven-period day schedules. Since January 2003, San Angelo ISD (SAISD) and Clear Creek ISD (CCISD) school boards have voted to return to a traditional schedule, projecting an estimated savings of \$2.1 million in SAISD and \$3.2 million in CCISD.

VISD's secondary staffing requirements on a traditional seven-period day schedule is presented in **Exhibit 3-9**. The current staffing at the high school is under block scheduling and the middle school is under a traditional scheduling. The formula used in the exhibit is based on a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 24 to 1, excludes special education teachers and may be applied across the middle and high schools.

Exhibit 3-9
VISD Secondary Staffing Formula
Using a Seven-Period Day and 24/1 PTR
2002-03

Description	Math	High School	Middle School
Total all teachers		34	33
Special Education teachers	Subtract	4	6
Regular teachers	Results	30	27
Student-teacher ratio (PTR)		24	24
Number of teacher periods	Multiply	6	6
Two semesters	Multiply	2	2
Required teacher load	Results	288	288
Two semesters	Multiply	2	2
Total student periods	Results	7,140	5,642

Total student periods		7,140	5,642
Required teacher load	Divide	288	288
Required number of teachers	Results	25	20
Regular teachers assigned		30	27
Required number of teachers	Subtract	25	20
Staffing Change	Results	(5)	(7)
<i>Source: VISD and TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.</i>			

VISD middle school is not on block scheduling. None of the regular education teachers are paid with Title I funds. Therefore, any staffing change will only affect state and local funding and should not impact federal programs.

Recommendation 15:

Eliminate secondary block scheduling, return to a traditional schedule and increase student-teacher ratios at secondary schools.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with secondary principal to design a traditional schedule.	October 2003
2.	The superintendent and principal present the plan to parents and students to explain the program, obtain community input and identify concerns.	November 2003
3.	The superintendent presents the plan for traditional schedule to the board for approval and the district's attorney briefs the board on reduction-in-force (RIF) requirements.	January 2004
4.	The superintendent and staff identify courses for elimination and associated teachers for possible RIF.	February 2004
5.	The board approves RIFs and personnel are notified.	March 2004
6.	The superintendent implements traditional secondary schedule.	August 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

The 2002-03 PEIMS files report VISD's average teacher pay as \$34,513. Using a 10 percent benefit adjustment, the average teacher pay would be

\$37,964 (\$34,513 x 1.1 = \$37,964). Reducing 12 teaching positions will result in a \$455,568 annual savings (\$37,964 x 12 = \$455,568).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Eliminate secondary block scheduling, return to a traditional schedule and increase student-teacher ratio at secondary schools.	\$0	\$455,568	\$455,568	\$455,568	\$455,568

FINDING

VISD does not have competitive salary schedules for teachers. Input received during staff interviews, public forums, focus groups and through surveys indicate that it is difficult for VISD to hire and retain qualified teachers because the salary pay scale is not competitive. **Exhibit 3-10** shows survey responses from teachers, principals, central office administrators and support staff regarding salaries. In addition, community surveys indicated 33 percent do not believe that “highly qualified teachers fill job openings.”

Exhibit 3-10
VISD Staff Responses to 2003 TSPR Survey

Survey Question: District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teacher Survey Results	0%	17%	0%	46%	38%
Principal Survey Results	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
Administrator/Support Survey Results	0%	0%	27%	47%	27%

Source: TSPR surveys.

The superintendent and administrative staff recognize that it is difficult to hire and retain qualified teachers because of the salary pay scale. Staff expressed concern in interviews about the district’s high turnover rate. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs said that in 2001-02 the district hired 17 new teachers to fill the primary school’s 23 positions. Of the teachers hired, 12 had alternative certifications in reading. Because of teacher shortages, VISD hires degreed applicants who must attend alternative certification programs. Upon completion of the required

certifications, neighboring districts that offer higher salaries recruit many VISD teachers. VISD's starting salary for new teachers is \$26,940, while Midlothian ISD offers \$31,000 and Mansfield ISD offers \$37,098 for beginning teachers. In 1997-98, a VISD middle school assistant principal accepted a teacher/coach position with Mansfield ISD for a \$9,000 annual salary increase.

Exhibit 3-11 shows teacher experience and turnover rates for VISD and its peer districts. Compared to the peer districts, VISD ranks fifth in experienced teachers and has the second highest teacher turnover rate. VISD's turnover rate is higher than the state average by 16.4 percent. VISD also has the highest share of beginning teachers and ranks third in the category of teachers with one to five years of experience.

Exhibit 3-11
Teacher Experience and Turnover Rates
VISD and Peer Districts
2001-02

	Dublin	Godley	Grandview	Rio Vista	Venus	State Average
Beginning Teachers	4.0%	5.8%	3.7%	11.4%	25.4%	7.8%
1-5 Years Experience	22.4%	43.3%	22.8%	26.6%	24.9%	27.8%
6-10 Years Experience	18.4%	20.2%	19.1%	19.4%	23.4%	18.1%
11-20 Years Experience	27.6%	20.2%	34.5%	32.4%	15.8%	24.7%
More than 20 Years Experience	27.6%	10.6%	20.7%	10.3%	10.5%	21.6%
Average Years Experience	13.6	8.3	11.8	9.3	7.6	11.9
Average Years Experience with the district	9.2	3.8	5.5	4.1	3.1	7.8
Turnover	20.8%	23.1%	22.6%	38.1%	32.1%	15.7%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.

VISD's lower compensation practice could be a factor resulting in the district's high rate of teacher turnover.

The teacher salaries earned for each salary step in surrounding school districts is shown in

Exhibit 3-12. The pay differential has been calculated between the average salary of the surrounding school districts and the current VISD salary.

Exhibit 3-12
VISD Teacher Salaries Compared with Surrounding Districts
2002-03

District	Salary Step				
	0	5	10	15	20
Mansfield	\$37,098	\$38,154	\$39,668	\$43,408	\$47,189
Cedar Hill	\$36,000	\$37,050	\$38,700	\$42,470	\$46,270
Midlothian	\$31,000	\$32,530	\$37,850	\$42,110	\$45,320
Red Oak	\$30,000	\$32,321	\$37,832	\$41,983	\$45,114
Burleson	\$34,000	\$35,000	\$37,500	\$41,490	\$45,080
Average	\$33,620	\$35,011	\$38,310	\$42,292	\$45,795
Venus	\$26,940	\$31,480	\$36,930	\$40,960	\$44,000
Difference	(\$6,680)	(\$3,531)	(\$1,380)	(\$1,332)	(\$1,795)

Source: VISD superintendent and district's Web sites.

The superintendent submitted a proposal to the school board in February 2003 to increase beginning teacher salaries to \$30,000 over a two-year period.

Recommendation 16:

Increase teacher salaries to be more competitive with peer and surrounding districts.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent assigns the business manager, coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs and representatives from school administration and staff to a salary committee.	September 2003
2.	The salary committee surveys area districts to determine the average salary for teaching positions of all levels of experience.	October 2003
3.	The business manager calculates the cost of increasing the	November

	VISD teacher salaries.	2003
4.	The business manager presents the results to the superintendent.	December 2003
5.	The superintendent reviews the information, presents it to the board and requests approval for inclusion in the 2004-05 budget.	January 2004
6.	The board approves the recommendation and directs the superintendent to budget for the increases beginning with the 2004-05 year.	February 2004
7.	The superintendent directs the business manager to include sufficient funds in the budget for the 2004-05 year.	March 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

The average salaries earned for each employment category in the surrounding school districts is shown in **Exhibit 3-12**. The fiscal impact assumes that there will be the same number of full-time-equivalent teacher positions that existed in 2002-03: 13 in Step 0; 53 teachers in Step 5; 25 teachers in Step 10; 23 teachers in Step 15; and 16 teachers in Step 20 (**Exhibit 3-13**). Using average salaries, the total budget adjustment needed to increase salaries for each employee group is \$367,839. In addition, the district will incur an additional cost of 3 percent in benefits. This is made up of approximately 1.45 percent in Medicare, 1 percent in Workers' Compensation and .055 percent in Unemployment Compensation.

**Exhibit 3-13
Cost of Increasing VISD Teachers to Area Districts Average**

Salary Step	Teacher FTE's	Difference between Venus and Area Average Teacher Salaries	Total Costs of Recommended Increase
0	13	(\$6,680)	(\$86,840)
1-5	53	(\$3,531)	(\$187,143)
6-10	25	(\$1,380)	(\$34,500)
11-15	23	(\$1,332)	(\$30,636)
16-20+	16	(\$1,795)	(\$28,720)
Increase in salaries			(\$367,839)
Increase in bene fits			(\$11,035)
Total fiscal impact			(\$378,874)

Source: Texas Public School Consulting Inc.; calculation using PEIMS data and average area teacher salaries.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Increase teacher salaries to be more competitive with peer and surrounding districts.	\$0	(\$378,874)	(\$378,874)	(\$378,874)	(\$378,874)

FINDING

The district does not have a salary schedule for administrators, support staff, auxiliary staff and/or educational aides. Comments received from community members and staff reveal a perception that salaries are not consistent for similar positions in the district, which affects staff morale. Salary increases varied in the past. Some employees received a 2 percent raise when others received a 10 percent raise. No procedures, guidelines or salary schedules exist for setting salaries for positions other than district teacher positions. In February 2003, the superintendent submitted a proposal to the board to implement salary schedules for administrative staff, instructional aides, secretary/clerical positions, food service staff and maintenance/custodial staff.

Compensation plans guide and control salary decisions for employees or groups of employees. An effective salary structure helps ensure equity, competitiveness and objectivity in a district’s compensation practices. Without established salary schedules or plans, pay inequities and disparities easily develop among and between comparable positions or classifications. The lack of structured minimum and maximum salary increments and grades hinders VISD in analyzing and comparing jobs in the district. Wide variances in pay also affect retention and employee morale and result in internal salary compression and salary inequities.

Bastrop ISD (BISD) has a comprehensive pay system that includes goals and supporting salary structures. **Exhibit 3-14** shows how BISD organizes employee positions by pay grades and a series of schedules.

**Exhibit 3-14
BISD Salary Structure
1999-2000**

Salary Structure	Number	Examples of Positions
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	of Pay Grades	
Teacher	1	Teachers, librarians
Administrative/ Professional	9	Principals, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, department directors and managers, counselors, nurses
Paraprofessional/Technical	9	Department managers, administrative assistants, department secretaries, attendance clerks
Manual Trades-- Custodians	3	Lead custodian, custodian, laborer/temporary/substitute
Manual Trades--Food Service	6	Food service manager, clerk, worker, cashier, laborer/temporary/substitute
Manual Trades-- Maintenance	8	Licensed technician, warehouse foreman, grounds worker, helper, laborer/temporary/substitute
Manual Trades-- Transportation	7	Vehicle maintenance foreman, senior mechanic, mechanic, bus driver, dispatcher, laborer/temporary/substitute
<i>Source: BISD Salary Plan, 1999-2000, prepared by TASB, June 1999.</i>		

Center Point ISD created salary schedules for auxiliary and non-certified employees to clearly define payment for each position. The business manager created these schedules by analyzing the original salary schedules, hours and days worked; verifying minimum wage; and including increases in incremental steps along the schedule for employees with more experience. Once the schedules were created, the schedules were presented to the board for approval. All schedules are based upon work experience relevant to a school district position. Each schedule is simple to understand, easy for an administrator or supervisor to communicate to an employee and easy for an employer to administer. The schedules help ensure that employees with similar experience are paid equally.

Salary surveys can provide district personnel useful data on average salaries based on the average number of days worked and average years of experience for comparable positions in surrounding districts. Kingsville ISD participates in Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators (TASPA) annual salary surveys to determine the competitiveness of the district's pay with other peer districts. These surveys assist the district in evaluating the market and developing salary adjustment during the annual

budget process. Kingsville ISD uses the TASPAs surveys, published survey data and peer district data to maintain salary competitiveness.

Recommendation 17:

Create an equitable salary schedule for all employees and positions.

Salary surveys assist personnel departments in evaluating the market and recommending salary adjustments to the superintendent during the annual budget process. A customized report can be purchased that includes market comparisons for the following: teacher salary schedules and incentives; pay raise budgets; market comparisons for 30 jobs including principals, assistant principals, classroom teacher aides, school secretaries, bus drivers, food service workers and others.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent assigns the business manager, coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs and representatives from school administration and staff to a salary committee.	September 2003
2.	The salary committee obtains salary survey data from peer districts and TASB.	October 2003
3.	The superintendent and business manager perform a detailed analysis of the salary data.	November 2003
4.	The business manager, with input from the salary committee, develops a salary schedule for all employee positions.	December 2003
5.	The superintendent reviews the information, presents it to the board and requests approval for inclusion in the 2004-05 budget.	January 2004
6.	The board approves the recommendation and directs the superintendent to budget for the increases beginning with the 2004-05 year.	February 2004
7.	The superintendent directs the business manager to include sufficient funds in the budget for the 2004-05 year.	March 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

A custom market survey of district salaries can be purchased for \$250.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Create an equitable salary schedule for	(\$250)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

all employees and positions.

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Venus Independent School District

Chapter 3

Personnel Management

C. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

As student enrollment increases and more teachers retire, Texas faces a critical teacher shortage. More than 1,040 Texas school districts compete in an ever-shrinking pool for teachers. In a study conducted by the State Board for Educator Certification published June 18, 2002, *Estimates of Teacher Shortage in Texas Public Schools for the 2000-01 and 2001-02 Academic Years*, it was estimated that the state had a shortage of approximately 40,000 teachers in 2000-01. In an effort to address the demand for teachers, many districts use incentives to hire and/or retain qualified teachers. Some strategies employed by Texas school districts include:

- hiring bonuses/competitive salaries;
- employee referral incentives;
- relocation or moving fees;
- housing assistance;
- reduced-rate mortgages and low-interest loans;
- tuition reimbursement and student loan assistance; and
- using professional recruiters to assist the district in targeting qualified teacher candidates.

Recruitment is becoming increasingly competitive as the supply of teachers decreases. Although the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is making efforts “to increase the number of college students who pursue educator preparation programs,” a large number of teachers are leaving the profession. **Exhibit 3-15** lists some of the reasons teachers have reported for leaving the profession:

Exhibit 3-15
Reasons Given by Teachers for Leaving Teaching Jobs

Reasons for Resignations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retirement• To stay home with children

- To move with families to a new area
- To pursue other positions in education
- To pursue another career for higher salary
- Teacher burnout

Source: Texas Center for Educational Research, The Cost of Teacher Turnover, November 2000.

FINDING

In spring 2002, VISD initiated a recruitment plan for the district to take a more proactive approach in filling teacher vacancies. The district has had difficulty recruiting and hiring bilingual and English as second language (ESL) teachers. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs identified job fairs to attend and prepared recruiting folders with VISD brochures, DFW area maps showing the Venus location, applications, pay scale, VISD district maps and VISD giveaways that include the VISD logo on a ruler, pencil or key chain. The coordinator and school principals attended the job fairs listed in **Exhibit 3-16** in 2001-02 and are planning to attend the job fairs listed for 2002-03. Prior to 2001-02, the district's recruitment efforts were minimal. VISD did not have a recruitment plan or attend job fairs.

Exhibit 3-16
VISD Recruitment Job Fairs
2001-02 and 2002-03

Date	Job Fair	City
April 2, 2002	Tarleton State University	Stephenville, TX
April 2, 2002	University of Texas Arlington	Arlington, TX
April 4, 2002	Midwestern State	Wichita Falls, TX
April 11, 2002	Texas Women's University	Denton, TX
April 15, 2002	McNeese State	Lake Charles, LA
April 16, 2002	Northwestern State	Natchitoches, LA
April 17, 2002	University of LA Monroe	Monroe, LA
April 18, 2002	University of Texas	Dallas, TX

May 23, 2002	ECAP Job Fair, Birdville Fine Arts Center	Denton, TX
May 30, 2002	Region 11	Fort Worth, TX
June 7, 2002	Region 12	West Texas,
March 28, 2003	Lamar University	Beaumont, TX
April 1, 2003	Tarleton State University	Stephenville, TX
April 1, 2003	University of Texas Arlington	Arlington, TX
April 1, 2003	University of Texas Austin	Austin, TX
April 3, 2003	Midwestern State University	Wichita Falls, TX
April 3, 2003	Tri-University	Abilene, TX
April 8, 2003	Southwest Texas State University	San Marcos, TX
April 9, 2003	University of Texas at Dallas	Dallas, TX
April 14, 2003	University of North Texas	Denton, Texas
May 12, 2003	North Central TX Association of School Personnel	Arlington, TX
June 6, 2003	West Texas Area Teacher Job Fair	Lubbock, TX
<i>Source: VISD Coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs.</i>		

Exhibit 3-17 provides the results of VISD recruitment efforts through job fairs in 2001-02.

Exhibit 3-17
VISD Recruitment Job Fair Results
2001-02

Job Fairs	Number of Teachers Hired
ECAP	3
Region 11	2
University of Texas at Austin	1
Tarleton State University	4
<i>Source: VISD 2002 Spring-Summer Recruitment Schedule.</i>	

In addition to job fair participation, VISD publicized teacher openings on its Web site and other Web sites. The staff is developing other initiatives for recruitment including the addition of materials regarding the VISD's benefits package and the advantages of working in a small school district that is close to a metropolitan area like Dallas and Fort Worth in its promotion brochures. The district uses Title 2 funds for teacher recruitment efforts.

The coordinator for Curriculum and Special Programs has analyzed the district's recruitment efforts by evaluating the number of resumes and applications received per job fair, the sources of applications, the quality of applicants received the prior year as a result of the recruitment efforts and number of teachers hired. The coordinator said that based on the lack of viable applicants at some job fairs in 2001-02, specifically Louisiana fairs, staff will attend job fairs where the district's participation would be more productive. The staff adjusts the district's recruitment efforts as necessary.

COMMENDATION

VISD has implemented a recruitment plan to address teacher job vacancies in the district.

FINDING

VISD does not have a centralized system or methodology for informing its employees of job vacancies. The superintendent oversees the personnel process but has not assigned the responsibility for job postings to any staff. Staff said during interviews that they were not made aware of positions as they became vacant and that they had received complaints from school employees who were also not informed of job vacancies. The staff cited the recent head football coach vacancy as one example. The job-posting example for that position did not have an advertising date listed.

The district does not have formal procedures to report or post job vacancies. Instead, word of mouth appears to be the way district job vacancies are communicated. The superintendent said the principals are responsible for informing their staff. The district's Web site is not updated on a timely basis for job postings to be effective.

Districts often establish a practice of posting job vacancies at central locations at each school and at the central office for a minimum of two weeks to ensure all employees have an equal opportunity to apply for positions within the district. In addition, posting vacancies on the district's

Web site for a minimum of two weeks extends an opportunity for community applicants.

Recommendation 18:

Implement a policy and process to inform district employees of job vacancies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent forms a committee to develop a procedure for posting job vacancies at the central office and each school, as well as timely posting on the district Web site.	September 2003
2.	The committee develops a standard operating procedure for the content and process of posting job vacancies.	September 2003
3.	The superintendent approves the standard operating procedure for posting job vacancies.	October 2003
4.	The superintendent distributes the standard operating procedure to central office and campus personnel for implementation and monitoring.	November 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 3

Personnel Management

D. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Texas law requires school districts to offer professional and in-service training for staff. Staff development and training exposes employees to new and better ways to complete tasks or tackle problems. The Texas Education Commission (TEC) provides minimum standards for staff development planning, preparation and improvement provided by school districts. These standards include:

- training in technology, conflict resolution and discipline strategies, including classroom management, district discipline policies and the student code of conduct adopted under Section 37.001 and Chapter 37;
- training that relates to instruction of students with disabilities and is designed for educators who work primarily outside of the area of special education; and
- instruction as to what is permissible under law, including opinions of the United States Supreme Court regarding prayers in public school.

In addition, TEC requires the staff development be predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives developed and approved by the campus-level committees. Campus staff development may include a variety of activities that enable staff to share effective strategies and to:

- reflect on curricular and instructional issues;
- analyze student achievement results;
- identify means of increasing student achievement;
- identify students' strengths and needs;
- develop meaningful programs for students;
- appropriately implement site-based decision making; and
- conduct action research.

Staff development occurs through a variety of means, including study teams, individual research, peer coaching, workshops, seminars or conferences.

A district that receives Title I assistance is required to provide professional development that will improve the teaching of academic subjects, consistent with state content standards, to enable all children to meet the state's student performance standards and meet the requirements of federal law.

State law also requires additional staff development for teachers and administrators who provide services to students who have been identified as gifted and talented. The gifted and talented education program has the following staff development requirements:

- prior to assignment in the program, teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program for gifted students must have a minimum of 30 hours of staff development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs and curriculum and instruction for gifted students;
- teachers without the required training who provide instruction and services that are part of the gifted/talented program must complete the 30-hour training requirement within one semester;
- teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of a program for gifted students must receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education; and
- administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted and talented students and program options.

Staff development provides employees with new and better ways to complete tasks and tackle problems, ultimately increasing productivity and efficiency in the district.

The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs coordinates staff development and attends seminars, conferences and training to keep abreast with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) enacted in 2002, Title I, federal programs, Safe and Drug Free School and Communities Act, curriculum training and new developments in education. The coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs updates school personnel on legal changes through memorandums and during monthly administrative meetings with the superintendent and principals. Other administrators receive professional staff development through their monthly staff meetings, professional associations and Regional Education Service Center XI (Region 11) workshops. The coordinator plans the staff

development schedules for the district. The schools participate in a needs assessment process as required by Title I, Part A, School-wide Program. The coordinator prepares the staff development schedule based on the results of the needs assessment and campus improvement plans.

FINDING

VISD has implemented a paraprofessional training program that will allow teacher aides to meet and even exceed the NCLB, continue their education and pursue teacher certification. NCLB requires that all paraprofessionals at Title I, Part A, School-wide Districts meet the “highly qualified” standards by January 31, 2005. In order to comply with this law’s requirements, paraprofessionals must have two years of higher education or an associate’s degree.

VISD, along with other public schools in the community college service area, participates with Hill College in an Employer Worker Training Program designed to meet the needs of working paraprofessionals. Hill College provides a customized program for working paraprofessionals to meet the “highly qualified” standards of NCLB by May 31, 2004. The program provides college courses at VISD’s high school. Courses offered focus on the field of education with supporting content drawn from other appropriate academic areas such as English, Spanish, reading, math, communication and technology. The classes are designed to not only meet the requirements of federal legislation, but are customized for this working population, enhancing their skills on the job.

The curriculum developed by Hill College will allow participants to further their education as teacher aides and to retain their jobs. The district’s objective is to have teachers to continue their education beyond the curriculum developed by Hill College and to obtain teacher certifications for public school teaching. Hill College works with Tarleton State University to develop a teacher preparation transition program.

In July 2002, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board published *A Report on Promising Practices for the Recruiting and Completion of Educator Preparation Programs*. The report’s findings identified the “top five best and most promising practices for student completion of educator preparation programs that appear to be working and are used by institutions across the state.” These practices include: hiring Examination for Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCet) coordinators; attracting educational aides into the program; providing ongoing field experiences; offering accessibility to faculty; and allowing flexible schedules. The report explains that many educational aides have a strong desire to become certified teachers but face barriers that prevent them from accomplishing this goal. Effort to provide flexible schedules and courses at times when

educational aides could attend classes has been beneficial. Another advantage is access to faculty who can offer assistance, encouragement and provide support. The report further states that although these students make huge sacrifices to attend classes, the success rate is high.

VISD has made several accommodations for its paraprofessionals to receive this training. The superintendent and business manager serve as project leaders in the Employer Worker Training Program with Hill College. The district provides the location for instruction. The paraprofessionals pay for the tuition costs. VISD allows the paraprofessional staff to pay the tuition and books through payroll deduction on a monthly basis.

The Venus Chamber of Commerce has recently awarded \$1,000 in scholarship aid for VISD paraprofessionals to attend the classes. Criteria for the scholarship aid is being developed. VISD and Hill College have recently been awarded a grant for Employed Workers from the North Central Texas Workforce Development Board to support those paraprofessional educators during their two years of college attendance. Funds from the grant will contribute to tuition and books through May 1, 2004. VISD paraprofessionals and those from four other districts enrolled in the Hill College program will benefit from this grant.

COMMENDATION

VISD has established partnerships with Hill College, the Venus Chamber of Commerce and the North Central Texas Workforce Development Board to provide educational opportunities for its paraprofessionals.

FINDING

Because of teacher shortages, VISD hires degreed non-certified professionals for some teaching positions. The district coordinates alternative certification plans through Region 11 and Education Career Alternatives Program (ECAP) so that all applicants complete their alternative certification program within the required time. The district also provides additional certification opportunities to district teachers in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) certification, Master Reading Teacher Certification Program and Master Technology Teacher Certification through Region 11. The district pays for the certification test fees and the cost of the preparation sessions at Region 11.

Exhibit 3-18 shows some of the staff development offerings in Region 11.

Exhibit 3-18
VISD Staff Development Opportunities in Region 11
2002-03

Date	Workshop Title	Audience
2/12/2003	Humanities Bridge Social Studies and Language Arts Connection	High School and Middle School
2/12/2003	Preparing for TAKS Math, Grades 9-11	High School
2/15/2003	TI-83 Plus Graphing Calculator for Intermediate Users	High School and Middle School
2/17/2003	Challenging Your Students with Math Resources on the Internet	Secondary and Elementary
2/17/2003	Soaring to Success on the Elementary Science TAKS	Elementary
2/18/2003	Preparing for the TAKS in Social Studies, Tenth Grade	High School
2/18/2003	RETN Teleconference School Health Advisory Council Update	All Level
2/18/2003	Bilingual/ESL Program Design	All Level
2/19/2003	Assessing Effectively to Improve Student Performance on Math TAKS	Elementary
2/24/2003	Brainstorm, Plan, Organize, Inspire, Create and Problem Solve with Inspiration	All Level
2/25/2003	Geometry: Teaching, Learning and Assessing for TAKS	High School
2/25/2003	ESL Strategies for Secondary Classrooms	Secondary
2/26/2003	Soaring to Success on Secondary Science TAKS	Secondary
3/01/2003	A Beginner's Approach to the TI-83 Graphing Calculator	High School and Middle School
3/03/2003	Preparing for TAKS Math, Grades 9-11	Secondary
3/03/2003	Partners in Literacy – Training of Trainers	Primary 3/20/03
3/20/2003	Impacting Language Arts and Gifted Students with KidPix	Elementary, Middle School and Tech
3/25/2003	ESL Strategies for Elementary Classroom	Elementary
4/01/2003	Critical Issues in Science	All Levels
4/02/2003	Building Connections in Language Arts	High School

	and Social Studies (Sheltered Instruction)	
4/02/2003	Effective Writing for All Students	All Levels
4/02/2003	Science TEXTEAMS and Beyond for Grades PreK-2	Para/Pre-K/K
4/03/2003	Educating Everybody's Children: Teaching Strategies for ESL Students	All Levels
4/08/2003	Great Explorations in Math and Science – GEMS	Primary, Elementary and Middle School
4/15/2003	Building a Foundation: Elementary Social Studies TAKS	Elementary
4/15/2003	Preparing Students for Nontraditional Careers	High Schools
4/22/2003	TEKS-Based Writing in the Primary Classroom	Primary
5/08/2003	RETN Migrant Summer School Teachers Planning Meeting	All Levels
6/03/2003	ESL Strategies of Monolingual English Speaking Special Education Teachers	PK-5
<i>Source: VISD, Office of Coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs.</i>		

Exhibit 3-19 provides the Teacher Preparation Program Training Schedule.

Exhibit 3-19
Teacher Preparation Training Program by Region 11
2002-03 and 2003-04

Date	Topic
May 6, 2003	Orientation
May 6 – June 9, 2003	Online Training and Homework (Background Information)
June 9, 2003	Child Development and Diversity
June 10, 2003	Special Populations I
June 11, 2003	Special Populations II
June 12, 2003	TEKS Organization and Structure
June 16, 2003	Content Area – English Language Arts
June 17, 2003	Content Area – English Language Arts

June 18, 2003	Content Area – Math
June 19, 2003	Content Area – Science
June 23, 2003	Content Area – Social Studies
June 24, 2003	Overview of State Assessment
June 25, 2003	Instructional Technology I
June 26, 2003	Instructional Technology II
June 27 – July 7, 2003	No Classes – Book Study
July 7, 2003	Classroom Assessment and Parent Conferences
July 8, 2003	Lesson Planning – Lesson Presentations
July 9, 2003	Classroom Management
July 10, 2003	Legal Issues and General Meeting
August 23, 2003	Tools for Beginning Teachers
September 13, 2003	Classroom Management Revisited Instructional Strategies
September 27, 2003	PPR Review
October 18, 2003	Effective Questioning Strategies
January 24, 2004	Inclusion
<i>Source: Region 11.</i>	

In addition to the staff development opportunities offered at Region 11, VISD provides gifted and talented (G/T) program staff development during a week-long G/T Academy in the summer through a consortium with Regions 10 and 11. The service centers also offer an extensive G/T program in-service throughout the fall. Additional programs are offered onsite at the campuses throughout the year.

The Texas Center for Educational Research published *The Cost of Teacher Turnover* in November 2000. The report states that “providing time and financial support to teachers to earn master certification and other advanced certifications can pay off in reduced attrition from teaching as well as improved instruction and student performance.” The report concludes that teacher turnover results in high costs to districts and that policymakers and administrators must evaluate how to support teachers and implement strategies to retain qualified teachers. VISD has provided staff development opportunities for alternative certification and advanced certification programs in an effort to retain qualified teachers.

COMMENDATION

VISD offers a comprehensive staff development program that facilitates alternative certification program completion requirements for degreed non-certified professionals.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 4

Financial Management

This chapter reviews the financial management and purchasing functions of the Venus Independent School District (VISD) in the following sections:

- A. Organization and Management
- B. Planning and Budgeting
- C. Accounting and Payroll
- D. Tax Collections
- E. Purchasing Operations
- F. Contract Management
- G. Textbooks

Financial management supports a district's instructional process by providing budgeting, purchasing, accounting and payroll services. Effective financial management ensures that internal controls are in place and operating as intended, technology is maximized to increase productivity and reports are generated to assist management in reaching goals. Multi-year forecasts and the evaluation of trends in key areas—such as enrollment, tax value, revenue, expenditures and fund balance—are essential in managing a district.

BACKGROUND

Districts have access to many tools for making sound financial decisions. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) Web site includes state revenue projection templates and historical data on students, staff and financial information via the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). The Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC), Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) and TEA have developed a database called the Financial Excellence Indicator System of Texas--Information about Education Resources (FEISTIER). Available on a CD, these data can be purchased from TASBO. FEISTIER compiles data from PEIMS, AEIS and annual audit reports on districts throughout the state. It is a helpful tool for generating information on one district or comparing districts.

The 77th Legislature directed the commissioner of Education, in conjunction with the Comptroller's office, to develop and implement a financial accountability rating system for school districts in the state. In response to this directive, TEA developed the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST), which will be implemented for the first time in 2002-03 using 2001-02 data. The rating system uses 21 indicators to rate the financial performance of school districts. TEA will require districts to hold public meetings to discuss financial ratings, just as it requires districts to do for student ratings. A worksheet to enable districts to calculate and monitor FIRST ratings is available on the TEA Regional Education Service Center XIII (Region 13) Web site, <http://www.esc13.net/finance/downloads.html>.

Strong financial management includes the use of available data and tools to develop and monitor budgets. Districts must plan the use of limited resources to maximize student achievement and productivity. The number of students enrolled and property value directly affects the amount of revenue a district receives. Revenue also directly affects the instructional process. It pays for salaries, employee benefits, supplies, staff development, student transportation, facility maintenance, safety and other items essential to district operations. Two major sources of revenue for districts are local taxes and state aid. Local tax effort directly impacts the amount of revenue from local sources and is a component in the calculation that determines the amount of state aid a district will receive.

Property value is a major component that districts use in revenue forecasting. In 2001-02, VISD had less property in the Business category and more property in the Land and Other categories than the state average. The Other category includes mobile homes. VISD has a large number of mobile homes within its boundaries. The district had more property value in the Other category than all of the peer districts, the TEA Regional Education Service Center XI (Region 11) average and the state average. **Exhibit 4-1** shows the comparison of VISD's property value to peer districts, Region 11 and the state. (VISD is part of Region 11.)

Exhibit 4-1
Property Values by Category as a Percentage of Total Property Value
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 11 and the State
2001-02

District	Business	Residential	Land	Oil and Gas	Other
Dublin	24%	25.7%	50.1%	0%	0.2%
Godley	12.7%	50.6%	33%	0%	3.7%
Grandview	17.7%	37.6%	43.4%	0%	1.2%

Rio Vista	11.3%	41.5%	45.2%	0%	1.9%
Venus	23.7%	41.6%	20.9%	0%	13.8%
Region 11	36.5%	55%	6.7%	0.7%	1.1%
State	37.9%	50.3%	6.7%	4%	1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.

Note: Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Tax revenue supports instruction and affects the amount of state aid the district will receive. In 2001-02, VISD had a lower maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate than its peers, the Region 11 average and the state average. VISD had a lower property value per student than its peers, the Region 11 average and the state average. A lower property value affects the amount of tax revenue that can be generated to support instruction. **Exhibit 4-2** compares VISD's M&O tax rate and property value per student to its peer districts, regional averages and state averages.

Exhibit 4-2
M&O Tax Rates and Value per Student
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 11 and the State
2001-02

District	M&O Tax Rate	Value per Student
Dublin	\$1.34	\$119,449
Godley	\$1.43	\$95,598
Grandview	\$1.47	\$106,232
Rio Vista	\$1.50	\$94,034
Venus	\$1.20	\$76,712
Region 11 Average	\$1.41	\$254,903
State Average	\$1.39	\$234,607

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.

The VISD board lowered the M&O tax rate from \$1.47 per \$100 taxable value to \$1.20 per \$100 taxable value for the 2001 tax year. During 2001-02, state funding decreased by \$1.2 million, of which nearly \$1.2 million

was directly related to the reduction of the M&O tax rate. Local tax revenue decreased by \$151,173 during the same period as a result. Board members said they were not informed of the financial impact of that decision on district revenue at the time. The board members accepted the former superintendent's recommendation, assuming the superintendent had the expertise to make that recommendation.

VISD hired a new superintendent in July 2003. The superintendent is working with the board to increase the M&O tax rate to the levels acceptable by law. The district increased its M&O tax rate for 2002-03 to \$1.35.

Exhibit 4-3 compares VISD's tax revenue, as a percentage of the total revenue in the general fund, to the peer districts, the Region 11 average and the state average. VISD's tax revenue percentage is lower than its peer districts, the Region 11 average and the state average.

Exhibit 4-3
Tax Revenue as a Percentage of General Fund Revenue
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 11 and the State
2001-02

District	Tax Revenue As a Percentage Of General Fund Revenue
Dublin	25%
Godley	19%
Grandview	20%
Rio Vista	18%
Venus	16%
Region 11	59%
State	50%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-4 shows VISD's actual revenue by source, as a percentage of the total, for 1997-98 through 2001-02, and its budgeted revenue for 2002-03. The 2002-03 fiscal year ends August 31, 2003. VISD can still amend the 2002-03 budget.

Exhibit 4-4
VISD's Revenue by Source
1997-98 through 2002-03

Source of Revenue	1997-98 Actual	1998-99 Actual	1999-2000 Actual	2000-01 Actual	2001-02 Actual	2002-03 Budget
Local property tax	9.4%	11.2%	12.2%	15.1%	15.8%	18.3%
Other local and intermediate	1.7%	2%	2.9%	3.6%	3.9%	1.5%
State	88.8%	86.8%	84.9%	81.4%	80.4%	80.2%
Federal	0.0%	0.04%	0.02%	0.01%	0.01%	0.02%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02, and PEIMS, 2002-03.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

VISD's total tax rate did not increase between 1997-98 and 2001-02. During the same period, the number of students in average daily attendance increased by 42 percent. **Exhibit 4-5** displays the changes in VISD taxes and student populations between 1997-98 and 2001-02. Total taxable property values increased by more than 91 percent during the same period; but total tax collections increased by only 78 percent. Since VISD lowered its M&O rate in 2001-02, its local tax effort for 2001-02 was a contributing factor in deficit spending of \$2.6 million.

Exhibit 4-5
VISD's Tax Rates, Assessed Property Values,
Student Average Daily Attendance and Value per Student
1997-98 through 2001-02

Category	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	Percent Change
M&O tax rate	\$0.93	\$1.14	\$1.37	\$1.47	\$1.20	29%
Interest and sinking	\$0.57	\$0.36	\$0.13	\$0.03	\$0.30	(47%)

tax rate						
Total tax rate	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	0%
Total taxable value	\$69,763,667	\$80,009,000	\$102,589,890	\$125,245,229	\$133,368,667	91%
Total tax collections	\$1,041,818	\$1,140,455	\$1,390,626	\$1,713,097	\$1,854,436	78%
Total students in average daily attendance	1,214	1,290	1,526	1,652	1,724	42%
Value per student in average daily attendance	\$57,466	\$62,022	\$67,228	\$75,814	\$77,360	35%

Source: TEA, PEIMS and VISD Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-6 reflects the impact of the decision to lower the M&O tax rate by \$0.27. The taxable value increased \$8.1 million, tax revenue decreased \$151,173 and state revenue decreased more than \$1.2 million. If the tax rate remained the affected or increased, tax revenue would have increased. State aid would not have been negatively affected by the decreased tax collections.

Exhibit 4-6
Impact of Tax Rate Decrease on VISD Revenues
2000-01 and 2001-02

Fiscal Year	2000-01	2001-02	Difference
M&O Tax Rate per \$100 Taxable Value	\$1.47	\$1.20	(\$0.27)
VISD Taxable Value	\$125,245,229	\$133,368,667	\$8,123,438
M&O Tax Revenue	\$1,651,274	\$1,500,101	(\$151,173)
General Fund State Revenue	\$8,900,645	\$7,654,622	(\$1,246,023)
Total Local Tax and State Revenue	\$10,551,919	\$9,154,723	(\$1,397,196)

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, years ending August 31, 2001 and August 31, 2002.

VISD budgeted less than the state average in instruction and instructional-related services and more than the state average for student transportation, food service and co-curricular and extracurricular activities. **Exhibit 4-7** compares VISD's 2002-03 budgeted expenditures with the state average.

Exhibit 4-7
Comparison of Budgeted Functional Expenditures
VISD and State Average
2002-03

Function	Venus	State
Instruction (11, 95)	52.7%	50.8%
Instructional related services (12, 13)	1.7%	2.7%
Instructional leadership (21)	0%	1.2%
School leadership (23)	5.2%	5.3%
Support services – student (31, 32, 33)	2.7%	4.0%
Student transportation (34)	5.5%	2.6%
Food Service (35)	6.6%	4.9%
Co-curricular and extracurricular activities (36)	3.4%	2.3%
Central administration (41, 92)	3%	3.6%
Plant maintenance and operations (51)	9.9%	10.0%
Security and monitoring services (52)	0.1%	0.7%
Data processing services (53)	1.8%	1.2%
Other	7.4%	10.9%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Venus Independent School District

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A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

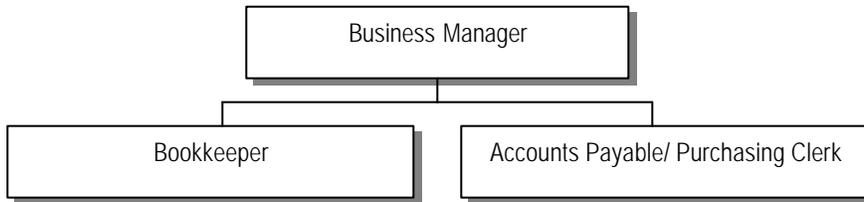
In February 2003, the district filled its newly created Business Office manager position. The new Business Office manager is a certified public accountant (CPA) and served as a school business manager in another state. The VISD Business Office handles accounting, financial reporting, auditing, accounts payable and receivable, bank reconciliations, investments, purchasing and fixed assets. The business manager supervises the bookkeeper and the accounts payable/purchasing clerk.

The business manager oversees all of the functions in the Business Office. The bookkeeper maintains the district's accounting, grant reporting and fixed asset systems. The bookkeeper also maintains the student activity and school activity accounts and performs all bank reconciliations. The accounts payable/purchasing clerk processes all district payments, including student and school activity funds, and processes all deposits for the district. The clerk also processes purchase orders and sends received orders to schools or departments.

In March 2003, the board approved an updated organizational chart that will move the payroll and food service budgets under the business manager's supervision. The district will implement the new organizational plan by the 2003-04 school year.

Exhibit 4-8 illustrates the Business Office's organization.

Exhibit 4-8
VISD Business Office Organization
2002-03



Source: VISD, business manager.

FINDING

The payroll and benefit management functions receive less attention than they need. The superintendent's secretary handles the payroll and employee benefits functions. Payroll and benefits require a dedicated position; the position of superintendent's secretary has enough responsibilities without these duties.

Administration of payroll and employee benefits requires knowledge of board policy, state and federal laws, guidelines and individual insurance/benefit programs. The review team noted that the district was not following board policy in paying unused local leave. The district also does not consistently apply its process for the Family Medical Leave Act. District employees had difficulty locating employee benefit program records and documentation relating to compliance issues when the review team requested them.

Small districts often will consolidate the payroll and employee benefits duties to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their business operations. In Lyford CISD, the payroll clerk has the following responsibilities:

- prepare all payrolls including semimonthly, monthly and special payrolls;
- prepare payroll checks for all employees and distribute to schools and departments;
- balance payroll earnings and deductions;
- make related transfers of funds and deposits;
- receive and audit timesheets for all district employees;

- prepare and submit payroll reports and forms including those required by the Internal Revenue Service, Texas Workforce Commission, Teacher Retirement System, Federal Insurance Contributors' Act, Medicare, and Texas Workers' Compensation Commission;
- prepare and post all payroll changes including payroll deductions, salary changes, terminations and new employee information;
- maintain physical and computerized files including payroll records, absent-from-duty reports and service records;
- communicate with Human Resource Department, campus secretaries and employees to ensure accuracy of information reported; respond to requests from financial institutions regarding employment verification; and
- maintain confidentiality.
- complete all workers' compensation reports; process cafeteria plan election and revocation forms and monitor Section 125 compliance of revocation forms;
- provide notice to third-party administrator for Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act events to ensure district compliance (these programs extend employee benefits to ex-employees for an established period);
- process tax shelter annuity agreements and collect maximum exclusion allowance forms and hold-harmless agreements from companies; and
- serve as liaison to employee benefit companies for employees.

Recommendation 19:

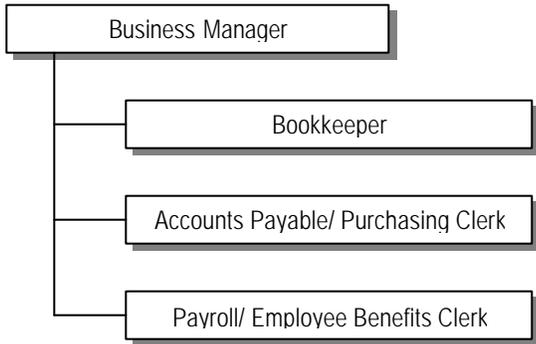
Create a payroll/employee benefit clerk position supervised by the business manager.

The duties of the payroll/employee benefit clerk position should include:

- payroll administration including absence reporting and tracking;
- all payroll reporting requirements including reports to the Teacher Retirement System, Internal Revenue Service and Texas Employment Commission;
- employee benefit administration including group health, dental, life, section 125, Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Workers' Compensation claims and reporting.

Exhibit 4-9 shows the review team's recommended VISD business office organization.

**Exhibit 4-9
VISD Recommended Business Office Organization**



Source: Texas Public School Consulting, Inc.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent and business manager develop a job description for the payroll/employee benefits clerk.	September 2003
2. The superintendent presents a revised organizational chart including the new position to the board for approval.	October 2003
3. The business manager advertises the position.	October 2003
4. The business manager screens applications, conducts interviews and recommends an applicant to the superintendent.	November 2003
5. The superintendent approves the hire and fills the position.	November 2003
6. Payroll duties are transferred from the superintendent's secretary to the payroll/employee benefits clerk.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The creation of the payroll/employee benefits clerk will cost the district \$23,890 for 2003-04 and \$28,662 for 2004-05 through 2007-08. The review team based this estimate on the average annual salary for paraprofessionals at the district central office—\$26,056. Benefits for the new position will cost another 10 percent of the salary (\$2,606). Total annual salary for the clerk will be \$28,662. Since VISD will not hire the clerk until November 2003, the review team prorated the cost of the position for 2003-04 ($\$28,662/12 = \$2,389 \times 10 \text{ months} = \$23,890$).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Create a payroll/employee benefit clerk position supervised by the business manager.	(\$23,890)	(\$28,662)	(\$28,662)	(\$28,662)	(\$28,662)

Venus Independent School District

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B. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

All Texas school districts must comply with Texas Education Code (TEC) sections 44.002 through 44.006 and the guidelines contained in TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG)* when preparing their budgets. The budget process consists of three major phases: planning, preparation and evaluation. The budgetary process begins with sound planning, which defines the goals and objectives of individual schools and the school district and develops programs to attain those goals and objectives. Budgets also allow citizens and taxpayers to hold policymakers and administrators accountable for their actions.

An effective school district budget links spending plans to the board's strategic goals, priorities and initiatives. School district budget development becomes a collaborative effort requiring the input, participation and cooperation of various individuals and groups across the district. A school district budget reflects the financial stewardship of the administration, the board and the local community.

After districts develop their budgets, they need to evaluate the document. During development and evaluation of the budget, district officials must be aware of the fund balance. The fund balance helps measure district solvency and is probably the most meaningful reflection of the district's financial condition.

VISD's superintendent and business manager are new to the district. The district hired the current superintendent in July 2002 and the business manager in February 2003. The superintendent developed the budget for 2002-03, a process that included the development of five-year histories, budget status information, budget assumptions, staffing, enrollment projections, budget projections and tax rate information. The superintendent made presentations to the board concerning budget preparation and legal notice information. Upon board approval of the budget, the superintendent sent schools a printout of the non-salary budgeted amounts. Central office staff manages salary and benefit accounts.

FINDING

The board does not have written goals or a formal policy to provide the superintendent with clear expectations concerning the fund balance. The district's fund balance fluctuated greatly between 1999-2000 and 2001-02, and fell by \$2.7 million, or 47 percent, from 2000-01 to 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-10 shows the actual change in the general fund balance from 1998-99 to 2001-02, and the 2002-03 budget. The 2002-03 fiscal year ends August 31, 2003. VISD can still amend the budget; the amounts shown do not represent the district's actual revenue and expenditures for 2002-03.

Exhibit 4-10
VISD's General Fund Actual Change in Fund Balance
1998-99 through 2001-02 and VISD's 2002-03 Budget

Revenue Source	1998-99 Actual	1999-2000 Actual	2000-01 Actual	2001-02 Actual	2002-03 Budget
Local & Intermediate	\$1,042,807	\$1,543,131	\$2,039,498	\$1,867,260	\$2,048,883
State	\$6,860,501	\$8,679,437	\$8,900,645	\$7,654,622	\$8,312,306
Federal	\$2,868	\$1,768	\$1,700	\$1,356	\$1,600
Total Revenue	\$7,906,176	\$10,224,336	\$10,941,843	\$9,523,238	\$10,362,789
Expenditure Category					
Salaries/Benefits	\$5,621,947	\$6,350,698	\$6,985,078	\$7,763,939	\$7,856,933
Contracted Services	\$606,389	\$716,964	\$890,283	\$1,125,910	\$1,102,850
Supplies & Materials	\$547,661	\$569,178	\$619,682	\$918,740	\$769,250
Other Miscellaneous Expenses	\$342,716	\$392,420	\$450,584	\$498,424	\$519,561
Debt Service	\$0	\$0	\$43,365	\$15,887	\$17,500
Capital Outlay	\$296,479	\$399,484	\$878,649	\$671,199	\$9,000
Total Expenditures	\$7,415,192	\$8,428,744	\$9,867,641	\$10,994,099	\$10,275,094
Revenue over	\$490,984	\$1,795,592	\$1,074,202	(\$1,470,861)	\$87,695

Expenditures					
Other Resources	\$0	\$2,622	\$2,108	\$12,125	
Transfers Out	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$1,212,323)	(\$56,428)
Adjustments	\$563,579	\$15,867	(\$634)	\$0	\$0
Net Change in Fund Balance	\$1,054,563	\$1,814,081	\$1,075,676	(\$2,671,059)	\$31,267

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1999-98 through 2001-02, and TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

Exhibit 4-11 shows VISD's ending general fund balance and the percent change from 1998-99 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-11
VISD's General Fund Year Ending Balance and Percent Change
1998-99 through 2001-02

Fund Balance Type	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change	2000-01	Percent Change from 1999-2000	2001-02	Percent Change from 2000-01
Total Fund Balance	\$2,832,444	\$4,646,525	64%	\$5,721,550	23%	\$3,051,142	(47%)
Reserved/Designated	(\$2,000,000)	(\$3,000,000)	50%	(\$3,000,000)	0%	(\$1,500,000)	(50%)
Unreserved/Undesignated	\$832,444	\$1,646,525	98%	\$2,721,550	65%	\$1,551,142	(43%)

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1998-99 through 2001-02.

TEA's FASRG provides a way for districts to calculate the optimum fund balance in their general fund. TEA requires districts to present the computation worksheet for their optimal general fund balances in their annual external audits. TEA recommends that each district maintain a fund balance equal to the total reserved fund 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 is the portion of fund balance that is not available for appropriation or that has been legally separated for specific purposes, such as a reserve for encumbrances. Designated fund

balances require board action to earmark portions of the fund balance for a purpose that will be fulfilled within a reasonable period of time. A decrease to a district's fund balance of 20 percent over two years creates a negative response to indicator 19 of FIRST.

VISD experienced a nearly 47 percent decrease in fund balance from 2000-01 to 2001-02 causing the district to operate with a general fund balance below the optimum level. **Exhibit 4-12** compares the district's general fund balance to TEA's prescribed optimum fund balance.

Exhibit 4-12
Analysis of VISD General Fund Balance
1999-2000 through 2001-02

	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Ending Fund Balance	\$4,645,525	\$5,721,550	\$3,051,142
Optimum Fund Balance	\$4,200,000	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000
Excess/(Deficit)	\$445,525	\$1,721,550	(\$948,858)

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1999-2000 through 2001-02.

Laredo ISD (LISD) established a general fund balance goal that exceeds the guidelines established by the TEA. The district advances toward that goal by following board-established instructions. LISD board policy CA (LOCAL), issued September 20, 1999, sets a goal of attaining an unreserved, undesignated fund balance of at least two months' operating costs within five years. To meet that goal, the policy instructs the superintendent and business manager to implement the following steps: develop and submit for board approval a balanced budget with input from site-based decision making committees and instructional programs; develop staffing patterns and funding formulas based on a per pupil basis; and restrict any surplus funds toward unreserved, undesignated fund balance. In the management letter for LISD's 1998-99 external audit, the auditor commended the district for adopting the policy requiring maintenance of at least two months of operating expenditures as unreserved, undesignated fund balance. The auditor further encouraged the board to support management in complying with the policy. LISD's 2001 external audit commended the board and staff for increasing the district's unreserved, undesignated fund balance from \$1.1 million in 1998 to \$10.6 million in 2001.

Recommendation 20:

Establish a general fund balance management policy.

The importance of fund balance cannot be understated. The balance of a district's general fund is significant since the general fund supports most of the district's activities until state aid and local maintenance taxes are received. For the district to avoid financial difficulties in the future, it must control spending and increase the general fund balance.

A board-approved general fund balance policy would enable the superintendent to make decisions to keep the fund balance at its optimum level. The policy should address reporting to the board so that the board understands the impact of financial decisions that will affect the fund balance. The policy should establish the optimum balance and provide clear direction as to how to achieve the goal.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent and business manager draft a fund balance management policy.	September 2003
2. The superintendent presents the policy to the board for approval.	October 2003
3. The board approves the policy and directs the superintendent to implement it.	November 2003
4. The superintendent and business manager implement and follow the policy.	November 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district overestimated its state revenues by nearly \$1.7 million for 2001-02. The incorrect estimation of state revenues contributed to the district's decrease in fund balance of \$2.6 million in 2001-02. According to the external auditor's management letter, the error occurred because the district used the number of students shown in the legislative planning estimate (LPE) of the TEA Summary of Finances instead of the district's estimate of student enrollment in the revenue forecast. The LPE uses student counts that were sent to TEA preceding a legislative session. TEA revises the estimates in March during the session. The set of estimates

adopted by the Legislature is used to determine the payment amounts or cash flow for districts for each year of the following biennium. VISD's state revenue comprised 80 percent of all revenue received for 2001-02.

Inaccurate estimates of state aid can create major financial problems for districts. TEA has a template located on its Web site to estimate state aid. The complex formulas involved include many factors that affect the revenue a district receives. The formula is broken into two categories called TIERS. Major factors used in TIER I of the formula include student attendance, student participation in special programs and the transportation allotment. Property wealth and tax collections affect TIER II. Because funding is based upon the entire year's average, the estimates of student attendance and students participating in special programs must be monitored on a six weeks basis.

Recommendation 21:

Obtain training on the TEA state aid template and begin using it to forecast revenue.

To ensure accurate revenue forecasting for state aid, the business manager must attend training on the use of the state aid template. In addition, he must use the tool on a six weeks basis to determine if the forecasts were correct.

The regional educational service centers and TASBO offer training opportunities through workshops that provide valuable instruction on the estimation of state aid.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager determines the availability of training opportunities with regional educational service centers and TASBO.	September 2003
2. The business manager obtains approval from the superintendent to attend appropriate workshops.	September 2003
3. The business manager attends selected training workshops on the use of the TEA template.	As soon as available
4. The business manager uses the template in forecasting and monitoring.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The two-day TASBO training workshops usually costs \$200 for member districts. The fiscal impact assumes the business manager will attend two workshops on the state aid templates annually beginning in 2003-04 (\$200 x 2 = \$400).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Obtain training on the TEA state aid template and begin using it to forecast revenue.	(\$400)	(\$400)	(\$400)	(\$400)	(\$400)

FINDING

The district exceeded its overall expenditure budget in the general operating fund by \$139,279 during 2001-02. The district's expenditures not only exceeded the budget at the functional level, but exceeded the total budget as well. According to the district's audit management letter, the problem occurred because of coding errors that it corrected during the external audit.

A lack of purchasing procedures, internal controls and oversight contributed to the overages in the budget. VISD's method of purchasing and lack of encumbrance accounting does not provide the necessary internal control to manage the budget. The district uses Regional Service Center Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) business system software, which can generate budget variance reports that are an essential tool used in monitoring budget status.

Exhibit 4-13 shows budget variances by category for 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-13 VISD Budget Variance 2001-02

Expenditure Category	Final Budget	Actual Expenditures	Variance +/-
Instruction	\$6,268,440	\$6,244,655	\$23,785
Instructional Resources & Media Services	\$196,888	\$170,887	\$26,001
Curriculum & Instructional Staff Development	\$13,000	\$10,859	\$2,141
School Leadership	\$596,536	\$571,406	\$25,130

Guidance & Counseling	\$228,562	\$204,182	\$24,380
Health Services	\$90,641	\$82,056	\$8,585
Student Transportation	\$822,453	\$1,077,888	(\$255,435)
Co-curricular/Extracurricular	\$412,575	\$442,596	(\$30,021)
General Administration	\$454,000	\$492,637	(\$38,637)
Plant Maintenance & Operations	\$1,184,985	\$1,164,513	\$20,472
Security & Monitoring	\$5,500	\$2,658	\$2,842
Data Processing Services	\$201,181	\$196,851	\$4,330
Community Services	\$13,915	\$13,045	\$870
Debt Services	\$26,100	\$15,887	\$10,213
Facilities Acquisitions & Construction	\$92,044	\$86,008	\$6,036
Payments to Fiscal Agents	\$248,000	\$217,971	\$30,029
Totals	\$10,854,820	\$10,994,099	(\$139,279)

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Report, 2001-02.

School districts must include budgets for the general fund, food service fund and the debt service fund in their official budget. Districts must prepare and approve these budgets at least at the fund and functional levels to comply with TEA's legal requirements. A school district must amend the official budget before exceeding a functional expenditure category, such as instruction.

Recommendation 22:

Generate and review budget variance reports and review the coding on the transactions flowing through the accounting system.

VISD should generate and review monthly budget variance reports. In addition, the business manager should monitor the codes on transactions flowing through the accounting system to ensure accurate function coding.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager creates a system to ensure that Business Office staff generates budget variance reports and	September 2003 and monthly
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provides them on a monthly basis.	
2. The business manager reviews, analyzes and takes appropriate action based upon the information in the monthly report.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 4

Financial Management

C. ACCOUNTING AND PAYROLL

Financial accounting and reporting provides information to determine whether current-year revenues were sufficient to pay for current-year services. Financial accounting and reporting demonstrates whether an organization obtained and used its resources in accordance with the entity's legally adopted budget. It also demonstrates compliance with other finance-related legal or contractual requirements. Financial reporting provides information to assist users in assessing the service efforts, costs and accomplishments of a governmental entity.

VISD's Business Office coordinates the accounting and reporting functions. The district's RSCCC software provides a general ledger, subsidiary ledgers and comparative audited financial reports for both the current period and the year to date. In addition, the financial software includes a requisition and encumbrance module.

RSCCC software produces the information VISD needs to fulfill TEA's financial reporting requirements, including the reporting of financial information for PEIMS as required by TEC §42.006. The system also accounts for revenues and expenditures based on FASRG's fund, function, object, cost center and program intent codes.

Payroll must be accurate, as it represents the district's largest budgeted expenditure. Many guidelines and laws govern payment to employees. VISD prepares one payroll for 252 employees plus substitutes on a monthly basis. The superintendent's secretary handles the payroll processing and reporting function. According to the organization chart the board approved in March 2003, the payroll function will move under the supervision of the business manager. The district uses RSCCC to process payroll and related reports. The system was written specifically for school districts; therefore, it can generate pay and Teacher Retirement System (TRS) reports. It also generates account distribution reports and automatically interfaces to the accounting system.

FINDING

The district does not segregate certain duties and functions. The superintendent's secretary enters employee information in both the personnel and payroll modules of the software system. This creates an internal control weakness because the same individual who establishes an employee in the system can also approve payments to that employee.

Proper internal controls dictate a separation of duties to prevent potential abuse of district policies, even in a small district. Appropriate internal controls prevent problems, such as payments to nonexistent or terminated employees. The separation of duties not only protects the district from abuse, it also protects the employees involved. The PEIMS coordinator currently assists the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs with personnel duties. The district does not have a Human Resources Department or administrator.

Recommendation 23:

Reassign personnel duties to the PEIMS coordinator to provide for proper separation of duties.

The district should reassign personnel duties that include establishing employees in the system and making changes to their pay or their pay status (such as active or terminated) to the PEIMS coordinator. The superintendent's secretary should continue to handle payroll processing. This will provide the necessary separation of duties.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager, the superintendent and the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation determine the duties they will reassign to provide for proper separation of duties.	September 2003
2. The superintendent's secretary trains the PEIMS coordinator on data entry in the personnel system.	October 2003
3. The business manager develops written procedures covering the new duties, including backup, cross training, forms and approvals necessary to enter a new employee or changes into the personnel system.	October 2003
4. The business manager transfers selected duties to the PEIMS coordinator.	October 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not follow board policy when granting local leave to employees and paying employees for unused local leave each year.

The employee handbook and the district's practice of paying for unused leave both conflict with board policy. The superintendent's secretary reported that the district grants employees five days of leave each school year in addition to the days granted by the state. VISD refers to this leave as local leave. The district pays employees with unused days for the days at year-end. Board Policy DEC (Local) states, "All employees shall earn one workday of local sick leave per school year."

The board voted to increase personal local leave from one day to five days on July 20, 2000. The increase in days did not include a provision to pay employees for the unused days at the end of August. The district, however, continues to pay employees for unused local leave at year-end. In addition, the district's employee handbook states that employees earn five days of local leave annually and describes the practice of paying the employees.

Recommendation 24:

Follow board policy regarding personal leave.

VISD should grant employees five days of local leave, but should not compensate them for unused local leave days. The district also should update the employee handbook to reflect board policy.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent and business manager notify employees that the district will follow Board Policy DEC (Local) by granting five local leave days each year and discontinuing payments for unused local leave.	September 2003
2. The superintendent directs the correction of the district employee handbook to comply with Board Policy DEC (Local).	October 2003
3. The business manager trains the superintendent's secretary on the leave policy and ensures that it is followed.	October 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

In 2001-02, the district paid employees \$11,355 for unused local leave.
VISD can expect savings of \$11,355 annually from this recommendation.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Follow board policy regarding personal leave.	\$11,355	\$11,355	\$11,355	\$11,355	\$11,355

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 4

Financial Management

D. TAX COLLECTION

The assessment and collection of school district property taxes involve different entities with distinct responsibilities. In accordance with state law, VISD's board sets the tax rate after the adoption of the district budget. The local appraisal district sets property values and certifies tax rolls. In May of each year, the appraisal district provides a tax value estimate but does not provide certified tax rolls until July 25. The appraisal district applies school district tax rates to assessed property values, minus tax exemptions, to determine the amount of taxes to be levied. VISD contracts with the Johnson County Tax Assessor-Collector's office for the collection of ad valorem taxes. The district contracts with Perdue, Brandon and Fielder to collect its delinquent taxes.

A large percentage of property value in VISD represents mobile homes, which makes it difficult for the district to collect delinquent taxes. Owners frequently abandon their property and are hard to locate. The delinquent tax attorneys receive a 15 percent fee that is calculated as a percentage of the total taxes collected. Since property taxes on mobile homes are not large accounts and do not generate large payment, they are not monetarily attractive to the delinquent tax attorneys.

At its September 17, 2002 meeting, the board voted unanimously to set the total tax rate at \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed property value. The total tax rate consists of two components: the M&O tax rate and the Interest and Sinking (I&S) tax rate. In most school districts, the M&O component of the tax cannot exceed \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed property value. Voters give authorization for the I&S component of the tax to pay bonded debt when they approve a bond issue. The approved M&O tax rate for VISD is \$1.35 and the I&S component is \$0.15.

Exhibit 4-14 presents an eight-year history of VISD's adopted tax rates.

Exhibit 4-14
VISD's Historical Tax Rates per \$100 of Assessed Value
1995-96 through 2002-03

Year	Maintenance and Operations (M&O)	Interest and Sinking Fund (I&S)	Total Tax Rate	Percent Increase/(Decrease) from Prior Year
1996	\$0.77	\$0.64	\$1.41	N/A
1997	\$0.84	\$0.61	\$1.45	2.8%
1998	\$0.93	\$0.57	\$1.50	3.4%
1999	\$1.14	\$0.36	\$1.50	0%
2000	\$1.37	\$0.13	\$1.50	0%
2001	\$1.47	\$0.03	\$1.50	0%
2002	\$1.20	\$0.30	\$1.50	0%
2003	\$1.35	\$0.15	\$1.50	0%

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 2001-02, and board minutes.

Exhibit 4-15 shows the amount and percentage of local taxes, which includes penalty and interest, other local revenue, state revenue and federal revenue for the general fund that VISD received for the years of 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-15
VISD Tax Collections, Other Local Revenue, State Revenue and Federal Revenue to Total Revenue for the General Fund 1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	1997-98 Actual	1998-99 Actual	1999-2000 Actual	2000-01 Actual	2001-02 Actual
Tax collections	\$639,935	\$883,822	\$1,248,340	\$1,651,274	\$1,500,101
Percent of total revenue	9.4%	11.2%	12.2%	15.1%	15.8%
Other local revenue	\$118,317	\$158,985	\$294,791	\$388,224	\$367,159
Percent of total revenue	1.7%	2%	2.9%	3.5%	3.9%
State revenue and pass-through	\$6,022,480	\$6,860,501	\$8,679,437	\$8,900,645	\$7,654,622

Percent of total revenue	88.8%	86.8%	84.9%	81.3%	80.4%
Federal	\$0	\$2,868	\$1,768	\$1,700	\$1,356
Percent of total revenue	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total local and state revenue	\$6,780,732	\$7,906,176	\$10,224,336	\$10,941,843	\$9,523,238

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-16 shows the changes in VISD's assessed property value and the percentage of collections between 1997-98 and 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-16
VISD Change in Property Value and Tax Rate and
Percentage of Taxes Collected to the Total Levy
1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Assessed Property Value	\$69,763,667	\$80,009,000	\$102,589,890	\$125,245,229	\$133,368,667
M&O Tax Rate	\$0.93	\$1.14	\$1.37	\$1.47	\$1.20
I&S Tax Rate	\$0.57	\$0.36	\$0.13	\$0.03	\$0.30
Total Tax Rate	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50
Tax Levy	\$1,046,455	\$1,200,135	\$1,538,848	\$1,878,678	\$2,000,530
Total Tax Collections	\$1,041,818	\$1,140,455	\$1,390,626	\$1,713,097	\$1,854,436
Percentage Collected to Levy	99.6%	95.0%	90.4%	91.2%	92.7%

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-17 shows the percentage of delinquent taxes, including prior years, to the current-year levy between 1997-98 and 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-17
VISD Percentage of Delinquent Taxes to Tax Levy
1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Tax Levy	\$1,046,455	\$1,200,135	\$1,538,848	\$1,878,678	\$2,000,530
Delinquent Taxes at Year End	\$358,828	\$428,551	\$538,771	\$719,075	\$862,234
Percentage of Delinquent Taxes to Levy	34%	36%	35%	38%	43%

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-18 shows the increase in VISD’s delinquent taxes between 1997-98 and 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-18
VISD Increase in Delinquent Taxes
1997-98 through 2001-02

1997-98 (Actual)	1998-99 (Actual)	Percent Change	1999-2000 (Actual)	Percent Change from 1998-99	2000-01 (Actual)	Percent Change from 1999-2000	2001-02 (Actual)	Percent Change from 2000-01
\$358,828	\$428,551	19%	\$538,771	26%	\$719,075	33%	\$862,234	20%

Source: VISD, Audited Financial Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

FINDING

VISD does not have a tax collection board policy, which may contribute to the district’s rising delinquent tax roll. Delinquent taxes increased \$143,159 from 2000-01 to 2001-02.

The new superintendent is working with the delinquent tax attorneys to improve the tax collection rate. As noted above, VISD has a large number of mobile homes in its tax base. The collection of taxes on these properties is difficult because owners can move and leave unpaid taxes. As of March 2003, the district had 823 delinquent tax accounts dating back to 1982. VISD's total tax collection rate for 2001-02 was 92.7 percent. FIRST states that a total collection rate of 96 percent or greater is favorable.

Other districts pursue delinquent taxpayers more aggressively. The Aransas ISD board authorized the Aransas County's Tax Assessor Collector to post delinquent taxpayers in the local newspaper. In May 2001, the board passed a resolution to allow the Aransas County Tax Assessor Collector the authority to post an advertisement of the top 100 delinquent taxpayers. The resolution agreed that the tax assessor collector would run two advertisements in the newspaper that read as follows:

WARNING NOTICE

Past due taxes owed to Aransas County Taxing Authorities

The Aransas County Tax Office on behalf of
Itself and Aransas County ISD, Aransas
County MUD #1, Aransas County ND #1,
City of Fulton and City of Rockport will
publish in _____ the names of individuals
and businesses that are delinquent in their
tax obligations as of __, 2001.

***PAY YOUR PAST DUE TAXES PRIOR
TO _____, 2001 TO PREVENT YOUR
NAME FROM APPEARING ON THE
PAST DUE LIST PUBLISHED IN THIS
PAPER.***

Aransas County's law firm also sent letters to the past due taxpayers warning them of the pending advertisement that would appear if they did not pay their taxes. The district entered into 40 written installment agreements with delinquent taxpayers as a direct result of this campaign.

Recommendation 25:

Develop a tax collection policy that sets the targeted rate of collection at 96 percent.

A total tax collection rate of less than 96 percent creates a negative response to indicator 6 of FIRST.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent and business manager draft a policy that sets a target total tax collection rate of 96 percent.	October 2003
2. The superintendent requests that the board adopt the policy outlining the proposed collection rates.	November 2003
3. The superintendent and business manager implement the policy.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The review team estimates that it will take VISD three years to reach a 96 percent collection rate. But the district should begin receiving increased revenue during 2003-04.

Exhibit 4-19 presents the annual additional revenue that VISD could realize by raising the total tax collection rate.

Exhibit 4-19
VISD's Projected Additional Revenue
from Increase of Tax Collection Rate

Year	2001-02 Tax Levy	Current Tax Collection Rate	Proposed Tax Collection Rate	Increase in Collection Rate	Additional Revenues (Tax Collection Rate)
2003-04	\$2,000,530	92.7%	94%	1.3%	\$26,007
2004-05	\$2,000,530	92.7%	95%	2.3%	\$46,012
2005-06	\$2,000,530	92.7%	96%	3.3%	\$66,017
2006-07	\$2,000,530	92.7%	96%	3.3%	\$66,017
2007-08	\$2,000,530	92.7%	96%	3.3%	\$66,017

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Develop a tax collection policy that sets the targeted rate of collection at 96 percent.	\$26,007	\$46,012	\$66,017	\$66,017	\$66,017

FINDING

VISD spent \$20,000 to renovate one of two houses the district owns and \$419 on property insurance for these houses in 2001-02. The district rents these properties to the superintendent and the athletic director.

The Johnson County Appraisal District values the house rented by the superintendent at \$79,150 and the house rented by the athletic director at \$83,670. The superintendent pays \$350 monthly for rent while the athletic director's monthly rent is \$600.

The district is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the properties. This includes repairs and grounds maintenance on the superintendent's home and providing property insurance. Occupants pay for the utilities.

It is not unusual for rural school districts with little or no available housing to provide homes for the superintendent and other key personnel. Districts provide these home at little or no cost to employees as part of the employee's compensation package. According to Internal Revenue Service Publication 525, both the superintendent's and the athletic director's rental rates are considered adequate for exclusion from income tax.

The VISD area lacks adequate housing primarily because of limited water treatment capacity in the area. The Venus Chamber of Commerce and others are working to remedy this situation and expect the problem to be solved within the next two years.

Recommendation 26:

Sell district homes, returning the property to the tax rolls.

VISD should consider increasing remuneration rather than furnishing housing. This would benefit both the district and the superintendent. The district would benefit by returning property to the tax roll and by relieving

itself of maintenance problems associated with residential property; the superintendent and athletic director would benefit from the additional income, which would count toward the Teacher Retirement System (TRS).

Venus should have increased water treatment capacity within the next two years, and this should have a positive impact on area housing. As housing becomes available, VISD should sell the district-owned homes and place them on the tax roll.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent and board determine if adequate housing is available within the district.	November 2004
2. The board offers the superintendent and athletic director an opportunity to purchase the rental houses at 6 percent below the market value.	November 2004
3. The board reviews and adjusts the 2006-07 contracts of the superintendent and athletic director to compensate them for the monetary value of their housing.	January 2005
4. If the superintendent or athletic director decide not to purchase the houses, the board places them on the market and sells them in accordance with applicable laws.	June 2005

FISCAL IMPACT

The Johnson County Appraisal District values the houses at \$162,820 (\$83,670 + \$79,150). Proceeds from selling to the occupants at a discount or through a real estate agent will amount to \$153,051 (\$162,820 x 94 percent). Considering the residential homestead exemption the tax proceeds from the homes will be \$1,992 (\$162,820 - \$30,000 = \$132,820 taxable value) (\$132,820/100 x \$1.50 = \$1,992). The fiscal impact assumes the additional remuneration provided to the superintendent and athletic director will offset the annual cost of repairs and maintenance. Two months of rent on both houses totals \$1,900.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Proceeds from sale of homes and additional tax revenue.	\$0	\$153,051	\$1,992	\$1,992	\$1,992
Loss of rental income, assuming the property is sold in June 2005.	\$0	(\$1,900)	\$0	\$0	\$0

Net Savings/(Costs)	\$0	\$151,151	\$1,992	\$1,992	\$1,992
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Venus Independent School District

Chapter 4

Financial Management

E. PURCHASING OPERATIONS

An effective purchasing program provides quality materials, supplies, services and equipment in a timely manner at the lowest cost to districts. Purchasing includes activities associated with the acquisition of supplies, materials, services and equipment. Purchasing agents must balance the needs of customers while exercising sound stewardship of their limited resources and complying with any regulations. TEC 44.031 describes state purchasing regulations intended to provide the best value to school districts through a competitive procurement option. The law enumerates several options for competitive procurement available to school districts. When a district purchases items valued at \$25,000 or more in aggregate or multiple like items with a cumulative value of more than \$25,000 in a 12-month period, it must follow one of nine methods for purchasing (**Exhibit 4-20**).

Exhibit 4-20
TEC-Approved Competitive Procurement Options
As of 2002-03

Purchasing Method	Method Description
Competitive Bidding	Requires that bids be evaluated and awarded based solely upon bid specifications, terms and conditions contained in the request for bids, bid prices offered by suppliers and pertinent factors affecting contract performance. Forbids negotiation of prices of goods and services after proposal opening.
Competitive Sealed Proposals	Requires the same terms and conditions as competitive bidding, but allows changes in the nature of a proposal and prices after proposal opening.
Request for Proposals	Generates competitive sealed proposals and involves several key elements, including newspaper advertisement, notice to proposers, standard terms and conditions, special terms and conditions, a scope-of-work statement, an acknowledgment

	form/response sheet, a felony conviction notice and a contract clause.
Catalog Purchase	Provides an alternative to other procurement methods for the acquisition of computer equipment, software and services only.
Interlocal Contract	Provides a mechanism for agreements with other local governments, the state or a state agency to perform governmental functions and services.
Design/build Contract	Outlines a method of project delivery in which the school district contracts with a single entity for both the design and construction of a project. (The “single entity” is usually a team of firms including a general contractor, architect and sometimes an engineer. One firm almost never does both the design and the construction.)
Job order Contracts	Provides for the use of a particular type of contract for jobs (manual labor work) for minor repairs and alterations.
Construction Management Contracts	Outlines the use of a contract to construct, rehabilitate, alter or repair facilities using a professional construction manager.
Reverse Auction Procedure	Outlines a bidding process that involves submission of bids by multiple suppliers, unknown to each other, in a manner that allows the suppliers to bid against each other.

Source: TEA and Financial Accountability System Resource Guide.

In 1999, the Texas attorney general issued Attorney General Opinion OP JC-37, stating that school district procurement through an interlocal agreement or a cooperative purchasing arrangement satisfies competitive bidding requirements. Under an interlocal agreement, a district can contract or agree with another local government, including a nonprofit corporation created and operated to provide one or more governmental services, to purchase goods and any services reasonably required for the installation, operation or maintenance of the goods. Texas law also allows school districts to participate in catalog purchasing programs from the Texas Building and Procurement Commission and Qualified Information Services Vendors.

TEC also sets the timeline requirements for bid notices. Districts must advertise contracts valued at \$25,000 or more once a week, for at least two weeks, in any newspaper published in the county where the school district’s central administration office is located.

Districts must advertise contracts for personal property worth between \$10,000 and \$25,000 over a 12-month period in two successive issues of a newspaper. The advertisements must specify the categories of property the district will purchase and solicit bids from vendors who are interested in supplying the goods or services. Before making a purchase, the district must obtain written or telephone price quotations from at least three vendors on an approved list of vendors for that item. TEC states that the purchase shall be made from the lowest responsible bidder. In determining the lowest responsible bidder, the district may consider

- purchase price;
- reputation of the vendor and of the vendor's goods and services;
- quality of the vendor's goods or services;
- extent to which the goods or services meet the district's needs;
- vendor's past relationship with the district;
- impact on the ability of the district to comply with laws relating to historically underutilized businesses;
- total long-term cost to the district to acquire the goods or services; and
- any other relevant factor specifically listed in the request for bids or proposals.

Attorney General Opinion DM-347 1995 states that insurance contracts are considered contracts for the purchase of personal property and must be made in accordance with Education Code §§ 44.031 and 44.033. In 1996, the Attorney General's Office issued Attorney General Opinion DM-418 stating that a district may execute an insurance contract for a period longer than 12 months, *if* the contract contains either or both of the provisions regarding the contract is a commitment of the district's current revenue only as follows: retains to the board the continuing right to terminate the contract at the expiration of each budget period during the term of the contract and is conditioned on a best efforts attempt by the board to obtain and appropriate funds for payment of the contract.

If the district executes a multi-year insurance contract, it need not advertise for insurance vendors until the 12-month period during which the district will be executing a new insurance contract.

Exceptions to the competitive bidding requirements include contracts for professional services rendered by architects, attorneys and fiscal agents. TEC also allows a district to purchase items that are available from only one source—sole-source purchases—if the purchase meets certain criteria, including:

- an item for which competition is precluded because of the existence of a patent, copyright, secret process, or monopoly;

- a film, manuscript or book;
- a utility service including electricity, gas or water; or
- a replacement part or component for equipment to a particular piece of equipment and not available from more than one vendor.

To properly use the sole-source arrangement, a school district must obtain and retain documentation from the vendor that clearly states the reasons the purchase must be made on a sole-source basis. The sole-source exception does not apply to mainframe data processing equipment and peripheral attachments with a single-item purchase price in excess of \$15,000.

In addition to state purchasing laws, VISD board policy further requires that all purchases that cost or aggregate to a cost of \$10,000 or more per year have board approval before a transaction can take place. The board has delegated to the superintendent, or designee, the authority to determine the method of purchasing and to make budgeted purchases.

The following process occurs when VISD obtains supplies and services. A requisition is completed at the school or department. The requisition includes the vendor, items ordered and the account code to which the order will be encumbered and then paid. The principal or department administrator approves or disapproves the requisition. If approved, the principal or administrator sends the requisition to the business manager for all general operating codes and the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs for all special revenue codes. The accounts payable/purchasing clerk enters all approved requisitions into the accounting system.

If funds are available, the accounts payable/purchasing clerk converts purchase requisitions to print purchase orders and sends one copy of the order to vendors. The accounts payable/purchasing clerk sends two copies of the purchase order to the school or department, one to be filed and retained and one to be used in verifying the receipt of merchandise. Upon receipt of the merchandise, the school or department checks the order and send one copy of the purchase order and the packing slip to the accounts payable/purchasing clerk so that the district can make proper payment.

FINDING

The district uses RSCCC online requisition software to facilitate the requisition and purchase order process. The software provides for requisition entry at the school or department level. A staff member enters the requisition; the system validates the account code, account balance and vendor upon entry. The system reserves funds (a soft encumbrance) while the requisition channels through the online approval process. The lines of

approval are set in the system so that staff cannot convert the requisition to a purchase order without proper approval. Once the requisition is approved, it becomes a purchase order and the Business Office prints and disseminates it. Upon receipt of the ordered items, school or department staff record the delivery of the items online. When the district receives invoices, accounts payable processes the payment unless there is a discrepancy between the ordered items and received items.

The accounts payable/purchasing clerk enters and prints purchase orders, obtains the appropriate signatures from the business manager or the coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs and distributes copies to the appropriate VISD offices and vendors. Prior to the online system, the accounts payable/purchasing clerk was responsible for coding and typing all purchase orders. Using an on-line purchase order system enables VISD to reduce processing time and provides more efficient service. This process has reduced the turn around time for purchase orders to be processed from weeks to one day.

COMMENDATION

By using an online purchase order system, VISD reduces processing time and provides more efficient service.

FINDING

VISD does not have a designated purchasing agent to direct the purchasing activity in the district. Even though the business manager reviews and approves purchase orders, the board has not formally authorized him to act as its representative on purchasing transactions.

A purchase order serves as a formal order for supplies or services from a vendor. Once approved, a purchase order serves as a binding commitment for a district to remit payment to the vendor after the district receives the order and invoice. Once issued, the purchase order encumbers funds and serves as an expenditure control mechanism. The lack of an expenditure control mechanism allows budgeted account codes to be over expended.

The district lacks oversight in ensuring compliance with the law and district policy. The district exceeded its 2001-02 budget at the functional level and its overall expenditure budget in the general operating fund by \$139,279. According to the district's audit management letter, the problem occurred because of coding errors that the district corrected during the external audit. VISD's method of purchasing and lack of encumbrance accounting does not provide the necessary internal control to manage the budget.

When a district purchases items valued at \$25,000 or more in aggregate, or multiple like items with a cumulative value of more than \$25,000 over a 12-month period, it must use one of the nine TEC methods for purchasing. Districts must make aggregate purchases of \$10,000 but less than \$25,000 over a 12-month period by soliciting vendors and obtaining quotes. VISD board policy further requires that all purchases that cost or aggregate to a cost of \$10,000 or more per year must have board approval before a transaction can take place. VISD's informal purchasing process leaves the district at risk of violating board policy and state law.

The Regional Educational Service Centers and TASBO offer training opportunities through workshops and online courses that provide valuable instruction on school district purchasing procedures and state purchasing law.

Recommendation 27:

Designate the business manager as the purchasing agent and train the manager and purchasing clerk on state purchasing laws and school district purchasing procedures.

VISD needs to coordinate and centralize all of the purchasing functions of the district through the business manager to ensure districtwide compliance. District staff and vendors need to know who has the authority to act on behalf of the board involving purchasing transactions. Without a designated purchasing agent knowledgeable in state purchasing laws and district policies, the district cannot ensure that its purchasing transactions follow the required laws and policies. In addition, the vendor community does not know who has the authority to represent the district in purchasing activity and to legally bind the district in purchasing transactions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent designates the business manager as purchasing agent.	September 2003
2. The business manager determines the availability of training opportunities with the regional educational service centers and TASBO.	September 2003
3. The business manager obtains approval from the superintendent to take appropriate purchasing workshops.	October 2003
4. The business manager and purchasing clerk attend selected training workshops on school district purchasing procedures and state purchasing laws.	November 2003

5. The superintendent sends written notification to all staff members that all purchases must flow through the business manager.	November 2003
6. The business manager monitors continuing compliance with the district's purchasing policy and state law.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of two-day TASBO training workshops is \$200 for member districts. The fiscal impact assumes the business manager and the accounts payable/purchasing clerk will attend two purchasing related workshops annually beginning in 2003-04 (\$200 x 2 staff x 2 workshops).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Designate the business manager as the purchasing agent and train the manager and purchasing clerk in state purchasing laws and school district purchasing procedures.	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$800)	(\$800)

FINDING

VISD does not have a purchasing procedures manual to establish purchasing controls and rules and provide guidance to school district employees in making authorized district purchases. The district does not ensure that district staff understands who has the authority to make purchases and how state law and board policy affect those purchases. VISD does not conduct staff training on purchasing policies and procedures. District staff lacks awareness of guidelines, laws and policies regarding purchasing. District employees currently make purchases without a duly executed purchase order.

VISD does not have procedures that outline the purchasing process. A purchasing procedure manual explains allowable purchasing thresholds, allowable purchases and the approval process. The district does not have procedures for the receiving and distribution process for received orders.

VISD receives orders in the Business Office. Business Office staff open the shipment, copy the packing slip and send the order with the copy of the packing slip to the requesting site. The Business Office also receives invoices. The district does not reconcile the purchase order, packing slip

and invoice prior to payment. By not having a defined receiving function, the district is at risk of paying for damaged or lost items and paying for items never shipped. In addition, the lack of control creates opportunities for theft.

The use of the procedures manual promotes consistency in purchasing applications throughout the district. A comprehensive purchasing manual includes the following topics:

- purchasing goals and objectives;
- statutes, regulations and board purchasing policies;
- purchasing authority or agent for the district;
- requisition and purchase order processing;
- competitive procurement requirements and procedures;
- vendor selection and relations;
- receiving;
- distribution;
- disposal of obsolete and surplus property; and
- consequences for noncompliance with the district’s established procedures.

Recommendation 28:

Develop and implement a comprehensive purchasing procedures manual.

The purchasing manual will assist VISD personnel in understanding the laws, rules and guidelines that govern all district purchases. Having a comprehensive and up-to-date purchasing procedures manual is vital if VISD is to ensure compliance and financially competitive purchases. The manual should establish rules for initiating, reviewing and approving requisitions. The manual should also explain how to receive goods and reconcile and process invoices. The district should provide the manual to vendors to acquaint them with the district’s policy and practice.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager obtains sample purchasing procedures manuals from other districts, Region 11 and TASB.	September 2003
2. The business manager submits a completed draft of the purchasing procedures manual to the superintendent for input and approval.	October 2003
3. The superintendent informs all district staff of the district’s official purchasing manual and requires signature	November 2003

acknowledgement by all employees.	
4. The business manager maintains a central file of the manual and distributes it to district staff while providing simultaneous training on its contents and related district procedures.	November – December 2003
5. The business manager posts the manual on the district’s Web site.	December 2003
6. The business manager ensures district compliance with the purchasing manual’s requirements by monitoring all purchases.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not make use of purchasing cooperatives (co-ops) and other mechanisms that would allow the district to procure goods and services at competitive prices without having to go through the bidding process. The district previously had an agreement for cooperative purchasing with Region 11 for the period from January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2002. The district did not renew it. VISD did not train campus staff to use the purchasing cooperative. VISD’s employees make purchases from the vendors of their choice.

TEA PEIMS data shows the district spent \$669,476 on general supplies for classrooms and offices in 2001-02. Cooperative agreements allow districts to take advantage of pricing discounts. They also reduce purchasing administrative costs since they satisfy TEC competitive bid provisions and eliminate the need for district personnel to perform some of the competitive solicitation activities.

TEC § 44.031(a)(5) allows Texas school districts to use an interlocal contract with purchasing cooperatives and other entities in lieu of obtaining competitive bids and quotes. Cooperative purchasing arrangements allow school districts to partner with other entities to procure goods and services. The cooperative entity performs the complete bidding process so that school districts do not have to bid items. Regional Education Service Centers, multi-regional cooperatives, TBPC and the Texas Association of School Boards are several of the purchasing cooperatives available to Texas school districts. TASB and other vendors offer online ordering through purchasing cooperatives.

TASB administers a just-in-time online purchasing system called The BuyBoard. The BuyBoard uses Internet-based technologies to create a single source for products and awarded contract information. The BuyBoard allows members to make confident buying decisions and streamline the purchasing process. The simple format allows point-and-click access to detailed product descriptions, part numbers and images. BuyBoard follows Texas statutes to competitively bid and award all items and catalogs posted on the site.

Advantages of using purchasing cooperatives include:

- greater efficiency and economy in acquiring goods and services;
- innovative purchasing procedures to ensure the most competitive contracts;
- competitive price solicitation and bulk purchasing for multiple government entities that yields economic benefits that cannot be obtained by individual entities;
- quick and efficient delivery of goods and services by contracting with high-performance vendors;
- equitable purchasing power for smaller entities that cannot command the best contract for themselves;
- credibility and confidence in business procedures by maintaining open competition for purchases and by complying with purchasing laws and ethical business practices; and
- assistance in maintaining the essential controls for budget and accounting purposes.

Districts that use cooperative purchasing arrangements have more efficient procurement practices because they eliminate or reduce the need for obtaining competitive bids and quotes. Many districts in Texas participate in cooperative purchasing programs, including Del Valle ISD, United ISD, Midland ISD, Spring ISD, Kingsville ISD and Tyler ISD. The savings achieved through the use of purchasing cooperatives can be substantial. Del Valle ISD estimates that it saved about \$250,000 between June 1998 and October 2000 by participating in purchasing cooperatives. Spring ISD's estimates that it save between 6 to 23 percent on tire purchases through purchasing cooperatives.

Recommendation 29:

Reduce purchasing costs by engaging in cooperative purchasing.

Participation in purchasing cooperatives will not altogether eliminate the need for or the use of competitive bidding, but will reduce administrative time and reduce costs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager contacts cooperatives concerning the purchasing services they can offer.	September 2003
2. The business manager develops a list of purchasing cooperative options, including the services/goods offered by each cooperative and their annual membership prices.	October 2003
3. The business manager determines the purchasing cooperatives that would best serve VISD.	October 2003
4. The business manager completes applications to participate in the purchasing cooperatives.	October 2003
5. The business manager requests that the board review and approve VISD participation in the purchasing cooperatives.	November 2003
6. The board approves participation.	November 2003
7. The business manager distributes purchasing cooperative instructions and provides training on the cooperatives to all district staff responsible for purchasing.	November – December 2003
8. The district begins using cooperative purchasing.	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

VISD spent \$669,476 on general supplies in 2001-02. The review team conservatively estimates that purchasing cooperatives can save VISD 5 percent on these purchases. This creates an annual savings for the district of \$33,474 ($\$669,476 \times 5$ percent). The estimated cost of participating in a cooperative is \$20,084 ($\$669,476 \times 3$ percent). The district's total annual savings would be \$13,390 ($\$33,474$ savings – $20,084$ costs).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Cooperative purchasing savings	\$33,474	\$33,474	\$33,474	\$33,474	\$33,474
Estimated cost of Region 11 cooperative	(\$20,084)	(\$20,084)	(\$20,084)	(\$20,084)	(\$20,084)
Net Savings/(Costs)	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$13,390	\$13,390

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 4

Financial Management

F. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

A contract is a legally enforceable and mutually binding agreement between two or more competent parties that obligates one party to furnish an item of value and the other party to provide payment. Contracts usually are awarded as an outcome of negotiations. The contract negotiation process ensures that the district awards contracts to bidders that offer the best available goods and services at the most competitive prices with terms that are favorable to a district. The negotiation process also ensures the proper evaluation of terms and conditions stipulated by district finance or purchasing staff and allows board members to receive substantive input prior to voting on whether to approve a contract.

FINDING

VISD does not have a formal contracting process to ensure that a legal expert thoroughly reviews all its contracts. The district does not maintain a centralized depository or file for district contracts. This makes it difficult to determine exactly which contracts the district maintains. The district has no policy requiring business staff to review all contracts or requiring legal review of contracts prior to execution. This creates a higher risk of entering into contracting arrangements that are advantageous to a vendor, but not in the best interests of the district. For example, a VISD contract includes a clause where the district signed a hold harmless agreement in favor of the vendor, such as the third party administrative services agreement for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Section 125, Cafeteria Plan.

The review team requested copies of district contracts. District staff had a difficult time identifying current contracts and providing copies of some contracts. The staff could not find the original cafeteria plan document for the IRS, Section 125 Plan or the contract for the dental plan. When contacted regarding the dental contract, the vendor stated it did not have anything in its file signed by the district. An employee said that the district cleaned out the files when the former superintendent left the district. The

review team contacted the third-party administrator for the cafeteria plan to identify benefits offered to employees under the cafeteria plan. The district does not have separate contracts for the individual benefit plans sold to employees under the cafeteria plan by the third-party administrator. The review team was able to identify the benefits marketed under the cafeteria plan through a monthly invoice.

VISD does not manage its existing contracts well. For example, the board renewed the custodial services contract on July 19, 2001 for an additional three years at \$298,000 a year without requesting competitive bids. The former superintendent signed the contract, but the district copy does not include the vendor's signature. The contract is vague and lacks many critical elements. It does not include performance measures, explain how the contractor will report to the district, designate who the contractor will be accountable to on a daily basis, describe the number of custodians the vendor will provide to the district or require employee criminal background checks and proof of insurance.

In addition, the custodial vendor's company has opted out of the Texas Workers' Compensation System. Workers' compensation insurance covers workers who incur work-related injuries or illnesses. The coverage is not required for most Texas employers but it is mandatory for political subdivisions like school districts. An employee of the vendor will not be protected under the Texas Workers' Compensation Act because the vendor opted out of the system. The Workers' Compensation System would provide medical and disability benefits to custodial vendor employees if injured on the job. An injured employee may sue the vendor and possibly the district. The contract does have an indemnification clause that releases the district from liability, but the vendor has not signed the district's copy of the contract.

Other contracts that did not have complete signatures on file with the district include the Multi-Regional Child Nutrition Co-op Interlocal Agreement, the Resolution of the Board of Trustees approving the Interlocal Agreement between Region 4 and the Texas Cooperative Purchasing Network and the Johnson County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding.

VISD cannot ensure its contracts are executed properly if it does not maintain, manage or monitor its contracts. When entering into a contract, districts often:

- employ legal counsel to draft or review the final contract prior to signing it;
- identify how the district's liability is addressed in the contract;
- review terms and conditions of the contract;

- identify who has the authority to enter into the contract on behalf of the district;
- attach all supporting documents to the contract;
- retain an original contract with signatures of all district parties;
- describe the specific services to be performed;
- identify when and how the contractor will report to the district;
- identify a clause for changing the contract;
- describe the cost to the district and any changes that may occur;
- describe how the district may terminate the contract and under what conditions;
- identify how the vendor's performance will be reviewed and documented; and
- describe remedies for a contractor's failure to perform services.

Recommendation 30:

Develop a contract management policy and procedure that requires legal review and input prior to final board approval.

Developing a contract management plan and supporting guidelines will reduce the district's exposure to liability, help monitor contract performance, track contract expiration dates and ensure that all contracts are completed and enforced.

After a contract is awarded, VISD should have a process to evaluate services rendered or products provided under the contract to ensure proper execution of contract terms. The monitoring process should also ensure that the district has a position responsible for representing the district as a final authority for contract disputes that may arise. The monitoring process should also have a mechanism to evaluate a vendor's performance and provide feedback or implement corrective action if, or, when warranted.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the business manager to develop a contracting process that includes contract review, authorization and monitoring.	September 2003
2. The business manager develops a centralized filing system for all district contracts.	September 2003
3. The business manager seeks input from the district's legal counsel and TASB on contracting policy.	October 2003
4. The superintendent submits the contract management plan and procedures to the board for approval.	November 2003

5. The superintendent and business manager trains school and central office administrators to use the contract management plan.	December 2003
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 4

Financial Management

G. TEXTBOOK OPERATIONS

TEA is responsible for selecting and purchasing most textbooks used in Texas school districts. Each year, TEA provides districts with a list of recommended textbooks, buys the textbooks from publishers and loans them to districts. Each district's established textbook adoption committee follows TEA guidelines to select the textbooks the district will order. The decision to order is made at a local level and TEA does not monitor textbook use.

The number of books that TEA allows per subject and grade level is based upon student enrollment information that districts submit to TEA through PEIMS. Districts base their annual orders for instructional materials 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.

Textbook orders are due to TEA by April 1 each year. Districts may submit supplemental orders after the annual order deadline and throughout the year. TEA gives districts the opportunity to report exceptions to PEIMS data if the district officials feel that the information is incorrect. Each district is responsible for returning borrowed textbooks to the TEA. If textbooks are lost during the school year, the district compensates the state for any textbook losses. Districts have the option of recovering lost-textbook costs from students, parents or guardians. The district's designated textbook coordinator is responsible for these duties.

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation handles textbooks in VISD. The district places textbook orders using TEA's Educational Materials and Textbooks online textbook requisition system. The district may order up to 100 percent of its maximum student enrollment for the grade or subject for which it is ordering student editions. The state allows districts to overestimate their orders by 10 percent. If the school orders above that amount and does not return the books when due back to TEA, the district may be held responsible for purchasing the books.

VISD bases its textbook orders on the highest level of enrollment for the preceding school year. If textbook shortages occur outside of the annual order deadline, VISD orders are placed as requested by the principals. TEA delivers new textbooks to the middle school where the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation unpacks, inventories and distributes the books during the summer.

The review team administered textbook surveys to students, parents, teachers, campus administration, district administrators and support personnel. **Exhibit 4-21** shows that the surveyed groups agreed, or strongly agreed, that VISD textbooks are delivered in a timely manner and in good condition.

Exhibit 4-21
Quality of Textbook Materials
Survey Results
Agree or Strongly Agree

Survey Statement	Principals	Administrative and Support Personnel	Teachers	Parents	Students
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	100%	60%	71%	87%	84%
Textbooks are in good shape.	100%	53%	67%	87%	57.8%

Source: TSPR Survey, February 2003.

Textbooks ordered through TEA are the property of the state; the school board is the legal custodian of those textbooks. VISD requires teachers to report lost or damaged books to the school principal.

FINDING

VISD has no textbook inventory or management system. School administrators do not receive textbook inventory lists to verify inventory shipments. School administrators or secretaries compile textbook inventory information manually. VISD does not compile these inventory reports into a districtwide report. The district does not have annual districtwide inventory reports available. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said schools take an inventory once a year and report the textbook inventory count to the director. The director

does not maintain annual records of these reports and does not verify the inventories.

VISD charges students for any textbooks they lose or do not return during the year. The district's record keeping for lost textbooks consists of a deposit slip completed when the student pays for the textbook. Staff members turn this deposit slip into the central office; central office staff add it to the count of lost textbooks. The district does not track textbook losses cumulatively or from year to year. The district could not identify its total textbook losses.

Without an effective textbook management system, the district cannot ensure that schools are adequately supplied and textbooks are properly safeguarded from loss. Principals and school secretaries have to rely on word-of-mouth to learn how to handle and coordinate their textbook responsibilities. Comprehensive textbook procedures manuals usually include the following topics:

- board policies related to textbooks;
- role of the textbook custodian and textbook clerks;
- textbook selection committee guidelines and procedures;
 - textbook quotas;
 - textbook number and stamping procedures;
 - textbook requisition procedures;
 - textbook shipment verification requirements;
 - shipping error procedures;
- guidelines for bookrooms, including environment, security and how to stack textbooks ;
 - information on book covers;
- transferring textbooks from one school to another;
 - distribution of textbooks in the schools;
 - textbook audit procedures;
 - responsibilities for textbooks;
 - lost or damaged textbook procedures;
 - year-end physical inventory procedures;
 - out-of-adoption textbook procedures; and
 - textbook inventory software procedures.

In Kenedy ISD, the textbook coordinator developed and uses a textbook manual that provides detailed guidance on how to manage the district's textbook needs. The manual helps that district to comply with applicable textbook rules and regulations. It also provides a single reference for answers to textbook questions. The folder 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 the annual inventory.

Recommendation 31:

Develop and implement a textbook inventory and management system.

The district should implement a textbook inventory system and require school personnel responsible for textbooks to report all missing textbooks immediately. The director for Operations, Maintenance and Transportation, or his designated representative, should maintain a list of all lost textbooks, dollar amounts collected and annual payments to TEA.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to develop standardized procedures for textbook inventory and management.	August 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation develops and documents the district’s procedures for textbook inventory and management.	September 2003
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation submits the procedures to the superintendent and business manager for review and approval.	October 2003
4. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation distributes the procedures and trains principals and clerical staff.	November 2003
5. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation ensures that staff follows the procedures and updates the procedures annually.	November 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 5

Asset and Risk Management

This chapter reviews the asset and risk management function of Venus Independent School District (VISD) in the following sections:

- A. Cash and Investment Management
- B. Risk Management
- C. Fixed Assets

Asset management involves managing the district's cash resources and physical assets in a cost-effective and efficient manner. This includes providing a system of controls for the collection, disbursement and use of cash as well as accounting for assets and safeguarding them against theft and obsolescence. Risk management includes the identification, analysis and reduction of risk to the district's assets and employees through insurance and safety programs. Asset management for a growing district involves proper oversight of capital improvement spending, including multi-year financial and budget planning.

Venus Independent School District

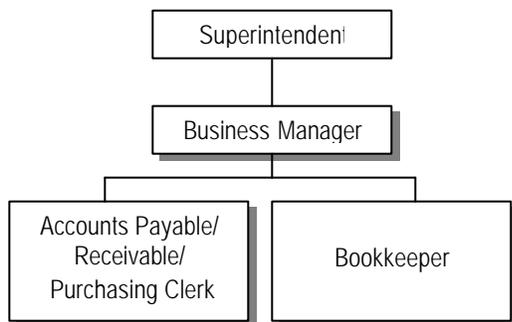
Chapter 5

Asset and Risk Management

A. CASH AND INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

Prior to hiring a business manager in February 2003, the VISD superintendent supervised district cash and asset management. The business manager now handles cash and asset management. **Exhibit 5-1** shows the positions and reporting relationships of the district's cash and asset management operations.

Exhibit 5-1
VISD Cash and Asset Management Personnel
2002-03



Source: VISD superintendent.

The superintendent and business manager serve as district investment officers. In addition to serving as insurance officer, the business manager manages bank relations and the depository bid; fixed and controlled assets; and cash management procedures. The accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk handles the intra bank and TexPool transfers; manual checks; non-sufficient funds (NSF) check processing; purchase order reviews and disbursements; and bank deposits. The bookkeeper reconciles bank statements.

Effective cash management practices ensure that the district collects and deposits funds in a timely manner and invests them in secure instruments

with competitive yields. Application of these practices provides the district with additional revenue to fund essential programs and operations by providing market rates of return on monies not required for the district's daily operations.

Texas school districts must comply with the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 45 and Subchapter G when selecting a depository bank. VISD bid the depository contract for a two-year period that runs from September 2001 through August 2003. After two banks submitted bids, the district evaluated the bids based on fees and service. VISD selected First Financial Bank, which offered lower fees, as the district's depository bank. **Exhibit 5-2** presents VISD depository bank fees. The district paid \$3,217 in 2002 for bank services.

**Exhibit 5-2
VISD Bank Service Fees**

Bank Service Fees	Account Analysis Charge
Account maintenance per account	\$10.00
Check serial sort per account	\$25.00
Coin rolls purchased	\$0.06
Currency straps purchased	\$0.50
Debits/checks paid	\$0.10
Deposit clearing	\$0.04
Deposit encoding	\$0.02
Deposit/credit posted	\$0.30
Returned items	\$2.00
Stop payment	\$15.00
Wire transfers per transaction	\$5.00

Source: First Financial Bank depository bid, 7/12/2001.

The depository agreement provides VISD with banking services on a fee for service basis and pays 2.5 percent in interest on the daily ledger balances in each account. The contract states that estimated day-to-day balances should not exceed \$1 million; however, the depository bank

provides pledged securities well in excess of this amount. **Exhibit 5-3** presents the various annual bank account collected balances and interest earnings.

Exhibit 5-3
Annual VISD Bank Account Information
February 2002 through January 2003

Account Name	Purpose	Average Collected Balance	Interest Earned
Activity Fund	Account for Student Activities	\$69,675	\$1,760
Capital Projects	Account for Building Projects	\$56,675	\$1,407
CED 21	County Education District (CED) Tax Revenues	\$2,382	\$0
General Operating	Account for daily operations	\$406,273	\$10,174
Interest & Sinking	Account for bonded debt	\$62,711	\$1,554
Lunch Room	Account for Food Service operations	\$292,427	\$1,097
Payroll Account	Account for payroll activities	\$1,143	\$7,347
Payroll Account 2	Account for employee benefits	\$35,320	\$29
Special Revenue Federal Funds	Account for special revenue activities	\$717	\$894
Workers' Compensation	Used to pay workers' compensation claims	\$43,284	\$19
Total		\$970,515	\$24,281

Source: VISD bank statements.

VISD invests exclusively in TexPool, a local government investment pool created by the Comptroller of Public Accounts and managed by Lehman Brothers and Federated Investors. The investment objectives are preservation and safety of principal, liquidity and yield consistent with the Texas Public Funds Investment Act (TPFIA). TexPool seeks to maintain a

\$1.00 value per share as required by the TPFIA. **Exhibit 5-4** presents VISD's TexPool interest earnings and ending market value for 2002.

Exhibit 5-4
VISD TexPool Accounts
2002

Account Name	Market Value as of 12/31/2002	Interest Earned 01/01/02 thru 12/31/02
Federal Fund	\$186,477	\$1,403
General Fund	\$4,463,495	\$80,348
Interest & Sinking	\$1,050,330	\$14,696
Lunch Room Fund	\$68,375	\$185
Total	\$5,768,677	\$96,632

Source: TexPool statement, 12/31/2002.

FINDING

Individuals other than the designated VISD investment officers handle district investment transactions violating current board policy CDA (Legal). The policy states that unless authorized by law, a person may not deposit, withdraw, transfer or manage in any other manner the funds of the investing entity.

The board designated the superintendent and three board members as the district's investment officers. Although the board investment officers do not make daily investment decisions, as policymakers board members should not be involved in the district's daily operations. The accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk and the business manager actually decide district investment transactions. Each business day, the accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk checks bank balances online and, with the approval of the business manager or superintendent, makes decisions concerning the investment of excess funds.

CDA (Legal) requires that the chief financial officer and the investment officers attend at least one training session related to their respective responsibilities under the Public Funds Investment Act. The training must be completed within 12 months of taking office. The superintendent has completed investment officer training. The business manager, who serves as the district's chief financial officer, has attended five hours of the

required training and plans to attend the remaining training within the one-year requirement.

School districts often designate business managers as investment officers. Smithville ISD's director of Business, who manages investment activities, makes decisions concerning the investment of excess funds.

Recommendation 32:

Designate the business manager as the district's investment officer and ensure he receives the necessary training.

As policy makers, board members should not be involved in the district's daily operations and should remove themselves from being designated as investment officers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent recommends that board members remove themselves as investment officers and designate the business manager as an investment officer.	September 2003
2. The board approves the recommendation.	October 2003
3. The business manager completes 10 hours of investment training.	November 2003
4. The superintendent and business manager attend 10 hours of refresher training every other year.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) and other organizations offer investment officer training. TASBO courses cost \$125 for TASBO members and \$150 for non-members. Two courses are needed to complete initial investment officer training. This initial training would cost \$300 (\$150 x 2). In addition, the superintendent and business manager need to attend biennial investment training. The annual cost for this training is \$150.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Designate the business manager as the district's investment officer and ensure	(\$300)	\$0	(\$300)	\$0	(\$300)

he receives the necessary training.					
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FINDING

VISD lacks a cash management procedures manual, which has resulted in poor cash handling

practices. For example, the following outlines the cash handling practice in restocking high school vending machines:

- principal or designee restocks the machines with product and collects the receipts;
- uncounted cash is given to the secretary;
- secretary counts the cash and prepares a deposit;
- petty cash is retained if required;
- deposit slip is prepared and placed along with the cash into a bank deposit bag;
- the locked deposit bag is transported to the Business Office;
- the Business Office maintains a log of bag numbers and depositors;
- the Business Office personnel transport deposits to the bank; and
- deposit bags and receipts are returned to the school.

This process has no internal control since it permits the unsupervised secretary to count, control and deposit funds without verification. This practice also increases the potential for theft and the associated liability. In addition, there is no process to verify receipts. The district handles deposits for other schools and food service in a similar manner.

Internal control provides reasonable assurance financial reporting reliability; operations' effectiveness and efficiency; and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. A strong system of internal control enables the school district to properly handle and properly use resources, while ensuring their availability for management and the board's designation. Procedure manuals provide staff detailed information regarding critical and reporting functions and serves as a training tool for new employees.

Many Texas school districts that have developed business-related procedures manuals willingly share these manuals with other districts. For example, Round Rock ISD (RRISD) has established an online Financial Information Resource Manual, which outlines procedures for all business-related activities. RRISD makes this information available to other school districts on its Web site

<http://www.roundrockisd.org/financialserv/firm.htm>.

Recommendation 33:

Develop a procedures manual on cash handling to ensure proper internal control.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager contacts other districts to obtain copies of their procedures manual.	September 2003
2. The business manager develops a draft procedures manual and reviews the draft with the superintendent.	October 2003
3. The superintendent and board review the completed manual.	November 2003
4. The superintendent approves the procedures manual and copies are printed.	November 2003
5. The business manager provides mandatory in-service training.	December 2003
6. The business manager implements the procedures.	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD issues an excessive number of manually prepared checks, which is time consuming and increases the chance for error. **Exhibit 5-5** summarizes the manual and system-generated checks that cleared the bank during a 12-month period.

**Exhibit 5-5
Checks Issued in the General Operating Bank Account**

Month	Manual Checks		System Checks		Total Issued
	Issued	Percent	Issued	Percent	
February-02	100	37%	167	63%	267
March-02	108	48%	117	52%	225
April-02	106	34%	208	66%	314

May-02	89	38%	143	62%	232
June-02	93	42%	129	58%	222
July-02	67	31%	149	69%	216
August-02	72	40%	110	60%	182
September-02	91	33%	182	67%	273
October-02	98	37%	164	63%	262
November-02	62	27%	168	73%	230
December-02	54	23%	183	77%	237
January-03	75	38%	125	63%	200
Annual Information	1,015	35%	1,845	65%	2,860

Source: VISD bank statements from February 2002 through January 2003.

Although the accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk and bookkeeper issue manual checks for a number of reasons, the primary reason is to reimburse teachers for out-of-pocket expenditures. During the review, staff told the team it was not unusual for coaches or sponsors to drive up to the administrative office on the way to an event with a busload of students to ask for a manual check.

The district uses Regional Service Centers Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) Business System software, which is provided and maintained by the Regional Education Service Center XI (Region 11). The software supports all business functions including system-printed checks.

System-printed checks ensure better internal controls than manual hand checks because they are entered into the computer system one time, contain all vendor information and can be printed in batches, facilitating quality control review. Typically, districts issue checks once a week or two times per month. The RSCCC system prints accounts payable checks that clear in the general operating bank account.

Recommendation 34:

Limit the number of manual checks.

Normally manual checks are issued only in unusual situations such as extra curricular student travel expenses occurring immediately after a grading period where “No Pass No Play” cannot be determined in advance. The district should establish an internal procedure requiring the

approval of the business manager and superintendent before issuing a manual check.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager and superintendent develop a manual check procedure.	September 2003
2. The business manager trains the budget managers on the manual check procedure and the budget managers communicate the changes to their staff.	October 2003
3. The procedures are implemented.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not use a cash flow spreadsheet to project cash flows, which would help determine monies available for investment. The district presently invests in money market funds. These investment decisions are made by reviewing current bank balances and investing excess funds into a money market account. A cash flow spreadsheet allows the investment officer to determine if a portion of available cash could be invested long term. Long-term investment normally produces a higher yield than money market funds.

The Comptroller of Public Accounts publication, *Banks to Bonds*, states that when a district develops its investment strategy, all assets should be considered and placed in interest-earning vehicles if possible. The publication recommends that a cash flow analysis be used to determine the amounts of cash that will be needed and the length of time that funds can be invested.

The Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG) contains a simple cash flow spreadsheet located on the TEA Web site at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/school.finance/audit/resguide10/far/cashflow.xls>

Recommendation 35:

Perform cash forecasting on at least a monthly basis.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager develops a monthly cash flow spreadsheet.	September 2003
2. The business manager trains the accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk to enter balance information into the spreadsheet.	October 2003
3. The business manager implements the use of the cash flow spreadsheet to make investment decisions.	November 2003 and Monthly Thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district maintains 10 bank accounts, many of which are not required for the efficient operation of the district. **Exhibit 5-6** shows the accounts and number of checks issued annually for each account.

**Exhibit 5-6
List of Accounts and Checks Issued
February 2002 through January 2003**

Account Name	Checks Issued
Activity Fund	556
Capital Projects	15
CED 21	1
General Operating	2,860
Interest and Sinking	5
Lunch Room	59
Payroll Account	2,624
Payroll Account 2	0
Special Revenue Federal Funds	88

Source: VISD bank statements.

VISD issues system-generated checks in the payroll and general operating bank accounts. Other accounts require manual checks. The district maintains an activity fund bank account, however, it accounts for school activities in the Business Office. Although the district maintains centralized operation of activity funds and could use the district's computer system to issue checks, it does not. The special revenue federal funds account issues only 88 checks annually.

Several district bank accounts have limited activity. These accounts include the lunch room account, which is mostly used to account for deposits; the payroll account 2, which is used to transfer funds to the district's benefit provider; and the CED account, which accounts for County Education District (CED) revenue and should be allocated to the general and debt service funds according to the FASRG.

Wall ISD operates efficiently with six bank accounts, while Lyford CISD, which has no outstanding bond debt, operates with five accounts. Five appears to be the optimum number of district accounts including: general operating, payroll, capital projects, debt service and interest and sinking for districts with outstanding bond payments.

Recommendation 36:

Evaluate and close unnecessary bank accounts.

Bank accounts should be opened only as part of a legal or other operational requirement.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager contacts bank and closes excess accounts.	September 2003
2. The accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk reconciles closed accounts until outstanding items clear.	Until Completed

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not charge a fee for processing non-sufficient funds (NSF) checks. The district processed 96 NSF checks from February 2002 through January 2003 without charging processing fees. Most NSF checks come from the family of students to purchase meals or pay for activity fundraisers. All NSF checks cleared in the following bank accounts: Activity Fund—34 and Lunch Room—62.

The accounts payable/receivable/purchasing clerk established a process to handle NSF checks in the lunchroom account. The district follows these steps when an NSF check is charged back to the district:

- makes a copy of the check for the bookkeeper;
- redeposits the check into the proper bank account;
- sends a certified letter to the issuer if the NSF does not clear the second time; and
- maintains a file of checks not redeemed.

Most businesses and government agencies charge a fee for processing and collecting NSF checks.

Recommendation 37:

Establish a fee and procedures for collecting non-sufficient funds checks.

The fee should cover bank charge back and redeposit fees, mailing and associated costs and the district's personnel time involved in the collection process. A \$25 processing fee seems reasonable for NSF checks.

The Johnson County District Attorney's office will aid the district in the collection process. The county has established procedures, which must be followed. A packet containing the collection procedures is available from the district attorney's office.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager contacts the County District Attorney's office and obtains a copy of its NSF check collection procedures.	September 2003
2. The superintendent and business manager meet to establish a	September

collection fee and draft a procedure.	2003
3. The board approves the superintendent's recommendation.	October 2003
4. The business manager trains staff on the collection process and implements procedures.	October 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

There were 96 NSF checks processed. A processing fee of \$25 would result in a \$2,400 increase in revenue (96 x \$25) and potentially prevent an undetermined amount of lost revenues for the district from NSF checks by deterring individuals from writing NSF checks. All NSF checks were issued during the 10-month school year. The first year saving was computed based on implementation in November (2,400/10 months x 8 months = \$1,920).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Establish a fee and procedures for collecting non-sufficient funds checks.	\$1,920	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 5

Asset and Risk Management

B. RISK MANAGEMENT

An effective risk management program can limit a district's exposure to loss. The objectives of a school risk management program should include conserving district resources so more money can be available for education, protecting school district's assets and improving the quality of decision-making.

A risk management program includes a decision-making and management process. The decision-making process involves the following steps:

- identifying risk exposures to property, liability, finances and personnel within the district;
- analyzing the risk exposures;
- selecting and applying the proper risk management technique, loss control and/or risk financing; and
- monitoring and making adjustments as needed.

An effective risk management program controls costs by ensuring that the district is adequately protected against significant losses with the lowest possible insurance premiums. To protect itself against significant losses, the district must have accurate insurable values through annual appraisals of property values and documentation for all district-owned property through annual fixed assets inventories. Districts also assess hazards and implement programs to reduce those losses to minimize claims and reduce premiums for workers' compensation.

VISD protects itself against loss for real and personal property, liability, school legal liability, vehicle loss or damage and crime by participating in the Texas Association of School Boards' (TASB) Risk Management Fund through interlocal agreements for property, liability and unemployment compensation coverage. The district requested proposals during the summer of 2002 for property and casualty coverages. Coverage was awarded to TASB based on the evaluation of competitive proposals submitted to the district.

A summary of VISD's property and casualty coverage is presented in **Exhibit 5-7**.

Exhibit 5-7
VISD Property and Casualty Insurance/Coverage
2002-03

Insurance/Coverage Policy	Policy Period	Coverage Limits	Deductible	Premium	Company
Property – Blanket Replacement Cost limit on Buildings, Personal Property and Auxiliary Structures	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$26,284,972	\$1,000	\$67,553	TASB
Property - Wind, Hurricane and Hail	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$26,284,972	\$25,000	Included Above	TASB
Equipment Breakdown	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$26,284,972	\$1,000	\$1,714	TASB
Miscellaneous Property – Band Equipment	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$150,000	\$250	\$450	TASB
Miscellaneous Property – EDP Equipment, Data and Media, EDP Extra Expense	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$1,250,000	\$250	\$4,000	TASB
General Liability	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$1,000,000 per occurrence	\$1,000	\$1,225	TASB
School Professional Legal Liability	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$1,000,000 annual aggregate	\$1,000	\$3,736	TASB
Fleet Liability	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$100,000 per person \$300,000 per occurrence bodily	\$1,000	\$11,820	TASB

		injury limits. \$100,000 per occurrence property damage limits			
Fleet Physical Damage – Comprehensive private passenger vehicles	9/1/02-9/1/03	Actual cash value	\$500	\$5,893	TASB
Physical damage – all other vehicles Specified Perils, Collision	9/1/02-9/1/03	Actual cash value	\$500	\$2,208	TASB
Mobile Equipment – Comprehensive	9/1/02-9/1/03	Actual cash value	\$500	\$1,857	TASB
Employee Crime Coverage	9/1/02-9/1/03	\$175,000	\$1,000	\$429	TASB
Public Employee Dishonesty Form	11/13/02-11/13/03	\$100,000	\$0	\$1,038	Western Surety Company
Student Insurance – Blanket Catastrophic Student Insurance All Sports Coverage and All School Coverage	8/1/02-8/01/03	\$2,000,000 medical per insured	\$25,000	\$22,788	Columbia Life Insurance

Source: VISD's superintendent's office.

VISD has initiated the risk management process to protect the district against future losses by identifying property values. TASB recently completed an appraisal of the district's property. The appraisal report provides district staff a tool for making a general estimate of replacement costs of specific construction types for buildings. In addition, the district has contracted for a comprehensive fixed asset management program that has identified the district's fixed assets and will continue to track fixed

asset values. The district has documented its property values for future loss exposures through this process.

School districts must provide unemployment compensation benefits to former employees who qualify for benefits under the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act. To finance these benefits, VISD participates in the TASB Risk Management Fund Unemployment Compensation Program through an interlocal agreement. This risk pool program provides a maximum contribution based on an approved rate for the fiscal period. **Exhibit 5-8** shows VISD's annual contributions and claims for 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 5-8
VISD Unemployment Compensation Program Summary
1997-98 through 2001-02

Year	Payroll	Contribution	Claim Number	Benefit Paid
1997-98	\$5,046,303	\$4,939	6	\$271
1998-99	\$6,280,493	\$6,684	2	\$582
1999-2000	\$6,055,592	\$7,139	0	\$0
2000-01	\$6,812,662	\$3,773	8	\$4,360
2001-02	\$7,308,828	\$4,527	8	\$1,902

Source: TASB Risk Management Fund Unemployment Compensation Program Annual Account Summary Report.

In addition to insurance coverage, the fund provides claims assistance and hearing representation. Each year the district's fund contribution is capped at a specified dollar amount based on the previous year's gross wages. This information makes it easier to budget for these costs annually. TASB provides training so that districts know how to handle complex unemployment compensation issues. TASB also offers loss control assistance. District employees can attend informal regional workshops to learn effective unemployment compensation and loss control strategies.

School districts are required by law to extend workers' compensation benefits to employees. A district can provide these benefits through self-funding, purchasing an insurance policy or entering into an interlocal agreement with other political subdivisions providing self-insurance.

VISD has chosen to provide workers' compensation through the third option. In 1996, VISD entered into an interlocal agreement with other political subdivisions to participate in the Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Joint Fund. The fund contracts with Claims Administrative Services, Inc. (CAS) for third party claims services.

The district does not have a risk manager. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation manages the district's workers' compensation and safety program. The Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) coordinator processes all workers' compensation claims using an online reporting system. Employees report accidents to their supervisors. Schools complete an injury form and fax it to central office. The PEIMS coordinator reviews the form for missing information, completes it and enters the information online for the third party administrator, CAS. The form is sent via Internet to CAS in Tyler, Texas. The district receives confirmation with a claim number within a day. The injured employee receives a form letter authorizing medical treatment and prescriptions.

FINDING

VISD implemented a district safety program to reduce workers' compensation costs and address a previous hazardous employer classification. In 1994, the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission identified the district as a "hazardous employer." A hazardous employer is an employer whose injury frequencies substantially exceed those that may reasonably be expected in that employer's business or industry.

VISD initiated a districtwide safety program to reduce accidents in the district. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said the commission removed the "hazardous employer" classification in April 1995. The ongoing safety program includes monthly building inspections conducted and documented by the school principals and the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation. In addition, the program requires each school administrator to conduct seven-minute monthly safety meetings with employees at each district location. **Exhibit 5-9** provides a list of safety topics for the current year. Employees sign attendance rosters, which are sent to the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation for documentation.

Exhibit 5-9 VISD Monthly Safety Meetings 2002-03

Month	Topic
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August	Preparing for Emergency Evacuation
September	First Aid for Stopped Breathing
October	Fire Extinguishers – Types and Uses
November	Check the Label for Key Information
December	Hand Trucks and Dollies
January	Dealing with Work Stress
February	Good Housekeeping Practices
March	Working Safely with Ladders
April	Slips, Trips and Falls
May	Horseplay Is No Laughing Matter

Source: VISD director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation.

In addition to the monthly meetings, VISD conducts an annual employee training on district-adopted safety policies and procedures to eliminate accidents, workers' compensation procedures, drug free schools policy and pest management policy.

COMMENDATION

VISD's employee safety program seeks to reduce employee accidents.

FINDING

VISD has not requested proposals for workers' compensation coverage to evaluate other district options for the most comprehensive and cost effective program. In 1996, VISD chose to provide workers' compensation through the Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Joint Fund. Through an interlocal agreement, the district pays claim costs in addition to a fixed cost that includes payment for the administration of claims, loss control, record keeping and the cost of excess insurance.

VISD has not evaluated the financial status of its workers' compensation program. On March 28, 2002, the board adopted a five-year workers' compensation plan with Claims Administrative Services, Inc. This extended the interlocal agreement through August 31, 2007. The district did not request proposals from other self-funded pools or carriers. Claims Administrative Services, Inc. submitted a proposal for a five-year plan that included a 12 percent discount applied to the fixed cost rate the first year

and a five percent discount calculated for the subsequent years. No documentation can be found that indicates the legal counsel reviewed the interlocal agreement, or that the district reviewed the audited financial status of the self-insurance fund, for which the district has assumed liability as a “plan sponsor.”

A plan sponsor means the school district has adopted the plan and assumes liability for the payment of workers’ compensation benefits to its employees directly and not through insurance. The district’s renewal rates do not include any information on the district’s experience modifier, fixed costs, excess insurance or how the district’s “proportionate contribution” is calculated for the year. The experience modifier is the average of the first three years of the loss experience (actual losses divided by contributions) for the last four-year period. The proportionate contribution is the total amount a plan sponsor must contribute in fixed costs and in the loss fund maximum. As a member of a pool, the district assumes an ownership interest in the program and should have a full understanding of all financial risks so that it may be addressed appropriately.

Exhibit 5-10 provides VISD claims experience for its seven years with the Workers’ Compensation Self-Insurance Joint Fund.

Exhibit 5-10
VISD Workers’ Compensation Claims History
1996-97 through 2002-03

Year	Number of Claims	Number of Open Claims	Incurred Losses	Paid to Date Losses
1996-97	16	1	\$58,314	\$55,895
1997-98	14	0	\$18,223	\$18,223
1998-99	6	0	\$1,618	\$1,618
1999-2000	12	0	\$9,834	\$9,834
2000-01	13	0	\$18,699	\$18,699
2001-02	8	1	\$9,601	\$3,253
2002-03*	9	6	\$2,138	\$238

Source: Claims Administrative Services, Inc. Claims Cost Detail Report.
*As of 01/31/2003.

Exhibit 5-11 provides VISD workers' compensation contributions summary for 1996-97 through 2002-03.

Exhibit 5-11
VISD Workers' Compensation Contributions
1996-97 through 2002-03

Years	Incurred to Date	Contributions
1996-97	\$58,314	\$44,952
1997-98	\$18,223	\$56,331
1998-99	\$1,618	\$60,647
1999-2000	\$9,834	\$60,744
2000-01	\$18,699	\$67,810
2001-02	\$9,601	\$46,630
2002-03*	\$2,138	\$39,058

Source: Claims Administrative Services, Inc., Analysis Detail Report.
*As of 01/31/2003.

VISD has participated in the Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Joint Fund for seven years. The incurred to-date amount is the amount of VISD losses actually paid by the fund plus related administrative expenses and reserves set aside in anticipation of future losses for the claims already reported for that claim year. The contribution includes the fixed cost and total claims payment VISD has paid to the fund for the plan year.

Under the general provisions of the Interlocal Agreement, the district may terminate after the initial term, "by giving the plan supervisor and the Board of Trustees written notice on or before the first day of July preceding any successive term. Such timely termination will be effective at the end of the one-year term in which written notice was given. A plan sponsor who attempts to terminate its participation in the plan without giving timely and proper notice of termination, shall be liable to the plan for all fixed cost and liabilities due under Article 6.4 through the end of

the next full successive term.” The district’s interlocal agreement further states:

- Upon termination of a plan sponsor’s participation in the plan “all liabilities at the time of termination” means all liabilities of the plan sponsor or its loss fund maximum for all claims, whether known, unknown, accrued, unaccrued, reported, unreported, fixed, contingent, reserved, unreserved, or underserved; the plan sponsor’s self-insurance liability; all liabilities to the self-insurance joint fund, including any liabilities for benefits for employees of another plan sponsor; and any other liabilities of the plan sponsor or its loss fund maximum for workers’ compensation benefits arising under this plan: occurring, arising or existing prior to midnight on the date the plan sponsor’s participation is voluntarily or involuntarily terminated or occurring, arising or existing prior to midnight on the date the plan is terminated.
- Each plan sponsor’s loss fund maximum shall remain obligated after termination to satisfy all liabilities at the time of termination until such loss fund maximum is exhausted or until all liabilities at the time of termination are satisfied, whichever occurs first as determined by the board.
- Each plan sponsor shall pay to the plan supervisor all fixed cost, fees, commitments and obligations through the date of termination, plus any attorney’s fees and collection costs incurred by the plan supervisor.

Effective organizations review their insurance programs periodically to ensure they balance the best coverage with an optimum price.

Successful districts conduct research on the financial status of pools and ask the following when deciding to participate in self-funded pools:

- How does the pool treat accrued liabilities?
- What is the financial condition of the program?
- Does the program use acceptable data to project future claims and costs for currently accrued losses?
- Is the program audited with appropriate standards?
- Are annual reports and financial statements made available to participating districts in a timely manner? (School boards need to know about the financial condition of the pool and whether problems are developing.)
- Does the program provide each district with information about how its contributions are spent?
- How much notice must be given if a school board wants to terminate its membership in the pool?

- Does the program provide information on your district to the rating bureau?
- What is the amount of stop-loss or excess coverage and what is the attachment point for each district as well as the pool as a whole?
- Does the program offer assistance in reducing insurance hazards in your district?

Recommendation 38:

Request proposals for workers’ compensation coverage to ensure the district obtains the most comprehensive coverage at the most competitive price.

The district should review the interlocal agreement with legal counsel to identify existing liability exposures and available options.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the business manager to request the latest financial audit and actuarial analysis of the workers’ compensation fund to determine financial status.	September 2003
2. The superintendent requests legal counsel to review the interlocal agreement for the workers’ compensation fund and any amendments to identify the district’s liabilities.	September 2003
3. The superintendent and the business manager identify the financial and legal liability exposures resulting from the workers’ compensation program and identify the worker compensation options available to the district.	October 2003
4. The superintendent directs the business manager to request proposals for workers’ compensation coverage.	October 2003
5. The business manager develops specifications for workers’ compensation coverage and requests for proposals.	October 2003
6. The business manager evaluates proposals for workers’ compensation coverage and makes a recommendation to the superintendent.	January - February 2004
7. The superintendent recommends the workers’ compensation program to the board for approval.	February 2004
8. The business manager and director for Operation, Maintenance and Transportation meet with the workers’ compensation carrier to coordinate implementation of program.	March 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

The district spent \$274,889 in contributions for workers compensation between 1998-99 and 2002-03 (through January 2003), for an average annual cost of \$54,978. The district has incurred losses during that same period of \$41,890, or an average of \$8,378. Incurred losses represent 15 percent of the annual contribution. While it is difficult to estimate a savings in the absence of the responses to a request for proposals, because of its low annual incurred losses the district could realize a 25 percent reduction in annual costs, or \$13,745.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Request proposals for workers' compensation coverage to ensure the district obtains the most comprehensive coverage at the most competitive price.	\$0	\$13,745	\$13,745	\$13,745	\$13,745

FINDING

VISD cannot verify compliance with certain requirements of Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code. Section 125 allows employers to provide the option of purchasing some fringe benefits before calculating taxes, saving both the employer and employees on taxes. These plans are called Section 125 or cafeteria plans.

VISD offers a flexible spending account cafeteria plan that includes a medical care expense reimbursement plan and a dependent care expense reimbursement plan. Employees also have the option of electing to pay dental, cancer and life insurance premiums under the plan. The cafeteria plan allows employees to take a voluntary reduction in wages equaling the amount they otherwise would pay for their portion of the premiums, eliminating federal income, social security and other taxes on their contributions. The IRS sets certain requirements for employers to offer a Section 125 or cafeteria plan. A district is required to adopt and maintain a document that includes the following:

- a description of each benefit available under the plan and the period of coverage;
- a description of the eligibility rules for participants;
- procedures for holding elections under the plan, including when elections may be made and revoked, with elections referring to a

period when the employees make decisions about enrollment for example;

- the manner in which employer contributions may be made, such as by salary reduction agreement between the employer and employee, by non-elective employer contributions or by both;
- a statement regarding the maximum amount of employer contributions available to any participant; and
- the plan year.

In addition, the IRS requires summary plan descriptions for employees and salary reduction agreements. VISD contracts with a third-party administrator (TPA), American Family Life Assurance Company (AFLAC), for administration of the Section 125 Plan. If a district outsources its cafeteria plan administration through a TPA, the following is recommended:

- the district verifies the TPA is licensed to do business in Texas;
- the district verifies the TPA has a good track record and history of cafeteria plan administration;
- a contract is developed stating what the district wants accomplished and the TPA or representative accepts the responsibility for its administration; specifically the contract should exclude any hold harmless agreement regarding the TPA's failure to administer the plan in accordance with the IRS Section 125 rules;
- the district ensures the representative enrolling employees in the cafeteria plan is not a marketer, meaning insurance and annuity products, for example, are not offered for sale by the representative;
- the TPA is responsible for calculating salary reduction contributions and guaranteeing they are correct; and
- the TPA protects the district employees' rights.

The district's TPA conducts the annual open enrollment for the employees in August. An AFLAC representative meets with employees. During the meeting with the employee, the AFLAC representative markets benefits that include accident, cancer and life insurance.

Upon request by the review team, VISD did not have a current Section 125 Plan Document or a copy of board minutes approving the adoption of the cafeteria plan. The reimbursement services agreement with American Family Life Assurance Company (AFLAC) states the district will be responsible for the following:

- interpreting the plan and its provisions, its terms, conditions and operations;

- notifying plan participants of their ability to apply for reimbursement benefits and supply them with request forms (to be provided by AFLAC) and request filing instructions;
- providing AFLAC with the names, addresses, social security numbers and elected amounts of all participants in the plan;
- informing AFLAC of new participants and any change of status that affects a participant's election; and
- providing AFLAC with eligibility information of participants on a timely basis.

The reimbursement services agreement states AFLAC shall:

- provide the district with a cafeteria plan document to be reviewed by the district and its legal counsel;
- provide the district with a flexible benefits summary plan description plan to distribute to each plan participant;
- assist the district in explaining the flexible spending account features to employees;
- assist with annual open enrollment; and
- provide the district with monthly reports on account activities.

There are administrative duties the Reimbursement Services Agreement has delegated to the district regarding IRS Code Section 125 compliance. These responsibilities were recently assigned to the business manager. Failure to comply with IRS Code Section 125 requirements can result in penalties to the district. When the district has not met compliance requirements, employees can also be adversely affected.

Recommendation 39:

Ensure compliance with Internal Revenue Service rules for cafeteria plans.

A cafeteria plan document in compliance with the IRS Code Section 125 and a summary plan document for employees with a corresponding election agreement should be developed with legal assistance. Board approval for the cafeteria plan document and benefit options is required. A request for proposal should be issued for benefits marketed by the current third party administrator under the cafeteria plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the business manager to work with legal counsel to draft a revised cafeteria plan document.	September 2003
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2. The business manager submits the revised cafeteria plan document to the superintendent for approval.	September 2003
3. The superintendent submits the revised cafeteria plan document to the board for approval.	September 2003
4. The superintendent directs the business manager to review the third party administrator (TPA) service agreement with legal counsel to identify liability exposures.	September 2003
5. The business manager prepares a list of liability issues identified with the TPA plan service agreement and responsibilities delegated to the district for plan administration.	September 2003
6. The superintendent and business manager develop a plan to address the liability exposures with the TPA service agreement and cafeteria plan administration responsibilities.	October 2003
7. The business manager implements the plan to address the liability exposures and cafeteria administration responsibilities.	October 2003
8. The business manager monitors the third party administrator and cafeteria plan administration for compliance with IRS Code Section 125 regulations.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 5

Asset and Risk Management

C. FIXED ASSETS

TEA defines fixed assets as items a district has purchased or had donated that are tangible in nature; have a useful life longer than one year; are worth \$5,000 or more; and may be reasonably identified and controlled through a physical inventory system. FASRG requires assets that cost \$5,000 or more to be capitalized. Items that cost less than \$5,000 are recorded as an operating expense of the appropriate fund under TEA guidelines. These guidelines also allow school districts to establish lower thresholds for control and accountability of equipment that costs less than \$5,000. For example, computer and audiovisual equipment that costs less than \$5,000 and do not have to be capitalized.

Many districts say items worth less than \$5,000 should be tracked on a control log and inventoried annually. This means:

- tagging all valued assets when they are received using a bar code system;
- using accounting codes to track capitalized fixed assets as well as expensed assets;
- inventorying all assets on an annual basis;
- using the annual inventory results to set insurance rates; and
- identifying decreases in inventory and tightening controls when necessary.

The Comptroller's *Top 10 Ways to Improve Public Schools* report provides districts with a description of fixed assets, reasons to keep accurate accounting records and explains why all valuable items should be maintained on a control log and inventoried annually. Fixed assets include all properties, vehicles, equipment and building contents. Districts should track and reconcile additions and deletions to property in the inventory. Additional reasons districts need to track fixed assets include:

- properly kept fixed asset records furnish taxpayers with information about district investments and contrast them with expenditures;

- fixed asset records provide the basis for adequate insurance coverage;
- systematic physical inventories of fixed assets allow the district to survey the physical condition of its assets and assess the need for repair, maintenance or replacement;
- periodic inventories establish a system of accountability for custody of individual items;
- for budgeting, reliable information about fixed assets can help determine future requirements; and
- periodic inventories identify lost or stolen items so that insurance claims can be filed, additional controls can be instituted and accounting records can be adjusted to reflect the losses.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board issued statement 34 (GASB 34), which establishes financial reporting standards for state and local governments. One element of the statement requires governments to report and depreciate capital assets. TEA required all districts to comply with GASB 34 for accounting periods beginning after June 15, 2001.

FINDING

VISD policy CFBA (Local) defines capital assets as land, buildings, improvements other than buildings and furniture and equipment that:

- are not consumed as a result of use;
- have a useful life of at least one year and per unit cost of \$5,000 or more;
- can be identified and reasonably accounted for through an inventory system; and
- are grouped or cataloged through library media or computer labs.

Inventory assets are defined as equipment that: are not consumed as a result of use; have a useful life of at least one year and per unit cost of at least \$500 and not more than \$4,999; and can be identified and reasonably accounted for through an inventory system.

VISD contracted with RCI Technologies, Inc. to provide a comprehensive fixed asset management program. On October 16, 2002, the contractor completed counting and bar coding all fixed assets with a value of more than \$500 and installed a software system to track fixed assets. The business manager manages the program and maintains the inventory system. District personnel will complete the annual inventory starting with the 2003-04 school year. VISD procedures address all the requirements of GASB 34.

COMMENDATION

VISD's fixed asset procedures identify assets to be depreciated under GASB 34 and control other valuable items.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 6

Operations

This chapter reviews the food service, transportation, facilities and security of operations Venus Independent School District (VISD) in the following sections:

- A. Food Service
- B. Transportation
- C. Facilities Use and Maintenance
- D. Safety and Security

Efficient, effective school operations and quality pupil services are essential to the success of a school district's educational mission. For children to learn, districts must provide adequate facilities to accommodate student enrollment, effectively manage their facilities to create an environment conducive to learning and maintain these facilities appropriately to ensure student and employee safety. Pupil transportation must be safe and prompt. Food must be nutritious, appealing and available to all children, regardless of economic status.

Chapter 6 Operations

A. FOOD SERVICE

School food service operations provide students and staff with appealing and nutritionally sound breakfasts and lunches at a reasonable cost in a clean, safe and easily accessible environment. School districts use several factors to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of their food service operations, including staffing, productivity, food cost, nutritional value, amount of waste, participation rates in breakfast and lunch programs, variety of meals served, wait time per student served and financial self-sufficiency.

A well-managed Food Service Department is important to the health and academic success of all students. Inefficient management of Food Service operations can negatively impact student performance by inhibiting concentration and achievement due to inadequate nutrition. In order to ensure that the food service operations effectively provide students with appealing and nutritious breakfasts and lunches as economically as possible, school officials must plan and monitor the operation regularly.

Studies support teacher observations that students are more alert and perform better in class if they eat breakfast. A Minnesota breakfast study found that students who ate breakfast before starting school had a general increase in math grades and reading scores, increased student attention, reduced nurse visits and improved student behavior. Researchers at Harvard Medical/Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston found that hungry students are more likely to have behavioral and academic problems than children who get enough to eat. Hungry children are more likely to be irritable, anxious and aggressive and have higher rates of absences and tardiness. These reports affirm the 1998 Tufts University study, *The Link Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children*, which states that, “children who participated in the School Breakfast Program were shown to have significantly higher standardized achievement test scores than eligible non-participants.”

The National School Lunch Act, enacted in 1946, established the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to nearly 27 million children every school day. School districts that take part in the lunch program receive cash subsidies and donated commodities from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve. In return, schools must serve lunches that meet federal requirements and they must offer free or reduced-price lunches to children of eligible families. The

Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Child Nutrition Programs Division oversees the NSLP and a similar federal allotment, the School Breakfast Program (SBP), in Texas public schools.

The Texas School Food Service Association (TSFSA), a professional organization for school food service employees, has identified nine *Standards of Excellence* for evaluating school food service programs. **Exhibit 6-1** lists these guidelines.

Exhibit 6-1
TSFSA Standards of Excellence

Standard	Description
1	School food service administration identifies and meets current and future needs through organization, planning, direction and control.
2	School food service maintains financial accountability through established procedures.
3	School food service meets the nutritional needs of students and promotes the development of sound nutritional practices.
4	School food service maintains a safe and sanitary environment.
5	School food service provides appetizing, nutritious meals through effective, efficient systems management.
6	School food service encourages student participation in food service programs.
7	School food service provides an environment that enhances employee productivity, growth, development and morale.
8	School food service promotes a positive image to the public.
9	School food service measures success in fulfilling regulatory requirements.

Source: TSFSA Web site, www.tsfsa.org.

VISD participates in both NSLP and SBP. As a participant, the district receives federal reimbursement for each meal it serves that meets federal requirements. A large part of the district's student population, 62.3 percent, qualifies for free and reduced-price lunches. The district meets

federal definitions of a severe need district: more than 40 percent of the lunches it served for the past two years have been free or reduced-price. This qualifies the district for an additional reimbursement of \$0.22 per meal served.

The meals served to students must meet the federal government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines recommend that no more than 30 percent of the meals' calories come from fat, with less than 10 percent from saturated fat. The district receives USDA food commodities to be used in the preparation of meals for students. The child nutrition specialist from TEA's Regional Education Service Center XI (Region 11) is working with the district to train managers on the use of standardized recipes and meal requirements at no cost to the district. The district also participates in TEA's Regional Education Service Center X (Region 10) multi-Regional Child Nutrition Purchasing Program for a fee of \$310.

Sound management practices that achieve the goals of an efficiently run operation must include the use of many tools: a budget, forecasting, cash flow analysis and profit and loss statements. In addition, food service departments must use performance measures to evaluate menu costs and staffing levels.

Exhibit 6-2 shows that the VISD Food Service Department has operated at a loss for the past three years and expects to have a deficit for 2002-03. The department has a negative fund balance.

Exhibit 6-2
VISD Food Service Department Operating Results
1998-99 through 2002-03

Description	1998-99 Actual	1999- 2000 Actual	2000-01 Actual	2001-02 Actual	2002-03 Budget	Percentage Change from 1998- 99
Revenues	\$536,716	\$636,596	\$687,660	\$781,089	\$711,600	32.6%
Expenditures	\$467,849	\$734,790	\$727,153	\$914,568	\$768,028	64.2%
Income (Loss)	\$68,867	(\$98,194)	(\$39,493)	(\$133,479)	(\$56,428)	(81%)
Fund Balance (Deficit) - Beginning	\$70,629	\$139,496	\$41,302	\$1,809	\$0.00	(100%)
Fund Balance	\$139,496	\$41,302	\$1,809	(\$131,670)	(\$56,428)	(140.5%)

(Deficit) - End						
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Source: VISD, Audited Annual Financial Reports, 1998-99 through 2001-02 and VISD 2002-03 Annual Budget.

VISD budgeted 6.6 percent of its 2002-03 funds on the food service operation. **Exhibit 6-3** shows that this exceeds the state average of 1.7 percent for 2002-03.

Exhibit 6-3
Comparison of Budgeted Functional Expenditures
VISD and State Averages
2002-03

Function	Venus	State
Instruction	52.7%	50.8%
Instructional related services	1.7%	2.7%
Instructional leadership	0%	1.2%
School leadership	5.2%	5.3%
Support services--student	2.7%	4.0%
Student transportation	5.5%	2.6%
Food Service	6.6%	4.9%
Co-curricular/extracurricular activities	3.4%	2.3%
Central administration	3%	3.6%
Plant maintenance and operations	9.9%	10.0%
Security and monitoring services	0.1%	0.6%
Data processing services	1.8%	1.2%
Other*	7.4%	10.9%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2002-03.

*Includes any operating expenditures not listed above and all non-operational

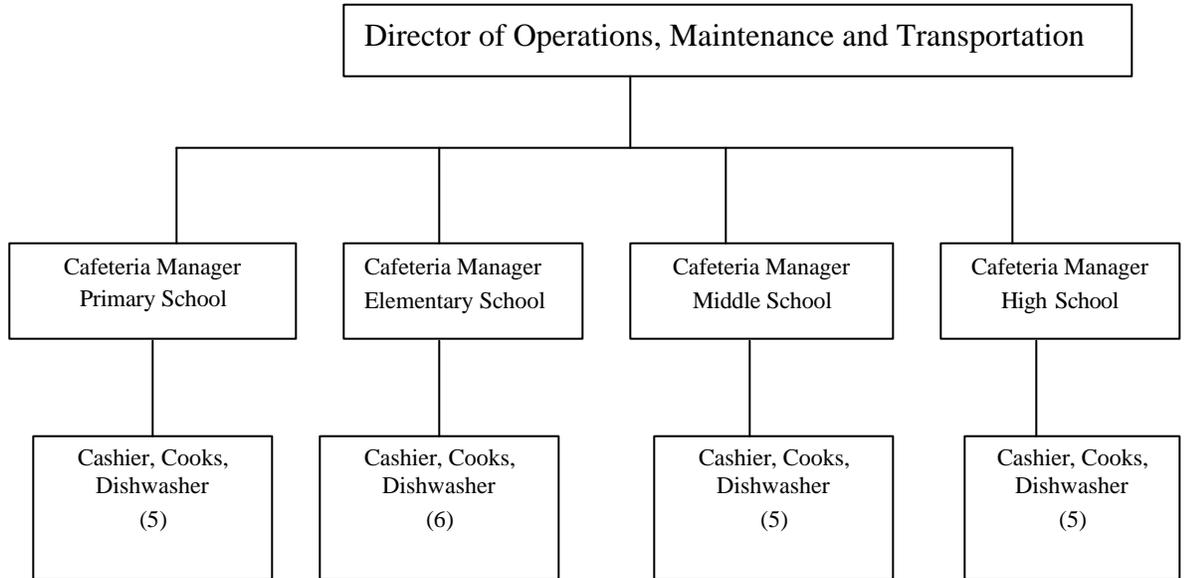
expenditures such as debt service, capital outlay and community and parental involvement services.

VISD Food Service Department prepares breakfast and lunch at each of its schools daily. Between September 2001 and August 2002, the food service operations served an average of 1,301 lunches and 1,669 breakfasts to students per day. These figures include snacks. The Food Service Department employs 25 people and operates a conventional kitchen system that prepares meals from scratch each day. The district has chosen to serve free breakfast to all primary and elementary school students to enhance the students' ability to learn.

Each cafeteria has a manager, a cashier, cooks and a dishwasher. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation supervises the Food Service Department. In March 2003, the board approved an updated organizational chart that will move oversight of the food service budget to the business manager. The district will implement the new organizational chart by 2003-04.

Exhibit 6-4 shows the food service organization.

Exhibit 6-4
VISD Food Service Department Organization
2002-03



Source: VISD, director of Maintenance, Operations and Transportation.

Financial management has been a major emphasis for school districts nationwide. A successful Food Service operation requires: knowledge of the financial goals and objectives of the school board; sound planning and budget development to meet board goals and objectives; and a financial accounting system that provides accurate and timely financial information to assist in managing revenues and expenditures.

Controlling Costs in the Food Service Industry, 1998, identifies several reports that are critical to the financial management of a school food service operation. **Exhibit 6-5** lists these reports.

Exhibit 6-5
Critical Food Service Operations
Financial Management Reports

Report	Report Description/Use
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial management plan that helps manager estimate

	revenue and expenses based on prior year data, estimates and planned changes.
Balance Sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report that provides a “snapshot” of the financial worth of the operation at the end of a reporting period. It shows assets, liabilities and the net worth or fund balance of the operation.
Profit and Loss Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report that shows how the operation has been doing both at the end of a period and over a period of time in terms of the revenue or income generated versus expenditures.
Cash Flow Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report that shows the cash inflow (revenues) and outflow (expenditures) for a period of time.
Financial Trends and Ratios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information on various types of performance trends. Examples include: food costs as a percent of total sales; labor costs as a percent of total sales; and value of inventory and inventory turnover.

Source: Controlling Costs in the Food Service Industry, 1998.

Exhibit 6-6 compares VISD’s NSLP and SBP participation rates to those of its peer districts.

**Exhibit 6-6
NSLP and SBP Participation Rates
VISD and Peer Districts
September 2001 through August 2002**

District	Average Breakfast Participation	Average Lunch Participation
Dublin	17%	67%
Godley	21%	55%
Grandview	17%	61%
Rio Vista	15%	40%
Venus	56%	71%

Source: TEA, Child Nutrition Programs, September 2001 through August 2002.

VISD has higher NSLP and SBP participation rates than its peer districts. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation processes all free and reduced-price applications. The director stated that he monitors the applications his office receives. If a family submitted an application one year and does not reapply the next year, the director contacts the family to remind them to send the application.

Of the VISD students in average daily attendance in 2002-03, 56 percent participated in the breakfast program and 71 percent participated in the lunch program. VISD has a closed campus; all students must either eat lunch in the cafeteria or bring their lunch. The primary and elementary schools serve free breakfast to all students.

FINDING

The VISD Food Service Department does not have written policies and procedures that address daily operations.

The lack of written procedures makes employee training difficult. In districts that have multiple kitchens, documented policies and procedures assist in standardizing operations among kitchens. **Exhibit 6-7** shows useful policies and procedures that other districts use in their daily operations.

Exhibit 6-7 Food Service Policies and Procedures

Area	Description
Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation of the budget.• Cash management.• Maintenance of participation and tracking of related revenue while safeguarding cashier banks and the preparation of deposits.• Labor standards.• Free and reduced-price application processing and the identification of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals.• Handling of credit sales and advance payments.• Monitoring and reporting of revenues and expenditures.• Tracking of prepaid meals.

Pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designation of an optimal price-setting methodology and procedures for evaluating and updating meal and a la carte prices. • Specific guidelines for notifying staff and students about changing prices. • Guidelines for the number of days and/or total dollar amount of charges that a student or staff member can accrue and what to do when students forget their lunch and have no money to pay for a meal. • Guidelines addressing free meals.
Inventory Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines addressing physical inventories, inventory rotation and the disposal of obsolete, spoiled, damaged or slow moving inventory. • Placing food orders.
Safety and Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines addressing who to contact when a worker is injured and what to do in case of an emergency in the kitchen. • In-service training requirements for safety and sanitation.
Facilities Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines addressing the extracurricular use of food service facilities, equipment replacement and preventive maintenance schedules on equipment. • Work-order processing.

Source: Texas Public School Consulting, Inc.

Nearly all of these policies and procedures have a direct impact on the profitability and efficiency of Food Service operations. Formal policies and procedures and the communication of standards to all relevant personnel will enhance overall efficiency and consistent management of Food Service operations.

The district does not have a perpetual inventory system, meal pricing policies, facilities management policies or a food service handbook that addresses safety and sanitation.

San Marcos Consolidated ISD (SMCISD) has a comprehensive procedures manual that provides Food Service staff with detailed procedures regarding all aspects of departmental operations such as finance, pricing

and sanitation. Although SMCISD is a larger district, formal and properly communicated procedures can help districts of any size with the overall efficiency of their food service operations.

Recommendation 40:

Develop and implement written policies and procedures for all food service operations.

A policy and procedures manual for the Food Service Department would promote consistency while providing guidance to employees. This manual will facilitate employee training as the district grows or experiences personnel changes.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to draft Food Service Department policies.	October 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation drafts policies on meal pricing and submits them to the superintendent for review.	November-December 2003
3. The superintendent reviews the policies and presents them to the board for approval.	January 2004
4. The board reviews and adopts the policies.	February 2004
5. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to develop a comprehensive Food Service Department Procedures Manual.	March 2004
6. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation develops and documents the procedures and submits them to the superintendent for approval.	March-April 2004
7. The superintendent approves the procedures.	April 2004
8. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation distributes policies and procedures to Food Service Department staff.	April 2004
9. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation updates policies and the procedures manual annually.	May 2004 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The Food Service Department operated at a deficit for the past three years and is projected to operate at a deficit for 2002-03. The district's meals per labor hour (MPLH) is below exceed industry standards. This indicates that VISD has a larger staff than it needs or the staff is working too many hours for the number of meals served. VISD does not have its own staffing standard and does not use industry standard calculations to staff its cafeterias. *Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence* quotes an industry standard that food service labor costs should not exceed 40 percent of revenue. Labor costs at VISD were 44 percent of revenue for 1999-2000, 46 percent for 2000-01 and 53 percent for 2001-02.

MPLH is a standard performance measure of efficiency for school districts, hospitals, restaurants and other Food Service operations. MPLH is the number of meal equivalents that a kitchen serves in a given period divided by the total man-hours worked during that period. Meal equivalents are lunches plus an equivalent number of breakfast and a la carte sales. The following are the conversion rates for meal equivalents used in the MPLH calculation:

Breakfast Meal Equivalents:

- Total meals served divided by three.
- \$3 in a la carte sales equals one meal equivalent.

Lunch Meal Equivalents:

- Total meals served.
- \$3 in a la carte sales equals one meal equivalent.

Exhibit 6-8 compares VISD's MPLH for each school cafeteria to the industry standard for a conventional system. A conventional kitchen system prepares meals on the premises from raw ingredients (using some bakery bread and prepared pizza) to washing dishes. In contrast, a convenience kitchen system heats and serves meals that were largely prepared offsite. Convenience kitchen systems operate with less labor but have higher food costs.

Exhibit 6-8
VISD Daily Meals Per Labor Hour
2002-03

Schools	Actual Meal Equivalents	Actual Labor Hours	Actual MPLH	Recommended MPLH*	MPLH Variance above/(below)
Primary	434	43	10.1	14	(3.9)
Elementary	608	49.8	12.2	16	(3.8)
Middle	344	42.3	8.1	14	(5.9)
High	399	42.3	9.4	14	(4.6)

Sources: VISD Food Service and Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence.

**The recommended MPLH is based on the MPLH for the conventional system.*

The number of hours worked is a function of two variables: the number of staff employed and the hours worked per employee. Kitchens can control the size of both variables. Hourly wages paid to VISD food service employees range from \$6.50 per hour to \$14.43 per hour plus 15 percent in benefits. The average hourly wage is \$9.46.

Exhibit 6-9 outlines the MPLH standards that the review team used to evaluate VISD's staffing structure.

Exhibit 6-9
Recommended Meals per Labor Hour

Number of Equivalents Served	Conventional System MPLH	Convenience System MPLH
Up to 100	8	9
101 - 150	9	10
151 - 200	10-11	12
201 - 250	12	14
251 - 300	13	15
301 - 400	14	16

401 - 500	14	18
501 - 600	15	18
601 - 700	16	19
701 - 800	17	20
801 - 900	18	21
900+	19+	22+

Source: *Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence, 1999.*

Exhibit 6-10 compares the number of hours worked at each VISD cafeteria to the industry standard. VISD employs 7.9 more full-time equivalents (FTEs) than industry standards recommend for the number of meals it serves, and its employees work 55.2 hours per day more than the standard.

Exhibit 6-10
VISD Food Service Daily MPLH
Compared to Industry Standards

School	Meal Equivalents Served	Hours Worked	Allowed Hours at Standard MPLH	Hours Above (Below) Standard	Equivalent FTEs at 7 Hours*
Primary	434	43.00	31.00	12.00	1.7
Elementary	608	49.75	38.00	11.75	1.7
Middle	334	42.25	23.86	18.39	2.6
High	399	42.25	28.50	13.75	2.0
Total	1,775	177.25	121.36	55.89	8.0

Sources: *VISD Food Service and Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence.*

*Standard industry workday is 7 hours.

Elgin ISD uses an industry productivity standard, meals per labor hour (MPLH), to determine and measure food service productivity. MPLH is calculated by comparing the number of meals served in a given period

with the labor hours used to generate those meals in the same time period. According to industry analysts, 16 to 20 meals per labor hour is a reasonable level of productivity given the large variation in food preparation systems and type of foods served. In 1999-2000 Elgin ISD maintained an overall average of 16.82 meals per hour.

Recommendation 41:

Implement industry meals per labor hour (MPLH) standards and adjust staffing levels accordingly.

VISD’s kitchens operate at a lower MPLH than industry standards. VISD can raise its MPLH by increasing the number of meals it serves, reducing the size of the kitchen staff or limiting the hours worked by each employee.

Projected meals served, divided by the industry standard MPLH, equals the number of labor hours required for each school. The number of labor hours, times the hourly rate for each cafeteria employee, plus benefits, times the number of days worked per year, equals the annual projected payroll cost for each employee. The sum of payroll costs for all employees should be the maximum payroll costs for the year.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The cafeteria managers and the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation create a plan for raising MPLH that increases productivity and/or decreases labor costs.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation presents the plan to the superintendent for approval.	October 2003
3. The cafeteria managers and the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation implement the plans for improving each cafeteria's MPLH.	November 2003 and Ongoing
4. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation and cafeteria managers review monthly management reports detailing each cafeteria's MPLH.	December 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

If all schools used the recommended meals per labor hours standard, VISD would conservatively reduce its labor by 55 hours per day. Applying the cafeteria worker's average hourly wage of \$9.46 results in \$520 per work day savings from reduced wage expense (\$9.46 per hour wage x 55 hours less worked per day = \$520) and \$78 per work day savings from reduced benefits expense (\$520 wages per day x 0.15 benefit rate = \$78). Total daily cafeteria labor savings would be \$598 (\$520 wages per day + \$78 benefits per day).

On average there are 185 cafeteria work days in a school year. Assuming the reduced labor hours plan begins in November 2003, there would be 141 cafeteria work days instead of 185 by removing September (21 work days) and October (23 work days) from the count (185 – 21 – 23 = 141). Annual savings for 2003-04 would be \$84,318 (\$598 daily labor savings x 141 work days). Annual savings for 2004-05 through 2007-08 would be \$110,630 (\$598 daily labor savings x 185 average work days per year).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Implement industry meals per labor (MPLH) hour standards and adjust staffing levels accordingly.	\$84,318	\$110,630	\$110,630	\$110,630	\$110,630

FINDING

VISD does not produce or use reports critical to sound business management and does not effectively monitor the Food Service Department's financial condition. The department does not generate and review profit and loss statements and budget variance reports on a monthly basis. The district does report that it began using a profit and loss statement in February 2003. VISD Food Service Department staffing levels are above the industry standard; its average hourly rates are higher than most of the peer districts and the recommended 40 percent of revenue; and the department does not determine if the total cost of menus and food costs exceed the recommended 40 percent of revenue. In addition, the district does not use an inventory system to ensure proper inventory levels. VISD participates in a purchasing cooperative.

The *Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence* manual recommends that districts keep food costs at 40 percent or less of revenue to allow sufficient revenue for payroll and other expenses.

VISD's food costs in 2001-02 were 43.8 percent of revenue. Over the three year period from 1999-2000 to 2001-02, the district expended \$105,258 more than the recommended food cost standard. **Exhibit 6-11** shows the variance of VISD food costs from the standard over the three-year period.

Exhibit 6-11
VISD Food Service Department Food Costs as a Percentage of
Revenue
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Fiscal Year	Food Costs	Total Revenue	Percent Expended on Food	Recommended Percentage	Variance +/- from Standard	Dollar Variance
1999-2000	\$280,388	\$636,596	44.0%	40%	(4.0%)	(\$25,750)
2000-01	\$324,782	\$687,660	47.23%	40%	(7.23%)	(\$49,718)
2001-02	\$342,226	\$781,089	43.81%	40%	(3.81%)	(\$29,790)
Total Three Year Variance						(\$105,258)

Sources: TEA, PEIMS, 1999-2000 through 2001-02 and Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence.

The *Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence* manual also recommends that districts keep payroll and payroll-related costs at 40 percent or less of revenue to allow sufficient revenue for food and other expenses. Payroll and payroll related costs in 2001-02 were 53 percent of VISD's revenue. Over the three-year period from 1999-2000 through 2001-02 the district expended \$163,724 more than the recommended standard on payroll and payroll related costs. **Exhibit 6-12** shows the variance of VISD's payroll and payroll related costs from the standard over the three-year period.

Exhibit 6-12
VISD Food Service Department Labor Costs
As a Percentage of Revenue
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Fiscal Year	Payroll Costs	Total Revenue	Percent Expended on Labor	Recommended Percentage	Variance +/- from Standard	Dollar Variance
1999-2000	\$282,577	\$636,596	44.39%	40%	(4.39%)	(\$27,939)
2000-01	\$313,208	\$687,660	45.55%	40%	(5.55%)	(\$38,144)
2001-02	\$410,077	\$781,089	52.50%	40%	(12.50%)	(\$97,641)
Total Three Year Variance						(\$163,724)

Sources: TEA, PEIMS, 1999-2000 through 2001-02 and Managing Child Nutrition Programs, Leadership for Excellence.

Exhibit 6-13 compares the average hourly wage paid to VISD Food Service Department employees to those paid in peer districts. VISD's average hourly wage is higher than three of the four peer districts.

Exhibit 6-13
Average Hourly Wages for Cafeteria Employees
VISD and Peer Districts
2002-03

District	Average Food Service Hourly Wages
Dublin	\$9.95
Grandview	\$5.71
Godley	\$7.45
Rio Vista	\$6.89
Venus	\$9.46

Sources: Peer districts and VISD, Food Service Department.

Exhibit 6-14 shows VISD's Food Service Department's losses from 1999-2000 to 2001-02. It describes the department's revenue by source and details expenditures by major categorical budget items.

**Exhibit 6-14
VISD Food Service Losses
1999-2000 through 2001-02**

Revenue Source	1999-2000 Actual	Percent of Actual	2000-01 Actual	Percent of Actual	2001-02 Actual	Percent of Actual
Local and Intermediate	\$171,363	26.9%	\$186,749	27.2%	\$199,975	25.6%
State	\$6,480	1.0%	\$7,608	1.1%	\$20,802	2.7%
Federal	\$458,753	72.1%	\$493,303	71.7%	\$560,312	71.7%
Total Revenue	\$636,596	100%	\$687,660	100%	\$781,089	100%
Expenditure Category						
Salaries/Benefits	\$282,577	38.5%	\$313,208	43.1%	\$410,077	44.8%
Contracted Services	\$9,226	1.3%	\$1,804	0.2%	\$3,773	0.4%
Supplies and Materials	\$389,894	53.1%	\$407,706	56.1%	\$483,275	52.8%
Other Misc. Expenses	\$4,550	0.6%	\$4,435	0.6%	\$17,443	1.9%
Capital Outlay	\$48,543	6.6%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
Total Expenditures	\$734,790	100.0%	\$727,153	100.0%	\$914,568	100.0%
Net Profit or (Loss)	(\$98,194)		(\$39,493)		(\$133,479)	

Sources: TEA, PEIMS, 1999-2000 through 2001-02 and VISD Annual Financial Reports, 1999-2000 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 6-15 shows the percent increase in the Food Service Department's actual revenues and expenditures from 2000-01 through 2001-02 and budgeted figures for 2002-03. The overall revenue increase from 2000-01 to 2001-02 was 13.6 percent; the overall expenditure increase from 2000-

01 to 2001-02 was 25.8 percent. The 2002-03 budget reflects percentage decreases.

Exhibit 6-15
VISD Food Service Revenues and Expenditures
2000-01 through 2002-03

Revenue Source	2000-01 Actual	2001-02 Actual	Percent Change from 2000-01 through 2001-02	2002-03 Budget	Percent Change from 2001-02 through 2002-03
Local and Intermediate	\$186,749	\$199,975	7.1%	\$191,600	(4.2%)
State	\$7,608	\$20,802	173.4%	\$8,000	(61.5%)
Federal	\$493,303	\$560,312	13.6%	\$512,000	(8.6%)
Total Revenue	\$687,660	\$781,089	13.6%	\$711,600	(8.9%)
Expenditure Category					
Salaries/Benefits	\$313,208	\$410,077	30.9%	\$391,378	(4.6%)
Contracted Services	\$1,804	\$3,773	109.1%	\$3,000	(20.5%)
Supplies and Materials	\$407,706	\$483,275	18.5%	\$371,500	(23.1%)
Other Misc. Expenses	\$4,435	\$17,443	293.3%	\$2,150	(87.7%)
Capital Outlay	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
Total Expenditures	\$727,153	\$914,568	25.8%	\$768,028	(16%)
Net Profit or (Loss)	(\$39,493)	(\$133,479)		(\$56,428)	

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2000-01 through 2002-03 and VISD Annual Financial Report, 2000-01 through 2002-03.

The general operating fund transferred \$131,671 to the Food Service fund in 2001-02. Subsidizing the Food Service Department reduced the amount

of money the district had available to be used in the classroom to fund supplies, technology or other instructional needs.

The lack of financial management in the Food Service Department contributed to the department's budget deficit as of August 2002. VISD's 2002-03 budget reflects appropriated Food Service expenditures that are higher than estimated revenues by \$56,428. This means that the general operating fund will again need to supplement the Food Service fund in 2002-03.

Many school districts reduce food costs and lower the price paid for food by using less expensive ingredients, maintaining good portion control, reducing plate waste, issuing separate contracts for specific food products where cost-effective and entering into group-purchasing contracts for commodities. Some districts achieve cost savings by contracting with a food management company to run the district's Food Service operation.

Recommendation 42:

Develop and implement a financial reporting system to use in controlling costs.

The use of financial reports is critical to sound financial management. The Food Service Department can use monthly reports to monitor the status of expenditures, revenues and profits or losses. The reports will help the department identify problems and take corrective action.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to develop and implement monthly food service reports.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation begins reviewing the reports and informs the superintendent, the board and the cafeteria managers of profitability and budgetary status.	October 2003 and Ongoing
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation uses the reports to identify areas where the department can save money or operate more efficiently.	October 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD'S student meal prices are lower than the average of its peer districts. Despite the Food Service Department's deficit, meal prices have remained the same for the past three years. **Exhibit 6-16** shows that VISD is charging \$0.29 less than the peer district average for a full price student lunch and \$0.23 less than the average for a full price student breakfast.

Exhibit 6-16
Secondary School Meal Prices
VISD and its Peer Districts
2002-03

School	Student Breakfast	Adult Breakfast	Student Lunch	Adult Lunch
Dublin	\$1.75	\$2.25	\$2.75	\$3.25
Godley	\$1.25	\$1.50	\$2.00	\$2.50
Grandview	\$1.10	\$1.35	\$1.85	\$2.25
Rio Vista	\$0.80	\$1.10	\$1.75	\$2.25
Average	\$1.23	\$1.55	\$2.09	\$2.56
Venus	\$1.00	\$1.40	\$1.80	\$2.25
Variance* + / (-)	(\$0.23)	(\$0.15)	(\$0.29)	(\$0.31)

Source: Peer Districts and VISD.

**Variance compares VISD to the peer district average.*

Setting meal prices at a competitive level is an important component in managing revenues; it is essential that food service departments generate sufficient revenue to operate. Texas public school districts receive food service revenue from federal, state and local sources. The district receives federal and state reimbursements from participation in the NSLP and the SBP; districts generate local revenue from the paid student and adult meals and a la carte sales.

Recommendation 43:

Annually evaluate and set prices for full priced meals to equal the cost of those meals.

VISD can generate additional revenue for its Food Service Department by raising meal prices to the level of other school districts. The extra revenue will reduce the department's dependence on general fund support. This will leave VISD with additional money in the general fund to use for classroom instruction.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent, the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation and the cafeteria managers review the prices of meals.	September 2003
2. The superintendent, the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation and the cafeteria managers determine adequate meal prices for board approval.	September 2003
3. The superintendent submits to the board the recommended meal prices for approval.	October 2003
4. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation provides to the cafeteria managers the approved meal prices.	October 2003
5. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation notifies students and parents of the price increases.	October 2003
6. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation implements approved meal prices.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the TEA Child Nutrition Programs District Profile, VISD served 65,722 paid lunches and 58,901 paid breakfasts to students between September 2001 and August 2002. Assuming that the new pricing does not begin until November 2003, the lunch count for the 2003-04 fiscal impact would be reduced by the September (6,945 paid lunches) and October (8,887 paid lunches) counts, resulting in a reduced lunch count of 49,890 (65,722 total annual lunch counts – 6,945 paid lunches in September 2001 – 8,887 paid lunches in October 2001).

Correspondingly, the breakfast count for the 2003-04 fiscal impact would be reduced by the September (2,842 paid breakfasts) and October (3,339 paid breakfasts) counts, resulting in a reduced breakfast count of 52,720 (58,901 total annual breakfast counts – 2,842 paid breakfasts in September and 3,339 paid breakfasts in October).

Increase the student breakfast to 1.25 and student lunch to \$2.00.

2003-04

- 49,890 lunches x 20 cents
= \$9,978
- 52,720 breakfast x 25 =
\$13,180
- Total is \$23,158 (\$13,180
+ \$9,978)

2004-05 through 2007-08

- 68,722 lunches x 20 cents
= \$13,144
- 58,901 breakfasts x 25
cents = \$14,725
- Total is \$27,869 (\$14,725
+ \$13,144)

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Annually evaluate and set prices for full priced meals to equal the cost of those meals.	\$23,158	\$27,869	\$27,869	\$27,869	\$27,869

FINDING

VISD's Middle School does not turn off the soft drink vending machine during the lunch period. The review team observed students at the middle school purchasing soft drinks to drink with their cafeteria meals. At the high school, school staff locks the vending machines during meal service. The primary and elementary schools do not have vending machines near the cafeterias.

The USDA has launched efforts to foster healthy school nutrition environments that support proper nutrition and the development of healthful eating habits. USDA's Healthy People 2010 project focuses on school nutrition in an effort to counteract the rising prevalence of obesity in the student population and to improve the quality of student's dietary intake. Foods of minimal nutritional value (FMNV) are not to be sold to

children in the food service area in competition with the lunch and breakfast programs. Soft drinks are considered FMNV.

The USDA's FMNV policy outlines penalties for improperly used or lost funds to include both corrective action and restoration of the school food service account. USDA recommends that corrective action include disallowing reimbursement for all meals served by a school on the day a violation was observed. The loss of income suffered by the Food Service Department must come from a source other than the school's Food Service account. Schools that violate the policy must implement a corrective action plan; state and federal authorities will diligently monitor violators to ensure continued compliance.

Recommendation 44:

Discontinue operating vending machines that compete with meal programs during meal service.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the middle school principal to disable vending machines during breakfast and lunch periods.	September 2003
2. The superintendent checks school adherence to vending machines rules on a periodic basis.	October 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 6

Operations

B. TRANSPORTATION

The primary goal of every school district transportation department is to transport students to and from school and approved extracurricular functions in a timely, safe and efficient manner.

The Texas Education Code (TEC) authorizes, but does not require, each Texas school district to provide transportation between home and school; from school to career and technology training locations; to co-curricular activities; and to extracurricular activities. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires a school district to provide transportation for students with disabilities if the district also provides transportation for the general student population or if disabled students require transportation to receive special education services.

The TEC also states that a school district may receive state funding for transporting regular and special program students between home and school and for transporting career and technology (CATE) program students to training locations. The Legislature sets transportation funding rules; TEA administers the program. TEA requires each eligible school district to provide two annual school transportation reports—the Route Service Report and the Operations Report. The Route Service Report documents reimbursable miles traveled and the number of riders by program and subprogram. The Operations Report assigns all costs and miles to either regular or special programs.

Texas limits state transportation funding for regular program transportation to students living two or more miles from the school they attend unless the students face hazardous walking conditions on the way to school. Although the term “hazardous” is up to the district to define, TEA guidelines suggest that areas with few or no sidewalks, busy roadways or railroad tracks would qualify as hazardous.

All 1,871 VISD students are eligible to ride buses to and from school. Due to the narrow streets and lack of sidewalks within the Venus city limits, the district lists all routes within the city as hazardous. The district’s

Transportation Department serves the entire district of 35.3 square miles with 41 bus routes. **Exhibit 6-17** lists the characteristics of each of the district's bus routes.

Exhibit 6-17
VISD Bus Route Characteristics
2001-02

Route Number	Type of Route*	Daily Mileage	Bus Number	Bus Capacity	Average Daily Ridership	Daily Percent of Used Bus Capacity
1	R	34.4	19	71	64	90%
2	R	35.6	13	71	71	100%
3	R	37.8	22	71	57	80%
4	R	25.4	24	71	71	100%
5	R	40.6	25	71	71	100%
6	R	40.6	20	71	58	82%
7	R	35.2	11	71	71	100%
8	R	34	10	71	71	100%
9	R	37.4	3	71	71	100%
10	R	35.2	4	71	70	99%
11	R	33.6	12	71	66	93%
12	R	34	1	71	71	100%
13	R	22.8	21	71	71	100%
14	R	24.2	8	71	66	93%
15	R	34.4	2	71	58	82%
16	R	14	14	71	65	92%
17	R	40.0	7	71	68	96%
18	R	27.0	6	71	71	100%
19	R	44.6	16	71	53	75%
20	R	31.0	9	71	32	45%
30	R	25.6	16	71	16	23%
31	R	21.0	12	71	22	31%
32	R	26.2	43	19	14	74%

33	R	20.6	42	71	24	34%
34	R	23.4	12	71	20	28%
35	R	20.1	49	71	19	28%
41	C	42.0	17	65	12	18%
42	C	42.0	49	19	6	9%
43	S	46.0	42	35	**	**
44	C	24.9	46	19	**	**
45	C	29.6	48	19	**	**
47	S	41.3	46	19	**	**
50	S	57.8	41	35	8	23%
51	S	48.0	46	19	7	37%
52	S	47.2	45	24	7	29%
53	S	39.8	50	19	7	37%
54	S	21.2	20	71	**	**
55	S	91.2	43	19	**	**
60	A	129.2	47	19	19	100%
61	A	54.3	47	19	9	47%
63	P	24.6	41	35	**	**

Source: VISD, Average Daily Ridership, 2001-02; VISD, Vehicle List, March 4, 2003.

*Type of Routes: R-Regular, S-Special Education, C-Career and Technology, A-Alternative Education and P-Parenting.

**Fewer than five students.

According to the Texas Association of School Business Officials, the industry standard for buses transporting all grade levels is 75 percent capacity. **Exhibit 6-18** shows used bus capacity of the VISD bus fleet for the various types of routes. **Exhibit 6-19** shows annual miles and trends for VISD and peer districts.

Exhibit 6-18
VISD Used Bus Capacity
2001-02

Special**	220,267	234,226	252,067	254,613	247,424	241,719	5,431
C & T*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	3,652	1,365	4,997	2,296	3,152	3,092	(100)
Rio Vista	68,400	83,787	75,932	69,956	72,450	74,105	810
Regular	51,480	63,357	58,172	52,740	53,748	55,899	454
Special	16,920	20,430	17,760	17,216	18,702	18,206	356
C & T*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Venus	193,513	194,039	215,357	224,069	234,156	212,148	8,128
Regular	134,854	138,848	157,284	165,186	146,436	148,522	2,316
Special	19,940	19,224	18,577	31,844	44,492	26,736	4,910
C & T*	37,719	35,967	39,496	27,039	43,228	36,890	902
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peer Average	130,080	139,485	142,636	142,646	142,590	139,487	2,502
Regular	67,302	71,972	72,321	73,476	74,429	71,900	1,425
Special	61,865	67,172	69,066	68,596	67,373	66,814	1,102
C & T*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private	913	341	1,249	574	788	773	(25)

Source: TEA, School Transportation Route Services Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

*C & T: Career and Technology

**Grandview ISD transports all special education students for the other four districts in the Co-op except for VISD.

The review team divided VISD's average annual mileage increase (8,128 miles per year) by the average annual mileage increase of its peer districts (2,502 miles per year) and multiplied the result by 100 to calculate that VISD's average annual mileage increase is 325 percent greater than its peer districts. This is due primarily to VISD's growth in the Special Program mileage—446 percent greater than that of its peer districts—and the growth in the Regular Program mileage—163 percent greater than its peer districts.

For regular program mileage, the state uses linear density to calculate district reimbursements for qualifying transportation expenses. TEA calculates linear density by dividing a district's annual ridership by the annual mileage. TEA established standard allotments per mile based on the linear density. 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. Standard miles and riders do not include miles or riders for alternative, bilingual, desegregation, magnet, parenting, regular pre-kindergarten or hazardous area service. TEA uses the linear density ratio to assign each school district to one of seven reimbursement groups. Each group is eligible to receive a maximum allotment per mile. TEA bases the allotment rates on the previous year's linear density.

Exhibit 6-20 shows the TEA linear density groups and the related allotment per mile.

Exhibit 6-20
TEA Linear Density Groups
For Regular Program Mileage Reimbursements

Linear Density	Allotment Per Mile
2.40 and above	\$1.43
1.65 to 2.40	\$1.25
1.15 to 1.65	\$1.11
0.90 to 1.15	\$0.97
0.65 to 0.90	\$0.88
0.40 to 0.65	\$0.79
Up to 0.40	\$0.68

Source: TEA, Handbook on School Transportation Allotments, revised June 2002.

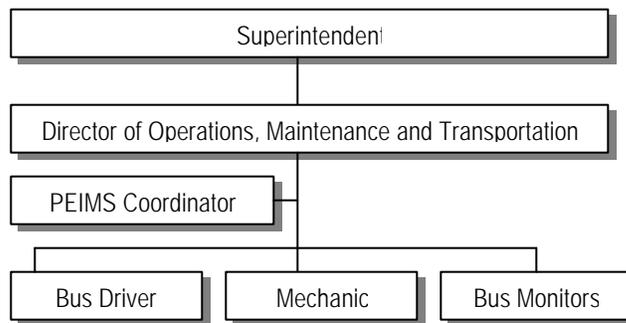
Linear density is calculated by dividing the annual ridership by the annual mileage. TEA established standard allotments per mile based on the linear

Dublin	381	388	367	352	275	(106)	(28%)
Regular	371	375	354	344	269	(102)	(27%)
Special	10	13	13	8	6	(4)	(40%)
C & T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Godley	711	821	945	534	579	(132)	(19%)
Regular	711	821	945	534	579	(132)	(19%)
Special	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
C & T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Grandview	336	357	365	447	462	126	38%
Regular	278	272	246	236	261	(17)	(6%)
Special	57	84	117	208	198	141	247%
C & T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private	1	1	2	3	3	2	100%
Rio Vista	369	347	275	273	274	(95)	(26%)
Regular	361	335	264	265	270	(91)	(25%)
Special	8	12	11	8	4	(4)	(50%)
C & T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Venus	976	1,027	1,374	1,428	1,391	415	43%
Regular	940	988	1,332	1,375	1,325	385	41%
Special	21	17	27	35	43	22	105%
C & T	15	22	15	18	23	8	53%
Private	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Peer Average	449	478	488	402	398	(52)	(12%)
Regular	430	451	452	345	345	(86)	(20%)
Special	19	27	35	56	52	33	174%
C & T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Private	0	0	1	1	1	1	

Source: TEA, *School Transportation Route Services Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02*.

Transportation in VISD is the responsibility of the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation. The mechanic is the only district position that is entirely devoted to transportation. The mechanic position maintains the district's fleet, is a full-time bus driver and helps call substitute drivers. **Exhibit 6-23** shows how VISD organizes its transportation operations.

Exhibit 6-23
VISD Transportation Operations Organization
2002-03



Source: VISD, *Transportation Department*.

Most of the district's bus drivers are members of the VISD teaching or administrative staffs. Only eight individuals have bus driving as their sole duty within the school district. The district requires coaches and organizational sponsors to be certified bus drivers and drive for field trips and extracurricular activities. The district has 48 certified bus drivers and another five employees awaiting certification. The district usually needs substitute drivers every day.

New bus drivers receive five hours of training. VISD requires drivers to take an annual refresher training that covers all updates in laws, requirements and procedures. Drivers receive in-service days for the training.

The VISD Transportation Department maintains 43 vehicles; 36 of the district's vehicles are buses with various passenger capacities. **Exhibit 6-24** describes the passenger capacity of the district's fleet. VISD also owns five pick-up trucks, a sedan it uses for administrative purposes and an enclosed bed truck.

Exhibit 6-24
VISD Vehicle Types
2002-03

Buses		Other	
Capacity	Number of Buses	Type	Number of Vehicles
19	5	Pick-up truck	5
24	1	Cargo truck	1
35	1	Sedan	1
71	29	Total	7
	36	Grand Total	43

Source: VISD, Vehicles Inventory.

Each school has its own special education bus. Of the five 19-passenger buses, two are for special education. One serves the elementary school, and the other serves the middle school. The 24-passenger bus serves the special education needs of the primary school, and the 35-passenger bus serves the special education needs of the high school.

FINDING

VISD has only one full-time mechanic to care for 43 vehicles. In addition to his mechanic duties, he also drives a bus, helps contact substitute drivers, fuels the buses and keeps a log of fuel usage. The mechanic and director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation also are on call to make emergency vehicle repairs. These additional duties reduce the amount of time the mechanic can actually spend on vehicle maintenance.

Most of the buses are still covered by warranties for major repair and replacement items. For the buses out of warranty, the district makes any needed repairs in-house, when possible. To accomplish this, the district maintains a stock of common preventive maintenance items. The district contracts outside mechanics for any required repairs that cannot be made at the bus maintenance facility. This requires the mechanic take the bus to the repair facility if another driver is not available.

Industry standards typically recommend between 20 and 30 buses per mechanic, depending on the fleet mix and the number of miles each bus is operating. VISD's vehicle to mechanic ratio exceeds the industry standard by a factor of two.

Recommendation 45:

Assign the mechanic to full-time mechanical duties.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation lists all duties and functions currently performed by the mechanic.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation reassigns all non-maintenance duties currently performed by the mechanic to other employees.	October 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not have a bus replacement plan. The district purchases buses without considering the long-term budget effects of the purchases.

Exhibit 6-25 describes the age of VISD's bus fleet and compares the district's fleet with its peer districts. VISD's bus fleet is relatively young. Most of its 36 buses (64 percent) are less than five years old. Only 8 percent of its buses are more than 10 years old. The peer districts have an average of 26 percent of buses that are more than 10 years old. VISD has a young bus fleet because it purchased several new buses to compensate for the significantly increased ridership it experienced between 1997-98 and 2001-02.

**Exhibit 6-25
Bus Fleet Age
VISD and Peer Districts**

School District	Number of Buses Less	Number of Buses Five	Number of Buses More	Total Number	Percent of Buses More
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	Than Five Years Old	to 10 Years Old	Than 10 Years Old	of Buses	Than 10 Years Old
Dublin	7	5	4	16	25%
Godley	8	6	0	14	0%
Grandview	5	3	4	12	33%
Rio Vista	3	4	6	13	46%
Venus	23	10	3	36	8%
Peer Average	6	5	4	14	26%

Source: VISD, Vehicle Roster, March 2003 and TEA, School Transportation Operation Reports.

These buses are 1999 models through 2003 models. **Exhibit 6-26** shows that VISD did not evenly space the purchase of the buses from 1999 through 2003. Bus purchases ranged from a low of none in 2003 to a high of nine in 2001. This uneven distribution of bus purchases will place an uneven cost burden on the district if all buses of the same model year need to be replaced at approximately the same time.

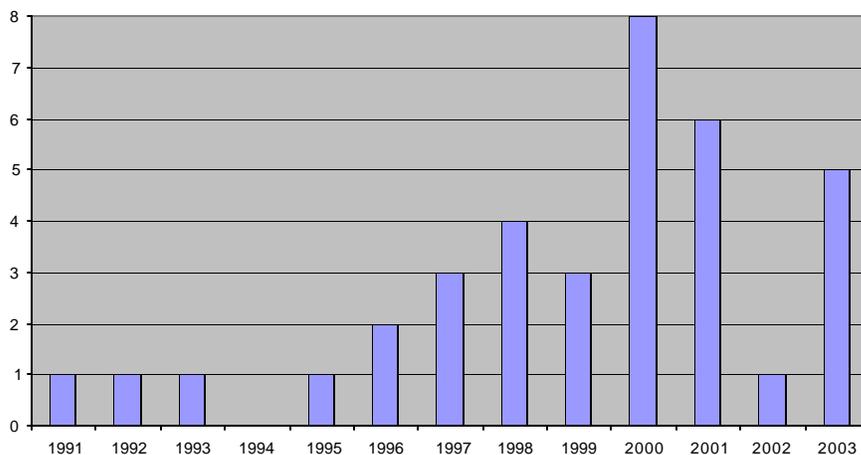
Exhibit 6-26
Purchase Cost of VISD Buses
Five Years Old or Less
1998-99 through 2002-03

Purchase Year	Number of Buses Purchased	Total Cost
1998-99	4	\$159,604
1999- 2000	7	\$338,003
2000-01	9	\$392,163
2001-02	5	\$230,812
2002-03	0	\$0

Source: VISD, Vehicle List.

Exhibit 6-27 shows the uneven distribution of the various bus model years for all 36 VISD buses. Because the bus ages are not evenly distributed, the district can expect a large replacement cost to occur as the 2000 model year buses near the end of their useful lives. None of the district's buses are more than 13 years old. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said he expects a bus to last 10 years. With proper maintenance, districts can expect their buses to last up to 15 years.

Exhibit 6-27
Model Year Distribution of VISD Bus Fleet
1990-91 through 2002-03



Source: VISD, Vehicle List.

Successful districts replace their buses according to a plan tailored to the district and its transportation needs. The ideal bus replacement plan considers such factors as safety, total vehicle mileage, expected remaining useful vehicle mileage, individual maintenance cost of each bus and the amount of time each bus is out of service for repairs or maintenance.

Recommendation 46:

Develop a 15-year bus replacement schedule for the VISD bus fleet.

The plan should use more than just age for determining a bus's useful life. VISD should also consider safety, mileage and frequency of repair in its replacement schedule. VISD has a young bus fleet; only three of its buses are more than 10 years old, and those buses are well maintained. The district should not have to replace them within the next five years.

A district can predict the number of buses it will purchase each year by dividing the number of buses the district needs to perform its transportation responsibilities by the expected useful life of its buses. For example, if a district requires 45 buses with an expected useful life of 15 years, the district can expect to purchase three buses per year. Knowing the expected bus purchase schedule allows the district to more accurately forecast expenditures for the coming year and reduces large financial variations in the district's annual budgets.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation develops a bus replacement plan that includes the measurable criteria the district will use in determining when a bus needs to be replaced.	October 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation submits the bus replacement plan to the superintendent and business manager for approval.	November 2003
3. The superintendent submits the plan to the board for approval.	December 2003
4. The district implements the plan.	January 2004 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not allocate student transportation to the proper account code for reporting to TEA as required by TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG). The FASRG requires school districts to account for pupil transportation in Function 34, Pupil Transportation, of the account code matrix. This function should be used only to account for the cost of transporting students to and from school for the regular instructional day. During 2001-02, VISD's annual mileage was 237,448. Of the total mileage, 209,237 were regular miles used to transport students to and from school. The district used 26,689 miles to transport students to extracurricular and co-curricular activities. The cost of transporting students for class field trips should be recorded in Function 11, Instruction. A review of district transportation records found some Function 11 costs labeled as Function 34 costs and vice versus. The cost of

transporting students for co-curricular athletic events should be recorded in Function 36, Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities. Failure to allocate cost misstates the expenditures of pupil transportation, instruction and co-curricular activities.

A school district may record all bus-related expenditures in Function 34 during the year. However, prior to closing the books for the fiscal year, the district should determine the cost of the different transportation functions and reclassify the transportation expenditures to the appropriate functions.

Exhibit 6-28 provides VISD's unallocated transportation costs for extracurricular and co-curricular activities from 1997-98 through 2001-02. VISD's cost-per-mile increase was due to the increased price for fuel and added routes.

Exhibit 6-28
VISD Unallocated Extracurricular and Co-curricular Transportation
Costs
1997-98 through 2001-02

School Year	Regular Education Extracurricular or Co-curricular Miles	Special Education Extracurricular or Co-curricular Miles	Regular Cost Per Mile	Special Education Cost Per Mile	Unallocated Regular Costs	Unallocated Special Education Miles
2001-02	26,689	1,112	\$2.20	\$2.28	\$58,716	\$2,535
2000-01	28,247	947	\$2.09	\$1.75	\$59,036	\$1,657
1999-2000	24,174	1,244	\$1.99	\$2.14	\$48,106	\$2,662
1998-99	21,066	1,626	\$1.86	\$1.97	\$39,183	\$3,203
1997-98	24,240	2,109	\$1.50	\$1.08	\$36,360	\$2,278
Five Year Totals	124,416	7,038	N/A	N/A	\$241,401	\$12,335

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Reports.

Recommendation 47:

Prepare a year-end audit adjustment to allocate transportation costs to the proper function.

The FASRG provides an example of how to allocate these costs at the end of the year.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager prepares a year-end audit adjustment to allocate transportation costs.	September 2003
2. The district allocates transportation costs to the proper function.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD’s transportation costs are higher than its peer districts. The district, unlike the peers, assigns bus monitors to most bus routes. VISD was experiencing a problem with students vandalizing buses. To control the situation, the board asked that the district assign bus monitors to all but in-town bus routes. While it is common practice to use bus monitors on special education routes, most districts do not use the monitors on regular routes because of the cost involved.

VISD pays bus monitors a flat rate of \$22 per day during the 175 days students are transported to and from school. Most monitors are VISD employees who perform bus monitoring as an additional duty. The annual pay per person for monitoring is \$3,850 (\$22 x 175); the district adds this amount as an annual stipend to their other pay. The district has 24 monitors; however, two monitors work only one route per day.

VISD assigns six monitors to cover special education routes; the other monitors work on regular bus routes. VISD’s annual expense for regular monitors is \$69,300 (\$3,850 x 18). Using monitors on all 63 routes increases VISD’s cost per mile. **Exhibit 6-29** compares VISD’s transportation expenditures with those of its peer districts.

Exhibit 6-29
Transportation Expenditures
VISD and Peer Districts
2001-02

School District	Total Operating Cost	Total Annual Mileage	Total Annual Riders	Cost Per Mile	Cost Per Rider
Dublin					
Regular	\$196,248	162,991	48,420	\$1.20	\$4.05
Special	\$13,177	3,384	1,080	\$3.89	\$12.20
Godley					
Regular	\$246,084	103,211	104,220	\$2.38	\$2.36
Special	\$0	0	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Grandview					
Regular	\$84,159	86,501	46,980	\$0.97	\$1.79
Special	\$289,349	247,729	35,640	\$1.17	\$8.12
Rio Vista					
Regular	\$178,727	93,641	48,600	\$1.91	\$3.68
Special	\$30,211	20,465	720	\$1.48	\$41.96
Venus					
Regular	\$521,236	237,448	216,000	\$2.20	\$2.41
Special	\$148,587	65,106	7,740	\$2.28	\$19.20
Peer Average					
Regular	\$176,305	111,586	62,055	\$1.58	\$2.84
Special	\$83,184	67,895	9,360	\$1.23	\$8.89

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operation Report and School Transportation Route Services Report, 2001-02.

Dublin ISD and Godley ISD do not use either monitors or video technology. Grandview ISD uses video technology to monitor its buses. Rio Vista ISD has camera boxes in all of its buses and rotates the cameras. However, the district does not run all cameras all of the time. If there are problems on a bus, the district will run the camera.

Brownville ISD uses video cameras to control discipline on buses. The cameras are popular with the drivers because they control student discipline, provide a mechanism for drivers to defend themselves if they are accused of inappropriate behavior and provide proof to principals and parents when a student misbehaves.

New video camera models include options such as external microphones and speed sensors, which districts can use to evaluate driver performance.

Recommendation 48:

Replace regular bus route monitors with a video surveillance system.

Since VISD’s board is concerned about vandalism and student discipline, the district should install video cameras on all buses. This will allow the district to eliminate the stipend it pays the 18 regular route bus monitors. The district should continue its use of bus monitors on its special education routes.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent meets with the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation and the business manager to draft implementation schedule.	August 2003
2. The superintendent presents the implementation schedule to the board.	September 2003
3. The board approves the schedule for implementation in the 2003-04 school year.	September 2003
4. The superintendent informs employees of the implementation plan.	September 2003
5. The business manager orders video cameras and coordinates installation with the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation.	October 2003
6. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation installs and tests the cameras, and drafts monitoring procedures.	December 2003
7. The director of Operation, Maintenance and Transportation trains bus drivers to use the surveillance cameras and the district releases regular route bus monitors.	January 2004
8. The district uses the surveillance cameras to monitor discipline, safety and security on the buses.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

A black and white video camera including on-site installation costs \$835 per unit. Installing cameras on all of VISD's 36 buses will cost \$30,060 ($\835×36). The cameras use standard VHS tape with a recording time of eight hours. VISD can purchase replacement tapes with existing funds. VISD pays bus monitors a flat rate of \$22 per day for 175 days to transport students to and from school. The annual pay per person for monitoring is \$3,850 ($\22×175). VISD's annual expense for 18 regular monitors is \$69,300 ($\$3,850 \times 18$). With implementation beginning in spring 2003-04, 85 days would be left to transport students to and from school. The 2003-04 expense for 18 regular monitors is \$33,660 (85 days \times \$22 per day \times 18 monitors).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Replace regular route bus monitors with a video surveillance system.	\$33,660	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$69,300
Purchase video cameras.	(\$30,060)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Savings	(\$3,600)	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$69,300	\$69,300

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 6

Operations

C. FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

Facility planning and managing construction and renovation projects are significant activities for most districts. Planning for facilities based on student growth, program needs and legislative requirements are essential to provide for student needs without overcrowding, substandard facilities or costly portable alternatives. Active management of construction projects can provide cost control, ensure quality of workmanship and help ensure timely completion. Districts must maintain and clean their facilities on a routine basis to ensure a safe and healthy environment for students, teachers and staff.

Effective facilities planning involves a formal planning process and a formal facilities master plan that serves as a guide for the construction and renovation of facilities. An effective master plan builds on a school district's strategic plan, incorporating projected demographic trends, facility repair and renovation needs and educational and operational space requirements. Community involvement and proper coordination with school administrators and other key personnel also are important. Finally, the plan should include timelines to complete facility construction.

In 2002, VISD developed a facilities master plan that addresses facility growth needs through 2007. The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) pupil projection system provided the demographic estimates through 2007. TASB expects VISD's student enrollment to increase by 19.3 percent between 2002-03 and 2006-07. **Exhibit 6-30** displays TASB's growth projections.

Exhibit 6-30
VISD Enrollment Projections
2002-03 to 2006-07

School Year	Actual*/Projected Peak Enrollment	Percent of Increase over Prior Year	Accumulated Percentage
2001-02	1,866*	NA	NA

2002-03	1,871*	0.4%	0.4%
2003-04	1,929	2.9%	3.4%
2004-05	2,026	5.0%	8.4%
2005-06	2,131	5.2%	13.6%
2006-07	2,252	5.7%	19.3%

Source: VISD, Long Range Facilities Plan, 2002; VISD Administration.

*Actual peak enrollment.

VISD anticipates that it will need new primary and middle schools to replace existing facilities, and an additional elementary school to accommodate the expected growth of the student population. The existing middle school will become a ninth grade center. The board is researching possible land acquisition for the future school site. With much of the land in the community being acquired by developers for residential use, the acquisition of potential school sites located in areas to serve future housing developments is a priority for VISD.

Development in VISD's community is limited by the area's limited capacity for water treatment. The Trinity River Authority (TRA) expects the Mountain Creek Regional Water Reclamation Plant, to eliminate this hurdle to development. The new treatment plant will serve the southern portion of Grand Prairie and all of Midlothian and Venus. The consequent prospect of rapid growth in enrollment poses challenges in planning to accommodate that growth. The VISD school board and staff have already developed a master facilities plan with five-year enrollment projections to prepare for the larger student population.

Exhibit 6-31 lists VISD's current facilities by purpose.

Exhibit 6-31
Inventory of VISD's Permanent Facilities
2002-03

Permanent Facilities by Purpose	Year Added	Appraised Building Value	Square Footage
Instructional			
Venus High School	1994	\$8,837,641	108,296
Venus Middle School	1985	\$2,564,241	41,556

Sixth Grade Building	1992	\$411,914	5,352
Vocational Building	1985	\$614,509	8,722
Venus Elementary School	1998	\$5,299,348	68,035
Venus Primary School	1984	\$801,485	17,208
Cafeteria Building	1980	\$481,030	8,760
Athletic			
High School Field House	2001	\$858,518	8,722
Middle School Field House	1985	\$105,194	4,131
Weight Room for Middle School and High School	1987	\$32,729	3,007
Football and Track Stadium	1986	\$488,000	NA
Baseball Field	1993	\$154,929	NA
Softball Field	2003	\$140,000	NA
Support			
Record Storage Building	1988	\$73,666	1,800
Maintenance Building	1998	\$131,101	5,000
Bus Maintenance Building	1985	\$105,375	3,000
Storage Building	1980	\$15,000	576
Housing			
Residential House	1990	\$80,000	2,200
Residential House	1998	\$75,000	1,800
Total		\$21,269,680	288,165

Source: VISD, inventory of facilities and TASB, property appraisal.

The district has a number of portable classrooms and special-purpose facilities at three campuses, with the majority located at the primary and middle schools. VISD uses portable facilities for its administrative and business offices.

Exhibit 6-32 lists VISD's portable facilities. The district's Long-Range Facilities Plan was submitted to the board on January 16, 2003. The plan proposes designating funds to its fund balance with the purpose of accumulating \$4 million to construct a permanent facility for the primary

school, replacing the existing temporary buildings that make up that campus.

Exhibit 6-32
Inventory of VISD's Portable Facilities
2002-03

Temporary Facilities by Purpose	Year Added	Appraised Building Value	Square Footage
Instructional			
High School Portable Buildings			
In-house Suspension	1986	\$30,000	768
Classroom	1986	\$32,000	768
Middle School Portable Buildings:			
Special Education Building	1991	\$42,000	1,920
Special Education Building	1992	\$42,000	960
Special Education Building	1992	\$42,000	768
In-house School Suspension	1992	\$42,000	960
Band Hall	1996	\$30,000	1,536
Special Education Classroom	1996	\$42,000	768
Classroom	1986	\$42,000	1,536
Classroom	1986	\$42,000	1,536
Classroom	1990	\$42,000	1,344
Primary School Portable Buildings			
Main Building	1991	\$190,000	16,820
Library	1983	\$57,000	1,280
Special Education Classroom	1982	\$57,000	1,440
Classroom	1982	\$57,000	1,440
Classroom	1982	\$57,000	1,440
Classroom	1983	\$57,000	1,280
Classroom	1983	\$57,000	1,280

Classroom	1983	\$57,000	1,280
Classroom	1992	\$65,000	1,536
Support			
Administration Offices	1996	\$57,000	2,274
Business Offices	1996	\$57,000	1,872
Total		\$1,196,000	44,806

Source: VISD, inventory of facilities and TASB, property appraisal.

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation handles the management of facilities in VISD. The maintenance staff includes the director's secretary and five maintenance workers who all report to the director. The Faulk Company (FC), a contract school custodial service firm, performs custodial functions.

Exhibit 6-33 compares VISD's 2001-02 budget for facilities maintenance and operation to its peer districts. VISD allocates roughly the same portion of its budget to maintenance and operations as do three of its peer districts. The state average for the facilities maintenance and operations budget in 2001-02, as a percentage of total operating budget, was 11.8 percent. VISD's budgeted expenditure per student for facilities maintenance and operations was almost the same as the statewide average cost per student and at the midrange for its peer districts.

Exhibit 6-33
Maintenance and Operations Budget
VISD, Peer Districts and State Average
2001-02

District	Maintenance and Operations Expenditures	Total Operating Expenditures*	Percent of Total	Cost Per Student
Venus	\$1,284,985	\$10,372,011	12.4%	\$694
Godley	\$1,030,543	\$8,334,401	12.4%	\$760
Grandview	\$687,493	\$6,792,235	10.1%	\$641
Rio Vista	\$819,223	\$5,422,235	15.1%	\$974
Dublin	\$926,603	\$7,348,587	12.6%	\$723
State Totals	\$2,882,045,984	\$24,477,549,474	11.8%	\$695

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2001-02.

**Excludes capital outlay.*

VISD's total budgeted expenditures for facilities maintenance and operations are at midrange of the peer group and nearly within a percentage point of the state average.

An efficient and effective maintenance operation for a school district requires well-defined procedures and processes, which include:

- adequate information to plan and manage daily maintenance operations;
- a good work order system that enables maintenance staff to respond to repair requests;
- a preventive maintenance system that ensures maintenance staff regularly services equipment to minimize down time; and
- a process to monitor maintenance service levels and to obtain periodic feedback on maintenance operations that need improvement.

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation supervises five maintenance workers and is the district's liaison with the custodial contractor. The maintenance workers respond to requests for minor maintenance; the district only uses contractors for major maintenance repairs when the district staff does not have expertise to complete the job. VISD maintains a very small inventory of maintenance parts and relies on suppliers for most repair parts. The worker responding to a work-order request determines what parts the repair will need. If the district does not have the supplies in inventory, it orders them or picks them up at a supply outlet.

The custodial staffing provided by the Faulk Company is primarily based on a formula that assumes one full-time equivalent (FTE) custodian per 20,000 square feet. FC makes adjustments to its formula to account for factors such as the number of temporary facilities, cafeteria areas to be cleaned, architectural structure and floor composition. According to the contractor, it normally schedules 14.5 FTE custodians for the VISD custodial operation. These custodians care for the district's 288,165 square feet of permanent instructional and athletic facilities and 44,806 square feet of temporary instructional facilities. Dividing the VISD instructional and athletic square footage by reported FTEs results in a ratio of one custodial FTE to 22,964 square feet. On the date the contractor discussed the custodial staffing formula for VISD, the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation provided a list of custodial staffing by

campus indicating 132 custodial hours scheduled that day, or 16.5 FTEs, which calculates to one custodial FTE to 20,180 square feet.

FINDING

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation developed an online combined maintenance request/work order system to improve and speed the flow of maintenance requests from campuses and departments to the director, and to more efficiently assign work orders to maintenance personnel. School and departmental staff generate requests in an email format that indicate the location and nature of the work being requested and the priority of the service needed. The director prints the emailed form and assigns the task to the appropriate maintenance worker. After the work assignment is completed, the maintenance worker returns the printed copy of the work order to the director for his file. The director stated that the procedure is still a work-in-progress; he envisions developing a means of tracking labor and material costs associated with each completed work order.

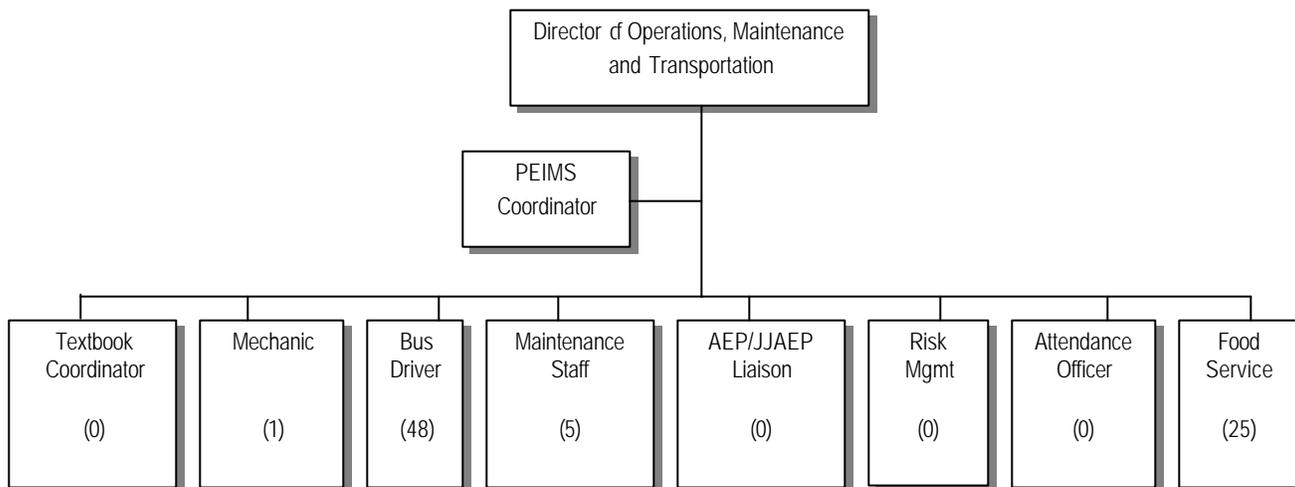
COMMENDATION

A combined maintenance request/work order online format improves and speeds the flow of information between campuses and the maintenance department and enables the director to more efficiently assign maintenance workers to respond to the requests.

FINDING

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation has more responsibilities than he can adequately manage and supervise (**Exhibit 6-34**). In addition to the director's responsibility for managing the district's facilities, he manages the district's transportation operations without the benefit of any supervisory or lead person's assistance. The director is also the textbook coordinator, Alternative Education Program/Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program liaison, risk manager and attendance officer.

Exhibit 6-34
VISD Facilities Organization
2002-03



Source: VISD, director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation.

Consequently, VISD is not adequately addressing maintenance needs of a well-managed maintenance department. The director has no operating plan to identify and assign priorities to the district's maintenance needs and to establish an implementation schedule to ensure critical maintenance issues are addressed. The district does not have operational processes to ensure that quality work is performed by staff or contracted services; that buildings are maintained at a comfortable temperature for students and staff; and that an adequate inventory of small parts regularly used by maintenance staff is available to complete jobs quickly. The director has not developed a plan to help direct and monitor ongoing Maintenance Department operations. As a result, VISD's Maintenance Department lacks the following characteristics of a proactive maintenance operation:

- administrative policy and operating procedures manual;
- written job descriptions for maintenance staff;
- a preventive maintenance program;
- a work plan for efficient deployment of maintenance staff;
- a process to monitor maintenance work performance and quality;
- a system for tracking and monitoring energy usage; and
- management oversight and evaluation of contracted custodial operations.

An effective maintenance department is characterized by:

- a skilled and dedicated staff;
- an operating plan to provide structure and direction for maintenance operations;
- maintenance work teams that are well supervised throughout the duration of projects;
- a quality control inspection process that randomly selects completed work orders for inspection; and
- a quality assurance program developed to provide school principals with a mechanism to give timely feedback on the quality of work completed at schools.

Recommendation 49:

Realign the facilities organization to provide adequate supervision of the maintenance and custodial functions.

VISD should review the responsibilities it assigns to the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to determine which duties could be more appropriately assigned to other support staff for a more efficient management structure. The district should realign the department accordingly. Assigning a lead role with a pay differential for supervisory responsibility to one of the maintenance workers would allow the director to delegate supervisory responsibility and to become proactive in planning for and managing the maintenance of facilities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent reviews responsibilities assigned to the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to determine which could be more appropriately assigned to other support staff.	September 2003
2. The superintendent makes those assignments and submits a report to the board indicating which duties have been reassigned and to whom.	October 2003
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation evaluates the capability of existing maintenance staff to determine which person could best serve in a lead maintenance role.	October 2003
4. The superintendent reviews the pay schedule for maintenance employees and determines an appropriate pay level for a lead person.	October 2003
5. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation	February

establishes objectives for the management of facilities maintenance and operations of facilities and develops a framework for meeting those objectives.	2004
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FISCAL IMPACT

Lead staff pay is estimated to be 20 percent above the average hourly rate. The average hourly rate for a Venus ISD maintenance worker is \$12.25, so the lead pay hourly differential is \$2.45 (\$12.25 per hour x 0.20). There are 2,080 work hours in a year. Assuming the lead maintenance staff role would begin in November 2003, there would be 1,728 work hours instead of 2,080 work hours in 2003-04 by removing September (21 work days x 8 hours per day = 168 hours) and October (23 work days x 8 hours per day = 184 hours) work hours from the count (2,080 work hours – 168 September work hours – 184 October work hours = 1,728). The annual additional cost for 2003-04 would be \$4,234 (1,728 work hours x \$2.45 per hour pay increase). Annual additional costs for 2004-05 through 2007-08 would be \$5,096 (2,080 work hours per year x \$2.45 per hour pay increase).

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Reorganize the facilities organization to provide adequate supervision of the maintenance and custodial functions.	(\$4,234)	(\$5,096)	(\$5,096)	(\$5,096)	(\$5,096)

FINDING

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation lacks a formal agreement with City of Venus staff to share equipment and facility resources. Through an informal agreement, VISD borrows city equipment for major plumbing repairs to avoid the expense of renting this equipment; the city parks some city vehicles on fenced VISD property to reduce the city’s parking expenses. While VISD and the city both have saved money, the lack of a formal agreement between VISD and the city could lead to questions about unauthorized use of school or city property and expose either entity to potential liability issues.

Recommendation 50:

Formalize the current informal arrangement between VISD and the City of Venus in an interlocal agreement to share equipment and facility resources.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent reviews current practices and board policies regarding the sharing of equipment and facilities, and identifies areas of concern and opportunities for partnership in the sharing of equipment and facilities.	September 2003
2. The superintendent meets with the City of Venus city manager for a discussion to develop a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the sharing of equipment and facilities by the two entities.	October 2003
3. The superintendent and City of Venus city manager submit a written MOU for legal review and incorporation into an interlocal agreement.	October 2003
4. The superintendent and the City of Venus city manager submit the interlocal agreement for approval by their respective governing bodies.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not have written operating procedures for the maintenance of facilities and repairs. In addition, the review team heard complaints from teachers and community members that the district does not address routine maintenance in a timely manner. The review team received these comments from teacher surveys and discussions with teachers and community focus groups. All these groups felt that the district responds promptly to emergency maintenance requests. **Exhibit 6-35** details the results of the review team’s survey of teachers’ attitudes about facilities maintenance.

**Exhibit 6-35
Teacher Perception of Facilities Maintenance**

Survey Question	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly
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	Agree		Opinion		Disagree
Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0%	28%	19%	48%	5%
Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0%	28%	10%	43%	19%
Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0%	52%	24%	24%	0%

Source: TSPR surveys.

Procedures that ensure timely response to maintenance requests and efficient work performance are inherent to an effective maintenance operation. The lack of such procedures in VISD is evident in the large percentage of negative teacher survey responses and in comments from citizen and teacher focus groups. Teachers and community members made the following comments during focus group meetings with the review team:

- Two years ago I went to a board meeting and requested that they fix the clock in the gym, and they removed the clock;
- Light on the flag pole was burned out for four months, finally was fixed after four months;
- We know the new bathrooms were shut down at the beginning of the year because the boys destroyed it;
- Staffing of maintenance is not adequate;
- There is daily vandalism of the bathrooms;
- Repairs are not done in a timely manner;
- High school alarm system no longer works; and
- One teacher has students do repairs.

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation indicated that the average turn-around time for a maintenance work order is one to two days unless parts have to be ordered. In these cases, the maintenance crew usually makes the repair the day after the part arrives.

The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation initiated a process for campus staff to e-mail work requests to his office in order to speed up the flow of information to the Maintenance Department. The director pointed to a backlog of only four work orders as of April 24, 2003 as evidence of a prompt response time by the department. But the director does not have effective mechanisms for monitoring the response to, and

completion of, the work orders and for receiving feedback from the campuses.

The lack of written operating procedures presents a problem in ensuring that staff is properly trained in how to submit work requests; that maintenance priorities are defined and followed; that response is timely and work is performed efficiently; and that quality control is monitored and documented.

Successful maintenance departments develop management reports that track individual staff performance, and evaluate the repair needs of each facility and the responsiveness of the department. Historical information on repairs at a given facility provides important management information on replacement decisions and evaluation of preventive maintenance.

Recommendation 51:

Develop written operating procedures for maintenance processes and performance measures that ensure timely and adequate response to routine maintenance requests.

The district should ensure that staff is trained in, and adheres to, the use of operating procedures. Performance measures should include effective mechanisms for monitoring the responses to, and completion of, work requests. VISD should develop a mechanism for receiving and evaluating feedback from the requesting campuses. The district should emphasize quality control at all stages of the maintenance work order process.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation reviews and documents current maintenance and operating practices, identifies effective and efficient practices appropriate to VISD and develops written operating procedures for maintenance processes.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation identifies points of inefficiency and any lack of responsiveness, formulates efficient and responsive maintenance procedures, establishes methods to monitor maintenance staff performance, obtains user feedback and institutes quality control mechanisms for maintenance of VISD facilities.	October 2003
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation trains maintenance staff and campus personnel on the new operating procedures for submitting maintenance requests.	November 2003

reporting maintenance concerns and giving feedback, and emphasizes quality in work performance and responsiveness to user needs.	
4. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation gathers feedback and monitors the effectiveness of the new operating procedures and the responsiveness and quality of maintenance staff's performance on a regular basis.	February 2004
5. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation evaluates the new operating procedures, maintenance staff performance and makes any necessary adjustments for the following school year.	June 2004 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not conduct a regular, formal evaluation of the custodial contractor's performance. VISD's contract with the Faulk Company (FC) states "FC will have regular meetings with a specified person from VISD for the purpose of evaluation of services provided by the custodial department." The district does not have documentation to support such evaluations. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation stated that he does not evaluate the contractor's performance and consequently, the accountability for housekeeping is lax in VISD. With no mechanism in place to monitor and evaluate the custodial contractor's performance, the district has no objective basis or documentation to substantiate that FC is performing to the district's standards or expectations.

The custodial contract between VISD and FC consists of the proposal that FC submitted in July 2001; the proposal is divided into 10 custodial specifications sections. According to the contract, FC will provide a project manager for the district and one or more day shift custodians at each school; will be responsible for daily custodial operations; and will have regular meetings with a specified VISD person for the purpose of evaluating FC's services. In the section titled "Duties and Frequencies," the proposal states, "FC will be responsible for scheduling all custodial duties. The frequencies of these duties will be determined by FC and approved by VISD. FC's recommended cleaning and frequencies are on the attached sheet." FC did not include the attachment with its proposal. The same section included the statement, "FC will implement a Quality

Control Program,” with no further description of what constitutes the program. The contract not include performance measures; how the contractor will report to the district or who the contractor will be accountable to on a daily bases; the number of custodians to be provided to the district; employee criminal background checks and proof of insurance. The terms of the agreement provide for an annual cost of \$298,000 to VISD for a three-year period from 2001-02 through 2003-04. VISD retained three current full-time employees on its payroll to work in the custodial section. FC supervises and manages the work of those employees. If any one of those employees ceases working for the district, FC will fill those positions with FC employees at an additional cost of \$17,000 per employee.

Responses from surveys of teaching, administrative and support staff and parents indicate diverse opinions among those groups regarding the cleanliness of the schools. **Exhibit 6-36** details the responses to the review team survey.

Exhibit 6-36
Perceptions of VISD School Cleanliness Among Teachers, Parents and Administrative and Support Staff

Survey Question: Schools are clean.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teacher Responses	0%	38%	10%	28%	24%
Administrative and Support Staff Responses	0%	67%	11%	11%	11%
Parent Responses	10%	70%	10%	0%	10%

Source: TSPR surveys.

The review team received the following comments during focus group meetings:

- Problem with cleaning school;
- Mouse and roach infestation is a problem;
- There are hot water and soap issues in the bathrooms; and
- My son complained that there was never any toilet paper in the bathrooms.

Successful districts will hold contractors accountable for services rendered. Some districts survey school staff twice a year to determine their level of satisfaction. Problems indicated in survey comments are

investigated and resolved. In most categories, custodial operations receive a four or five on scale of one to five, with five being the highest.

Recommendation 52:

Renegotiate the custodial contract to include standards of performance and criteria for evaluating performance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation reviews current custodial practices with school principals and identifies any concerns with the contractor’s current standards for staffing and housekeeping in VISD.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation reviews the custodial contract with the Faulk Company to determine if any concerns identified in the review can be addressed within the terms of the contract.	September 2003
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation establishes standards of performance for the custodial contractor and renegotiates the contract to include those standards with performance criteria and evaluation timelines.	November 2003
4. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation gathers feedback and monitors the performance of custodial contractor.	May 2004
5. The superintendent and the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation evaluate custodial performance and make any necessary adjustments in the contract or, if necessary, the contract for following school year.	June 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not regularly monitor energy usage. The district lacks a mechanism for conserving energy or managing energy consumption. The district does not report utility costs by campus or facility; instead the

district lumps utility expenses in one account with no specific detail accounting for electrical, gas or water usage.

VISD reported a total utility expense for 2001-02 of \$366,322. That total included costs for telecommunications and waste collection. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation reported that VISD receives electrical service from three different providers; the district does not receive bills from one of its electrical providers in a reliable fashion. VISD receives electrical power from TXU Energy Services, United Cooperative and Reliant Energy. Reliant representatives did not know which of the district's meters to read. This slowed down their billing of VISD. Reliant corrected this problem and is now sending bills on time.

The average soft drink machine uses two fluorescent bulbs, which total 80 watts, plus the energy required to operate the ballast, a component required to alter the electricity when using fluorescent bulbs. Using a very conservative estimate of only 2 kWh per day usage, a soda machine uses an annual total of 730 kWh just for lights. At an average rate of \$0.10 per kWh this amounts to \$73 per year for just one machine.

The goal of school energy management is to keep operating costs down by reducing energy waste while providing a safe, comfortable environment for learning. The State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) can help VISD to analyze energy usage and to identify potential energy savings with recommendations for realizing those savings. VISD has not contacted SECO for this assistance.

Other school districts have achieved energy savings by developing successful energy management and conservation programs. Wimberley ISD entered into an energy management program with a manufacturer of energy management control equipment. The goal of the program is to conserve energy usage at several schools using equipment upgrades and lighting retrofits. The district was able to centrally control classroom temperatures from the district's maintenance facility by using its new energy control system.

Comal ISD implemented an energy conservation program. The district sets thermostats between 74°F and 76°F degrees for cooling and between 68°-72°F degrees for heating. The district also instructs staff to turn lights out when rooms are not in use, stop using space heaters and unplug all unnecessary equipment before leaving school. The district installed an automatic energy management control system at nine of its 16 schools. Comal employs a part-time energy manager to coordinate the district's conservation program and energy management control system. Comal ISD's estimated energy savings from its conservation program are \$600,000 annually.

Recommendation 53:

Monitor energy usage and implement an energy management program in VISD.

The district should monitor energy costs by campus or facility. Electricity, natural gas, water and waste collection expenses should be recorded under separate expenditure object codes for management purposes and not lumped as one account code. Where more than one utility meter is located on a campus, the billings for those meters should be identified under the organizational code to produce a total utility expenditure for the campus. Monitoring the cost of energy usage by campus and facility would allow VISD to determine energy costs per square foot and to review the cost-efficiencies of energy usage.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The business manager refines accounting procedures to recognize utility costs by campus and by facility at the appropriate expenditure object code.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation disconnects the lighting on all vending machines.	September 2003
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation identifies utility billing expenses by organization code and furnishes that information to the business office.	October 2003
4. The superintendent contacts SECO to request an energy audit and assistance with developing a comprehensive energy conservation plan for VISD.	November 2003
5. SECO initiates energy audit.	January 2004
6. SECO presents the results of the energy audit to the superintendent and the board.	March 2004
7. SECO assists the staff in developing an energy management plan for VISD.	April 2004
8. The superintendent presents the energy management plan to the board for approval.	May 2004
9. VISD implements the energy management plan.	July 2004
10. The energy manager submits quarterly energy conservation reports to the board.	October 2004 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

Energy savings from campus conservation measures could result in significant savings to the district, but are conservatively limited here to the savings that could be achieved through disconnecting lights on the 14 vending machines at a savings of \$1,022 (\$73 per machine x 14 vending machines) a year over the next five years.

Recommendation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Monitor energy usage and implement an energy management program in VISD.	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$1,022	\$1,022

Venus Independent School District

Chapter 6 Operations

D. SAFETY AND SECURITY

School districts must provide a safe and secure environment for their staff and students. Effective school districts develop policies, procedures and programs to address crisis contingencies, facility safety and violence prevention. Failure to adequately address any one of these areas weakens the safety and security of the school district.

School safety and security have become important issues at the national, state and local levels. Media coverage has heightened the school safety concerns of parents, teachers, school administrators and the public. Staff and students should test the effectiveness of a district's emergency plan until responses become automatic and consistent.

Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe School—published by the U.S. Department of Education in 1998—notes that crisis intervention plans should include the following:

- Training for teachers and staff in a variety of skills ranging from dealing with escalating classroom situations to responding to a serious crisis;
- Reference to district or state procedures. Many states now have recommended crisis intervention manuals available to their local education agencies and schools;
- Involvement of community agencies, including police, fire and rescue, as well as hospital, health, social welfare and mental health services. The faith community, juvenile justice and related family support systems also have been successfully included in such team plans; and
- Provision for the core team to meet regularly to identify potentially troubled or violent students and situations that may be dangerous.

Schools in Texas practice fire drill procedures routinely and should practice responding to the presence of firearms and other weapons, severe threats of violence, hostage situations and other acts of terror. Any crisis commonly precipitates confusion that can disrupt even the most carefully written plan. Practice leads to automatic, orderly and rational responses.

FINDING

In October 2001, VISD and the City of Venus, including the fire and police departments, created a comprehensive Emergency Procedures Manual. The two entities identified those factors they believe will be common to any given event and developed a manual that is the accepted guide for district employees when dealing with crisis situations. This manual assigns responsibility—at both school and district levels—and provides a step-by-step response to different events. All district faculty have copies of this manual. Venus fire and police managers also have copies of the manual.

One of the first responses of those involved in a disaster is to report the event to public safety officials. This is commonly accomplished through the 911 phone systems. VISD assigned safety and security of the district to the director for Operations, Maintenance and Transportations. District administrators and the maintenance crews have two-way radios. These two-way radios are on the same frequency as the Venus police department. District employees immediately alert police officers and the fire department to any problems within the district; the city's police and fire department train their crews to respond appropriately to events. The crisis management plan provides a methodology for district staff to deal with natural or operational situations that can occur in the district. The plan includes the following areas:

- threatening statements and actions on campus;
- bomb threats;
- bomb threats checklist;
- assault of a student on campus;
- protest activity;
- contagious disease;
- stranger or irate person on campus;
- cult activity;
- violent behavior of a student;
- abduction;
- gang violence;
- off-campus death;
- declaration of war or national incident;
- school bus accident with injuries;
- accidents with severe injuries;
- death at school;
- environmental hazard;
- explosion;
- fire;
- plane crash into building;

- drive-by shooting;
- hostages;
- sniper gunfire;
- suicide attempt at school;
- suicide threat;
- crisis management checklist for counselors; and
- crisis management checklist for principals.

The district designated evacuation sites for each school and includes a list of emergency telephone numbers in the emergency procedures manual. The emergency procedures manual also contains a diagram of each school with room numbers.

In addition to the school Emergency Procedures Manual, the district has prepared and distributed to all district employees a Critical Incident Plan Flip Chart that complements the manual. The flip chart provides quick access to key phone numbers and step-by-step instructions for critical incidents. VISD also provides in-service staff development on the critical incident plan to employees at the beginning of the year.

COMMENDATION

VISD has developed a comprehensive emergency procedures manual with the cooperation of the City of Venus that includes an accompanying flip chart and staff development activities.

FINDING

VISD has established a committee to review and update its Emergency Procedures Manual and Critical Incident Plan annually. This committee is made up of the following representatives:

- Venus Police chief;
- Venus Fire chief;
- prison warden;
- school administration;
- director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation;
- coordinator of Curriculum and Special Programs;
- Johnson County sheriff;
- school resource officer;
- counselors;
- district nurse;
- parents;

- community representatives; and
- business and city representatives.

District staff recognized the need to develop a community-wide advisory committee that included members from the law enforcement department, fire department, community and district to provide input and exchange ideas on how to improve the emergency procedures after a critical incident the previous year. The committee meets annually. Good safety practices in today's environment call for each school district and its campuses to develop crisis management plans with the help of a team of specialists who represent a broad spectrum of the school community.

COMMENDATION

VISD established a community-wide safety committee that includes members from the law enforcement department, fire department, community members and district staff to provide input, skills and resources to improve the VISD Emergency Procedures Manual and Critical Incident Plan on a continual basis.

FINDING

VISD does not have a written agreement with the Venus Police Department that identifies services the department will provide to the district. The district does not have its own police force and depends on area law enforcement to provide security services and protection for its schools. The district's emergency communication two-way radio system is on the same frequency as the Venus Police Department. The district relies on the officers to patrol and walk the campuses at night for security and loss prevention. District staff stated the high school buildings were secure without the alarm system set at night because of the patrols. The district also contracts with off-duty officers for extracurricular activities as needed. Although the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said the relationship with the Venus Police Department is a good one, there is no agreement in writing that specifically describes what services the Police Department is expected or is willing to provide to the district.

The district does have an agreement with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office for one student resource officer (SRO) through a grant. The SRO assists with campus discipline at the high school and middle school and will respond to calls at the primary and elementary schools. This

agreement outlines the specific duties and responsibilities of the SRO and the responsibilities of the district.

A close relationship between the school district and law enforcement benefits both students and the community. Community crime affects schools, and crime affects the community. A written agreement identifies areas of concern and how each party will address these concerns, helping all parties accomplish the common goal of crime prevention.

Recommendation 54:

Formalize the relationship with area law enforcement by developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Venus Police Department specifying the district’s understanding of services provided by the police department.

Expectations for security service should be clearly spelled out and signed by all parties to the agreement. Sharing information is key to ensuring that school safety is enforced. The district can identify areas that are not addressed in the agreement and determine alternative security or loss control measures.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent meets with the Venus Police chief, the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation, the Johnson County Sheriff Department's student resource officer and school administration to identify current security services provided by police department.	September 2003
2. The superintendent meets with legal counsel to draft the MOU with the Venus Police Department.	September 2003
3. The superintendent, district legal counsel and Venus police chief meet to finalize the MOU.	October 2003
4. The superintendent submits the MOU to the board for approval.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not have written policy and standard operating procedures to ensure that the district can accurately account for all keys to the district buildings. There are no key procedures that cover labeling, location, distribution, collection, master key dissemination and a re-keying schedule. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation is responsible for the initial distribution of keys. There are no written records of the keys that the director has distributed in the past. Key distribution procedures vary by school. At the high school, the school secretary, principal, assistant principal and athletic director each have a master key. The secretary distributes keys to school personnel. The principals or assistant principals distribute keys at the other schools. The district requires employees to turn in keys upon resignation or termination. There are no regulations regarding employees reproducing district keys. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said employees know they are not to make copies of district keys.

Controlling building access is a basic protective measure. If keys are lost or not returned, the building has an increased risk of loss or vandalism. Many school districts physically label keys and employees sign a security document when keys are issued. These districts require employees to return keys when they are terminated. Additionally, many districts randomly conduct physical key counts and ensure employees still have the keys that correspond to the signed documents in their personnel files. When a key is found to be missing, the district immediately takes action to re-key all corresponding locks in affected areas. This procedure ensures that the safety of students and staff is not compromised if a lost key finds its way into the hands of an unauthorized person.

San Diego Unified School District has prepared a detailed administrative policy that deals specifically with issuing keys. The district assigns accountability for all keys to the school or central administration. The policy outlines who in the district is entitled to have keys, when they are assigned and what procedure should be followed if an employee is terminated or leaves the district. In addition, the district presents detailed instructions concerning master keys, non-master keys, duplicate keys and lost or stolen keys. Finally, the policy includes procedures for re-keying.

Recommendation 55:

Establish a district policy and set of procedures designed to track all district keys.

The district should take an inventory of who has been issued master keys and room keys for all district facilities. It should then establish a policy to ensure that distribution of keys is strictly monitored. Each key should be manually coded and assigned to a specific staff member. Each staff member should be required to sign for their keys and be held accountable if they lose their key. The keys should be stamped “Not to be duplicated.” The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation can track the issuance of keys on an Excel spreadsheet. The district should require principals to maintain and submit records of who has keys to the VISD central office monthly.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to draft a policy and standard operating procedures to track keys.	September 2003
2. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation and principals to inventory all master keys and room keys for district facilities and compile the inventories into one central database.	September 2003
3. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation meets with all school principals and department heads to discuss the current status of all keys; the needs of teachers, coaches and all who require access to each facility; and identify any potential security risks due to lost keys.	October 2003
4. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation develops a policy and standard operating procedures for issuing district keys.	October 2003
5. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation submits the policy and standard operating procedures to the superintendent for approval.	November 2003
6. The superintendent approves and presents the policy and standard operating procedures to the board for consideration.	November 2003
7. The board adopts the new policy and standard operating procedures.	November 2003
8. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation distributes the approved policy and standard operating procedures to all schools and departments.	December 2003

9. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation implements the standard operating procedures and tracks the issuance of keys on an Excel spreadsheet.	December 2003 and Ongoing
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not set the security alarm systems at the schools. VISD invested in a security alarm system for Venus High School, Venus Middle School and Venus Elementary School. During the teacher focus group, teachers said that the high school no longer set the alarm system. The high school principal confirmed that the alarm system was no longer used because of traffic in and out of the building at all hours. The principal cited numerous false alarms as the reason for not setting the alarm system. The director for Operations, Maintenance and Transportation said he was not aware that the alarm system had not been used for the past months at the high school. He did know that the elementary school and middle school were not using their alarm systems. He stated that the Police Department patrols the campuses three times a night for security. When asked how often the alarm codes are reissued, the director stated there has not been a need to reissue the codes and could not recall the last time there was a break-in or theft occurrence at the schools. The review team audited the district’s invoices from the alarm company and found that the district continued to pay for the alarm services at the elementary and high school campuses. The middle school’s security system was in-house. The security alarm service for Venus High School is \$141.17 per month. The elementary school’s quarterly statement for security monitoring is \$75.

In safety conscious schools, districts look for trouble before it occurs. Security alarm systems provide district staff and police notice of intrusion to campus buildings, ensuring a degree of secure and safe environments for students and staff. In addition, the alarm system provides a degree of security for the district’s property and personal contents

Recommendation 56:

Require all campuses to set their alarm systems when buildings are not in use.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1. The superintendent directs the director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation to draft a policy and procedure to set all alarm systems when buildings are not in use.	September 2003
2. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation submits the policy and procedure to the superintendent for approval	October 2003
3. The superintendent approves and presents the policy to the board for consideration.	October 2003
4. The board adopts the new policy.	November 2003
5. The director of Operations, Maintenance and Transportation implements and distributes the approved policy and procedure to all schools and departments.	November 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Venus Independent School District

Appendix A

PUBLIC FORUM AND FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

Public Forum and Focus Group Comments

Part One

Part Two

The narrative comments below are the actual comments from the public forum held on March 3, 2003 and focus groups held on March 4, March 6, and March 10, 2003 in Venus Independent School District. The comments do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the Comptroller or the review team.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

- Members don't attend site-based decision meetings (many listed). Curriculum meetings - no teachers attending (many listed).
- New superintendent working hard to get district straightened out.
- New business manager.
- Board is doing better with the new superintendent. Developed a long-range facility plan. But there is a lot to be addressed.
- New superintendent is 100% improvement. School board motto "no excuses." Gives 110%. Very pro for the new superintendent.
- School board meetings use to last until 1:00 a.m. They are getting better now and ending at 10:30 p.m.
- Superintendent has long-range goal for building program. It is good to purchase accessible land and land restrictive property.
- Look at the primary school building. We decided to spend \$1 million on an athletic program before we replaced a primary school building.
- Back when TSPR was free, a board member asked for it but the superintendent did not want it. The board needs to be more proactive when major concerns surface. Checks and balances are eating our budgets. It's like planning a trip and putting all our energy into planning so when we finally take our trip it last one hour and we never even leave our driveway.
- Our superintendent has done more with this board. We've seen a lot of positives with Dr. Pfiefer. We have seen a huge difference.
- The superintendent is very supportive.
- The superintendent's door is always open. If she doesn't know the answer, she will find the answer.
- She will break her neck to find the answer. We feel like we see the light at the end of the tunnel.

- She increased state funding by selling WADA and she applied and was awarded the ninth grade initiative grant.
- Not everything is done in closed session.
- It is more open and receptive.
- We get copies of what the board gets.
- We are impressed that Venus ISD teacher aides get training here for the No Child Left Behind Act.
- Checks and balances are robbing us of our greatest natural resource, our children. How big do we want the head to be away from the body (the people)?
- Timeliness of communication. Received a letter that was dated a week before and it was requesting information due the next day.
- We now see the light at the end of the tunnel with Dr. Pfiefer. She now answers our questions where before we didn't get answers. As for as the school board, we can improve.
- We have a school board member that misses lots of meetings, is there any recourse for voters? We have a board member that from August until this past month has been ill and has not been to board meetings.
- What about board members doing business with the district? Is that legal?
- We feel like there has been no bidding process. I have been to a lot of school board meetings and I don't recall any bid or contract being awarded at the school board meeting for work being done only.
- If they do say something about a bid, they only bring one to the board. It is not competitive. They only advertise it in the local paper and not that many businesses will read the local paper.
- Campus administrators - who are they responsible for? Cafeteria people? They are trying to reorganize the district to some degree. We have a cleaning service, Faulk, yet we have two employees who are custodians. Why are we dividing it up? It doesn't seem to be cost effective?
- Everything is run on the buddy system. Children of board members are not held accountable as other students. For instance, if a school board member's child acts badly on the bus we cannot write a discipline request or anything on them.
- School employees are not allowed to voice any objections to policies at school board. If you do it could cost your job.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Open house - nothing mailed out, not posted. Community not informed of what is going on in the district. District asks for community involvement, but hard to be involved if you don't know what is going on.

- Website not updated.
- Hardly any community involvement. Information on the public forum was not posted on the marquee, although a letter was sent out on the forum. The marquee did not have notice of the open house tonight at the school. No letter was sent home notifying parents of the open house.
- Parents work in Dallas and Ft. Worth, so unless you meet on Saturdays, it is difficult to get parents involved. Administrators and teachers do not want to meet on Saturdays.
- My wife volunteers a lot of time in the school. She is certified to do screenings for eyes, ears and scoliosis, and never gets compensated by the district or offered a lunch, drink, etc. or shown any type of appreciation for her volunteer work or time in the district.
- We don't have the parent participation we really want because the parents work in Dallas or Ft. Worth and cannot attend meetings at night. We would have better participation if meetings were held on Saturdays.
- Suggestion - how about communication. A lot of parents do not receive advance communication about what is going on. There is a lack of money for mailing. In elementary school the kids are anxious to bring the flyers home but the middle school and high school students don't want to bring things home. Maybe if we got things in the mail or email we would know what was going on.
- What about the Venus Community Calendar Sign on the corner - it is usually blank. Last night the high school marquee did not have the open house on it. No one came to the open house. But if it were sports related, it would have been on the marquee. Everyone would have known about it.
- On the communication note, the three week notices have a signature line, but are there any consequences for not turning it back into the school. Does the school follow-up for not turning it in. Parents are working and making a living and may never see the notice. To my knowledge, report cards aren't even followed-up on. Sometimes the teacher will follow-up - the teacher will give a 100 on an extra grade or an extra credit if the student returns the report card.
- I have heard people make comments that the parents in this community don't care. Last year there was an event where every kid would receive an award if the parent were there and they showed up - parents do care.
- If a parent has a child participating in a program, they show up.
- I don't really think you can expect the teachers, with their overload, to have the time to follow-up on the kids' report cards.
- The district has a website. The website is not kept up. The open house was not on the website.

- I think the community supports school pretty good. I do PTO work and we have pretty good support.
- We have a community library that is supported by the community. We don't have as much support in the summer as we would like to see.
- No community involvement in schools. They go to football games.
- I have seen them at middle school band concerts.
- I had three parents at the open house the other night.
- I had four parents at the open house and I gave extra credit.
- The school is a baby-sitting center.
- I had a four year old on my bus route and he was almost communicating at the end of the year.
- Most do not have books at home
- The community was not encouraged under the old superintendent. I was never asked to contribute to the district for three years under the old superintendent. I know a lot of businesses would be glad to help if asked.
- When they do the annuals they do not contact the businesses for advertising. If you look, they are people from other places like Midlothian. I don't know what they think, if they think people don't want to help. You never get responses from any one. It's like a lot of people want to do as little as they can.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- I have two students in high school. They need to offer more in high school. A lot of kids are put in elective classes they are not interested in, but that's where they are placed. They have blocked scheduling so they must make choices between advanced classes and electives. Pre AP geometry and Pre AP biology are offered at the same time and there are scheduling conflicts.
- I have two children in G/T. The high school does not do anything about G/T. They say they are addressed in AP classes but they do not do anything about G/T. They are supposed to do a portfolio but they have never been shown how to do that.
- Lots of teachers are non-certified in the district.
- An aide runs the district-learning lab and there is an aide that does credit recovery.
- The district does require more credits than the State does to graduate.
- This year, the district did not offer Spanish III and no notice was sent to inform the parents.
- I am very concerned about the history that is being taught in the district. Three kids had the same history teacher and one called it video 101 because they watched VCR movies ("Saving Private Ryan," "Tora, Tora, Tora"). I am concerned because of the new

TAKS test and I do not see that the district is doing anything to prepare the kids.

- Our migrant program has lots of kids that are being qualified that don't qualify. They have been here all their lives. They started school with my kid, do not go, and are still here.
- I wanted this visit to happen when the last superintendent was here.
- Things have gotten better since this superintendent came, but it is an uphill battle. She has worked real hard. She came into a big mess. We were supposed to have a big fund balance, but it wasn't there.
- My daughter has gone to her English teacher because she will be gone to FFA or tennis, but the teacher never knows what they will do the next day. I am concerned. Are they doing lesson plans? If they are, why don't they know what they will do from one day to the next?
- Wish they had more foreign language than Spanish and with they spent as much on Fine Arts as they did on sports.
- Have they or are they implementing any type of program to address the TAKS test for Venus ISD students?
- Look into the migrant program. Review the records to see if we have the proper documentation to place a child in the migrant program.
- Out of date material. Wrong information. One-sided information. Misleading information. We want to get the children up to date with materials and equipment, PC's, Internet, software, purchasing, who is really profiting? The school board's friend sells PC's software, etc.
- One of the biggest problems is teacher turnover - we train teachers and they leave. It is a result of low salaries. The newness of the teacher is an issue - they are fresh out of school. They don't have the maturity they need - it effects class planning.
- Staff development - We have the same alignment in terminologies in middle school and high school, which helps.
- As a parent, I'm concerned about course offerings. We would like to gain a distinguished diploma. We need three classes of foreign language. We are having a problem offering that third course in Spanish III.
- I think we all want our schools to get our campuses to go from acceptable to recognized status. I think if you can get more parents involved you can make more improvements. I've lived here for 21 years and haven't been involved until the last few years. I am a grandparent. Too many parents push their kids on to the system, but they need to get involved in the system instead of just giving them the money for whatever they need in school.
- I've seen kids in classes with five kids and other classes with kids of twenty. It doesn't seem that the classes are leveled.

- At high school, education is not first, sports is.
- I don't treat athletes any differently.
- We get budgets, but most of the money goes to athletics.
- There are so many special education students in our district; they are dragging the rest of the kids down. You cannot set the bar high. The kids should be able to achieve as much as they can. The needs of the college bound kids are not met. I have kids that are gifted in math and I have kids that can't add in the same class.
- I have a senior who can't read.
- We don't get to give any input on material. We had presentation on the new pre-k adoption but we didn't get to choose the book. It was chosen before we met with the representative.
- Someone is spending money on the career technology programs and the kids are not finishing these classes - they are ARD into these programs and they don't finish. They get these opportunities and it is wasted. We don't have distributed education where you could work half a day and get credit like we use to. Instead they are working 30 to 35 hours a week and going to school.
- Do you have curriculum guides? We have a curriculum guide for the mathematics department.
- Our libraries are well run. The librarian does a wonderful job and tries really hard to provide what we need in our libraries.
- Drop out prevention is horrible. We lose so many kids right now. No one is encouraging these kids to come back. They are telling us that there will not be a summer school this year because there is no money.
- They told us there would be emphasis on summer reading in the elementary school.
- We were told there wasn't money for summer school.
- The community library runs an extended day summer reading program.
- At the high school the teachers really rely on each other. It is wonderful. I help with band uniforms and choir uniforms; I'm home economics.
- I have a daughter that is a senior and she was filling out a college application and she needed her GPA and it took her several days because it had to be figured out by hand. It is not in the computer. It just seems like things are not very organized in that respect. We never have any meetings on financial aide or colleges. My daughter was told it was a waste of her time to take her SATs and ACTs. Just take what you need and get out.
- No encouragement except for the teachers' kids and the principal's son, or the volleyball kids.
- The girls' volleyball team was stealing from the other school and nobody thought it was a big deal.

- The G/T program is not being done to the standards in the high school. The district is getting money but they are not doing anything.
- The field house cost about \$90,000 of district funds.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

- Most of the teachers are good teachers.
- Nurses are very important and are paid so. Teachers are more important because they have the power to prevent harm, sickness, ignorance, pregnancies, suicide, and drugs. Give the teachers more power to make change in our children's lives. Big business and big government will rob us of our assets.
- They hire too many uncertified teachers.
- My grandson was taught by an aide his entire kindergarten year. I did not know until the end of the year. The law says they have to report that to the parents.
- I know when an uncertified teacher taught my daughter I received a letter and was told that if I had a problem that I could come to the school and discuss it. I believe hiring qualified teachers is a must, but you must have the money to back it up.
- There is no reward for superior teachers.
- There is little done for inferior teachers.
- I don't think that is the case on the middle school. I don't think we have many inferior middle school teachers.
- I think we have good math teachers in high school.
- Overall I think we have good high school teachers.
- We have large turnover. We lost 8 teachers. Usually they go to somewhere better for \$10,000 increase in pay.
- Are district salaries competitive? No, district salaries are not competitive.
- We don't have enough substitutes.
- Substitutes don't get paid anything here.
- It's not competitive either.
- You can't get a degreed teacher. Maybe a high school graduate.
- At the high school, because of the money situation, usually teachers are covering for absent teachers during their conference periods. It makes for a very long day.
- They still hire subs.
- ESL only has two teachers that share an aide. Usually I don't count on having an aide.
- Health insurance is terribly high priced. It is the state plan and they shouldn't have ever accepted that plan.
- It's a government issue.
- Employees with mediocre performance are not counseled.

- Aides do not have contracts so if a problem occurs in a classroom with an aide and a teachers, the teacher is kept on till end of contract and the aide is immediately released (fired).
- We have begged them for two years to quit hiring uncertified teachers. An aide taught my son and I did not know about it.
- I know they went and spent a lot of money traveling on recruiting but I didn't see a lot come out of it.
- I know our administrator's salaries are in the top ten and our teacher's salaries are in the bottom ten. I'm not sure what we pay our maintenance people. I know they were hauling garbage to the central office. It seems like you see the maintenance people driving around town a lot. They did build a new maintenance building.

FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

- The campuses have broken electrical outlets and broken thermostats around the schools. They have uncovered electrical outlets like that one on the wall over there in the cafeteria. Repairs don't happen around here for a long time. The light switch (high school cafeteria) didn't have a cover for a long time. The vending machine over there was broken into today and the kids took all the candy out of it during a passing period. It is a result of no supervision during passing period.
- Hot running water is not available in middle school or high school or soap to wash hands. No soap in restrooms. Water takes a while. Most of the time paper towels need to be replaced.
- Problems with water and sewers flooding the rear of the high school.
- It doesn't seem that the (high school) building is kept clean.
- I don't think we plan enough. The softball field is a prime example. When the lights came they rebuilt it and moved it. They put up a fence and within six months they were moving it.
- Up until the new superintendent came there was no facility plan. Now we have one in the working.
- For the small staff in the maintenance department, they do a great job.
- The girls' locks in the bathroom in the cafeteria have been broken since the beginning of the year, and probably won't be fixed until the door falls off.
- Are there standards for toilet paper and soap?
- The students throw the toilet paper in the toilet and the soap on the ceiling and they rip the paper towel dispensers off the wall. The toilet paper and soap cannot be kept in the rest rooms because it is abused.
- Maybe we need stronger discipline in the schools.
- We also need hot water.

- Open up our school grounds for summer use - baseball fields, for summer use - get kids off the streets during the summer.
- Mine are terrible. (Condition of classrooms)
- In my classroom, I have tables and chairs for 30 students and I have a huge problem with mouse droppings on the counters and roaches. And they do try to keep up with it. (High school)
- I clean my own boards.
- I have my students do my repairs.
- The arm that shut the door fell off and grazed a kid the second day of school. This is the fifth six weeks and it still has not been fixed.
- My room produces mold. That is a problem. On the mold, was it remediated? Had the cleaning ladies remove the tiles and I cleaned the rest.
- I'm wondering about the air conditioning unit. I've had a cough that won't go away.
- Have you checked the filter?
- I've wondered about the air condition unit in the library. It blows out black specks. Maintenance says it is not their job; it is the cleaning crew's responsibility to clean the vents.
- No soap in the bathrooms.
- The maintenance truck was kept running for thirty minutes while they were talking instead of turning off the truck. This is a problem with the cost of gas.
- As primary school gets improved, it will help our district.
- We have a security system that we no longer use (high school). Our building is open and we have a kids running through the building. A candy machine was broken into over the weekend. When we used the security system, it would tell me which door was ajar before we left. It was my responsibility to check the door.
- I think they have done a good job with our primary campus with security. The primary campus is the most secure campus. The elementary campus is secure. They could control access at the high school, but they don't. There is no way at the middle school.
- Two years ago I went to a board meeting and requested that they fix the clock in the gym and they removed the clock.
- The light on the flagpole was burned out for four months. They finally fixed it after four months.
- The facilities are really beginning to be run down.
- As parents, we are not being invited to the schools. I had been asked today if I had been in the new part of the high school. This gentleman told me that the new part looks worse than the old school. It has been abused by the kids.
- The carpeting has been pieced - put down in strips.
- We know that the new bathrooms were shut down at the beginning of the year because the boys destroyed it. The principal just shut it down.

- My son complained that there was never any toilet paper in the bathroom.
- My son in the middle school says there are no doors in the bathroom. No privacy. He has a medical problem. I have complained

Venus Independent School District

Appendix A

PUBLIC FORUM AND FOCUS GROUP

COMMENTS

Part Two

ASSETS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- A child comes home with a fundraiser and the cheapest product is \$10 and the district only gets \$2 and the child gets a pizza party if they sell the most. It would be better just to give the child \$20 than go through all the fundraising.
- Invest in teachers. Teachers can create our future. Teachers need to be treated as though they do have Texas future in their hands. Teachers need time off, benefits, and 401K. If they do not perform to standard, let them go. Make being a teacher an opportunity, not a job. Quality teachers need to be treated well. Checks and balances will eat up our budget before the benefits will be seen in the state. Administrative cost eats our taxes up before teachers.
- Old superintendent kept us in the dark about wage adjustment. There were teacher bonuses in cash in December. They had this peace of paper. The teacher would sign it when they received it. We had requested that they bring a new auditor two years ago. We don't ever want that to happen again. We don't know who else was paid in cash.
- This is what else I am saying. That \$60,000 that was going to a well and we don't know where it went.
- Another issue is getting the large amount of back taxes collected. We would like to see the district work harder on the tax collection.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- In 2001-02, the football program spent almost double their budget. Who is doing the checks and balances on the budgets? Everyone can sign a check at central office.
- We get to ask for what we want.
- We get to put in a wish list at the end of the year.
- Who gets raises and how much? Look at the secretaries' salaries at the administrative building compared to the secretaries' salaries at each school. Teachers get no raises except for state raises when central office and administrators receive substantial raises. District needs to pull in the same direction for all employees. This is not conducive for that and bad for morale.

- Last superintendent rented a home for four years. Was rent paid? Would like your agency to look at if we should retain the property rented by the A.D. owned by the school district? Is this the best utilization of our funds? I would like the rent checked into. Is it fair value for Venus property - three bedroom and two bathroom homes? I am not sure you can find another deal like that anywhere.
- Send more money.
- I have a child that is active in athletics and one that is not; I look at the money that the district is spending on athletics. You don't have ratio for staffing coaches. You will have twenty kids with three coaches, 45 kids with nine coaches, etc. There is inequity.
- Children in middle school were told they would be offered a course. Then they were told they couldn't be offered a course. And then the course was offered in high school. The high school students ended up dropping out of the classes because they had other summer commitments and couldn't attend. So it didn't seem like the taxpayers were getting the most for their money.
- At the board meetings in the past, the bills presented were a couple of months of old. We did not have what Dr. Pfeifer thought we had when she came in to the district. Yet in the athletic program, we had new uniforms. This year we got new tennis uniforms and this is the year we were suppose to cut back. Last year there was \$60,000 earmarked to dig a well, and then they decided not to do the well. The \$60,000 is gone and we didn't dig a well. We don't know what happened to the \$60,000.

PURCHASING AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- This district supplies every female personal protection. Sanitary napkins and tampons. If we put a dispenser on the wall, the dispenser gets ripped off the wall for the money. I have brought it up that they should be charged just like the young men are charged for raisers. I brought it up when we (teachers) have to buy our own sticky pads.
- It's getting better. It is now going into categories. It uses to be miscellaneous - now more accountable.
- Look at when the district bids out jobs and contracts. Look specifically at when a board member has been awarded bids from the district. Look at the bid process. Was the bid process fair, equitable, and legal?
- Look at the companies that have been awarded bids to build buildings and look at the ones completed on time within budget. Did we collect the late fines on the ones that we did not. And why do we continue to use the same contractor when the same problem arises.

- Big dogs with their hands in lobbyist pockets talking to our decision-makers are taking from our entire tax system, textbooks only teaching one side of our state, country history. Then the children hit the real world; they are hit with reality from being taught from a one-sided story. Start with king, colony, greed, tobacco, drugs and finish with family. Values, bailing your daughter out of jail. Checks and balances will cover the dirty pockets of real people who benefit from purchasing. Donate old textbooks to underprivileged neighborhoods. Purchasing, do we really need new stuff or should we be taught how to take care of what we have. PC's are being pushed, where do we win, where do we loose.
- School board members supply dirt and material for football field, yet contracts were not bid or even presented for bids.
- I don't think we purchase wisely. When they were buying stuff for the snack bar they were going to Wal-Mart instead of bidding it out.
- At the beginning of the year my son came home with a list of supplies, batteries, dry erase markers, and I called the teacher and the teacher said he goes through so many that he needed the kids to bring them. The kids got an extra grade for bringing in the supplies. When his progress report came home, this grade was dropped, but he did give a grade for the kids who brought the supplies to class.
- I was asked to bring extra Kleenexes when my child was in seventh grade.
- Do the teachers not have an allowance or expense for supplies?

FOOD SERVICE

- Come eat at school one day when they do not know you are coming, it is horrible.
- I have one child that eats out of the vending machine and another child that eats out of the cafeteria and says it is cold - I have eaten there and it looks pretty good.
- I have a child that eats at C lunch and sometimes they run out and they get left over from previous day, cold lunch.
- My grandson eats in second grade and he doesn't complain.
- They don't have a lot of time to eat at lunch; they are pretty rushed at the elementary school.
- I don't agree with the price of the meal. The adult has to pay a higher price but gets the same portion as the child.
- Clean up is atrocious. We had a fall festival and clean up was terrible. The job isn't being done.
- Lunches are disgusting. Half the time the milk is rotten. They don't have balanced meals. Today they had one hot pocket for \$1.80

with peaches. If you are an adult, you pay more and get the same proportion. We don't care for the food. We usually bring from home because the school food is fattening.

- Food is recycled for weeks. Left over food is used over and over. Milk is often spoiled. Food is not clean. Hair is in food. Molded food is served in snack bar.
- I have two children in high school. Food runs out before students can eat. It is a closed campus. Food is not properly cooked. Children don't get a full meal. Menus are not a balanced meal (pizza and French fries). Students need to have input into menu planning.
- The lunch/breakfast program at Venus high school is very disturbing. The service is great but the food is definitely days old and used again and again. Today my friend got a pretzel (supposedly fresh) with a big green mold spot. I think these were made for the days we were out for snow days but used again without inspection. Many times I have had spoiled milk, moldy food or even food with hairs unlike the ones on my head. Efficiency is a virtue, but one shouldn't put a child's health in jeopardy.
- And the price is insane. Last year the price was \$1.80 for lunch and \$1.25 for snack bar items. Now it's still \$1.80 for lunch and \$1.75 for snack bar items. Why the prices hike? Our district needs to greatly improve the quality and preparation of the food.
- First the most things that bother me are that the food they serve is like they are trying to feed little kids. We only get on a good day maybe six cheese sticks with milk and maybe corn. They tell us when we're done we can purchase extra items and most of the people in Venus can't afford the extras. I also hate when we get hair or even little bugs in our food. I also remember when they served Salisbury steak with a biscuit and gravy for breakfast for almost one week. Is that not wrong or how about breakfast pizza. The only thing breakfast about it was the sausage on it. I also know a lunch lady who was fired because she saw another lunch lady pull a roll out of the trash and gave it to a coach for lunch.
- Veggies equal liabilities of eating meats and grains. With all the allergies out there we are opening our schools up for lawsuits. Hygiene is #1. Dough, fats, bread, carbs are needed to focus one's mind. Too much and you overdose, then it's all wasted, not on a five servings a day for children, grains are converted to sugars when used great, not used - fat. Educate the educators about nutrition. I helped start salad bars in the U.S. Army in 1983-85, starting in Ft. Hood, Texas. I know we can make a change but it takes education. Even with a low budget we can afford nutrition. It takes time and checks and balances and purchasing. This item is a

big purchasing mess up, we trust too much with our \$1 and our children as I have heard food rots before the children get to eat it.

- The students are served very bad choices for menu, not only poor nutrition but bad choices - cheese stick (meat), potato chips. Many of the extras are in bad shape such as sour cream, bad milk . . . They need help. They need someone to show them how to plan a menu. Kids throw a lot of the food away.
- Middle school is better. We do not have those problems as bad as high school does.
- I think a lot of those problems are parental. They bring enough money for the snack machine and eat during breaks before lunch.
- Most of our students eat from the snack bar or vending machines. Very few are eating the full meal. And you wouldn't want to eat the full meal.
- The homemade rolls are great! I eat the rolls. They are hard to mess up.
- I'm appalled at what they charge for the lunches. I know the short cuts they take, because I use to work in a lunchroom. At least it was edible then.
- My child brings his lunch a lot.
- The old superintendent praised what our food service was making. The auditor said we had a big surplus. The next time the auditor came; food service was in the hole.
- I have heard that milk is spoiled a lot of times at the high school. I don't know about the other campuses.

TRANSPORTATION

- Inconsistency is a policy within the district, some kids can wear headphones and then some kids on other buses cannot. The handbook says no headphones, but with my children I've seen it vary throughout the year with the bus monitors. Some days they let them and others they don't.
- A concern is that money is spent too freely. During the basketball session, taking four buses to games (1) girls varsity and junior varsity, (2) cheerleaders, (3) boys varsity, and (4) boys freshmen and junior varsity.
- Venus ISD trucks and buses around town during the day. It appears they are being used for personal use.
- Concerned about the number of trucks we have for maintenance - it appears to be too many. The district has a double cab dually. A large truck for maintenance.
- Discipline on the school bus - sexual misconduct.
- A certain bus monitor is a racist and has all whites up front and Hispanics of all ages in back. Thank you.

- A certain bus driver, a teacher, is very reckless and rude. I have heard many interesting stories from peers and other teachers. Yet he/she has been here forever and can never be fired. A child's life shouldn't be put in danger by a person driving a bus like a sports car. Thank you.
- Need better bus drivers. Have driver that think they own the road. They'll run you off the road. They use three or four buses when they could use one or two. My son just got his license and his first day driving to school he was put in the ditch by a bus. It was either go in the ditch or be hit. Same has happened to me many times. Also they can be very cruel to the kids. Buses need to slow down and treat other drivers with respect and also their charges are humans not dogs.
- Adult drivers and monitors are on every bus. I applaud them. Stuff still happens but it curbs them. A high school kid stood over a middle school and threatened him, and I was able to prevent the fight. The high school student was dealt with that day, but middle school kid took a week.
- We are enablers to these kids and parents. If they don't make it, we call them and wake them up and get them here by 10 o'clock.
- We had a horrendous problem last year with sexual assault. There was supposed to be an aide on the bus and there was. We had a lady who pulled her six year old out of school because her kids were sexually assaulted on the bus.
- When my daughter tried to resolve a problem with the district, nothing happened when she reported it to the central office administrator in charge of transportation.
- My grandson was on the primary campus, I learned that there were three middle school boys on the primary campus receiving education - they were being housed on the elementary school. They were moved to the high school after these people complained about the incident on the bus.
- The buses are overcrowded. They put too many on there. They put three to a seat. There are different sizes of kids. They should have more buses come out.
- The high school kids are real mean to the other kids.
- We even run a bus route in town.
- My kids were told by the bus driver that the bus was too full and they would have to find another way. They would not stop for them. They do live more than two miles from the school.
- The bus drivers pull away before the kids are sitting in their seats.
- Why does the district need a double cab dually? Do we really need that? They haul trash in it.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- There are problems. Our discipline at the high school is one sided. Our discipline is ineffective. People in athletics are treated differently. It really needs to change. Students get treated differently because of gender; boys get treated by one person and girls by another. Sometimes because parents are on the school board. I am only speaking for the high school. Student A and student B will be wearing same outfits. Student A is a cheerleader, but student B gets ISS - differential treatment. They do not enforce the dress code for all the students the same. They have tongue rings - it is against the campus policy, but it is not enforced by the administration. Consistency with teachers is a problem. One enforces the policy and one doesn't. The students like to go to ISS because they get to sleep when they finish their work.
- The teachers get discouraged because they write up a student and nothing happens - it goes nowhere. You feel like you are not being supported by administration.
- I have not lived in Venus long but I think a lot of people think nothing happens out here. That there is a false sense of security out here. But it is the reason I live out here, a lot less happens out here.
- When they had a bank robbery last year, they had everyone accounted for very quickly.
- My friend was thrown against a locker for wearing a hat. Teachers take it overboard. A kid was wearing headphones and was grabbed by sweater. Teachers are breaking things and yelling. One teacher breaks pencils and overhead projectors.
- Identify problems, counseling, family counseling, not just the student. If the student is acting out there must be a reason and the root is usually at home. Nutrition plays a big role in attitudes. Good food equals good attitude. If they don't get it at home then give it to them at school. Here is where purchasing plays a big role. First offense equals warning, ISS, whatever it takes plus counseling. If the actions continue, family counseling. When the average family speaks less than five minutes a week we have a problem, when 75 percent of all marriages end in divorce. We have a problem when 85 percent of all families are one paycheck away from homelessness. Jail looks good to some families when police officers are number 1 alcoholics, number 1 domestic violence, number 1 divorce rate, who do we trust. This is not opinion but proven fact documented. Care about the children, they are products of their environment. The fruit doesn't fall very far from the tree. Family counseling is needed.
- When I came here 10 years ago you didn't have to worry about security, now you have an officer pulled between all campuses.
- Drugs are such a part of the community. It is a family event.
- So is alcohol.

- Teachers are in the hallways breaking up fights before anyone knows about it. It also depends on who is where.
- It is easy to smoke on campus, too.
- Not consistent - policy states kids cannot have cell phones but some kids are allowed to have them and some kids are not.
- There were 12 sophomores in ISS because they did not have their shots. Why didn't they just send those kids home for their shots?
- We are going over the safety regulation and procedures because of what had happened last year. A middle school student made a threat against an assistant principal - a child emailed him at home and threatened him, the kid said he was bringing weapons on Wednesday and then was going to bring them on Friday. We never found out about it - I find out about it on TV. Here the threat came through, but the sheriff's children got a choice to stay home but not our kids because they wanted the funding for attendance in the school. He said he didn't have to tell us, there was an investigation going on. Because of me going up there and screaming about what they were going to do to protect my child, no one would have known about it. I waited until Dr. Pfiefer came in and we went over the policy and she was great. The principal said he was so happy about the communication he had during an assembly later. No body knew what really had happened.
- That's why the police officers came out and the prison even sent guards out to the school. I understand you don't want to panic everyone but we don't want to be lied to either. Even when they had the bomb threat at the elementary they moved the children to the high school.

COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Lease? Tax writes off. Buy? Asset? Liability?
- Every year technology moves at a faster rate of progress than anyone's budget. Be it a household or school district when children can't read or write to their grade level, but yet they can do book reports on line or "surf." PC's will help children in the future, but will they graduate with a dancing bear diploma or will they really know how to spell. Donations would be great when it comes to this opportunity, but then you /we would need checks and balances because we don't want illegal furniture being used in condos on the coast. To lease would be a benefit with a company that will upgrade each year for free and they are out there.
- I think we have a lot of computers in the school but I'm not sure they are all being used. We have these in the library and I am not sure these are being used. We were supposed to have some on a cart and were supposed to be used by the Government class but they didn't have the software on it.

- I don't see the children or teachers using the computers - using the tools like the Internet being integrated in the classroom.
- Strong area here. We have a mobile lab. Teachers use it and use it effectively. I haven't found my niche in it yet.
- We are downloading our send home books.
- Grade books and attendance are on-line for high school and middle school.
- Everyone has an email account, but not everyone is up and running. Some in primary still do not have their email working.
- I think we have computers but I'm not sure we use them. The program my daughter needed to use on the computer for her class was not loaded on the computer. We have the distant learning lab but we only have 20 students that are able to take advantage of it. It's all college and all dual credit.
- In the FFA classes, my son and daughter took a computer tech class. The class was so crowded that the state disallowed the credit because students could not get the hours on the computer.

Venus Independent School District

Appendix B

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF

SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

Venus Independent School District Management and Performance Review

(n = 15)

Demographic Data

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response				
		27%	60%	13%				
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response	
		67%	0%	0%	0%	20%	13%	
3.	How long have you been employed by Venus ISD?			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
				67%	7%	13%	7%	7%
4.	Are you a(n)	Administrator	Clerical Staffer	Support Staffer		No Response		
		13%	33%	54%		0%		
5.	How long have you been employed in this capacity by Venus ISD?			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
				67%	7%	13%	7%	7%

A. District Organization and Management

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
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1	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	13%	27%	33%	20%	7%	0%
2	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	13%	40%	20%	27%	0%	0%
3	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	40%	7%	40%	13%	0%	0%
4	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	33%	13%	40%	13%	0%	0%
5	Central administration is efficient.	0%	67%	20%	13%	0%	0%
6	Central administration supports the educational process.	13%	67%	20%	0%	0%	0%
7	The morale of central administration staff is good.	0%	33%	20%	47%	0%	0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
8	Education is the main	7%	47%	13%	27%	7%	0%

	priority in our school district.						
9	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	7%	27%	47%	7%	13%	0%
10	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	0%	27%	33%	40%	0%	0%
11	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0%	20%	47%	27%	7%	0%
12	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	0%	33%	13%	47%	7%	0%
	b) Writing	0%	47%	13%	40%	0%	0%
	c) Mathematics	0%	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
	d) Science	0%	67%	13%	20%	0%	0%
	e) English or Language Arts	0%	67%	13%	20%	0%	0%
	f) Computer Instruction	7%	80%	13%	0%	0%	0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0%	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
	h) Fine Arts	0%	47%	47%	7%	0%	0%
	i) Physical Education	0%	47%	27%	0%	13%	13%
	i) Business	0%	20%	60%	7%	7%	7%

	Education						
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0%	33%	53%	7%	7%	0%
	l) Foreign Language	0%	20%	60%	13%	7%	0%
13	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	27%	40%	27%	7%	0%	0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	7%	40%	47%	7%	0%	0%
	c) Special Education	0%	73%	7%	20%	0%	0%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	0%	47%	53%	0%	0%	0%
	e) Dyslexia program	0%	20%	67%	13%	0%	0%
	f) Student mentoring program	0%	13%	40%	47%	0%	0%
	g) Advanced placement program	0%	20%	53%	20%	7%	0%
	h) Literacy program	0%	13%	60%	27%	0%	0%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0%	27%	40%	27%	7%	0%
	i) Summer	7%	53%	0%	33%	7%	0%

	school programs						
	k) Alternative education programs	0%	60%	27%	13%	0%	0%
	l) "English as a second language" program	0%	47%	53%	0%	0%	0%
	m) Career counseling program	0%	13%	47%	33%	7%	0%
	n) College counseling program	0%	13%	47%	33%	7%	0%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	0%	20%	47%	20%	13%	0%
	p) Drop out prevention program	0%	20%	47%	27%	7%	0%
14	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	0%	67%	27%	0%	7%	0%
15	Teacher turnover is low.	7%	13%	7%	53%	20%	0%
16	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0%	7%	27%	60%	7%	0%
17	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	0%	27%	33%	33%	7%	0%
18	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0%	7%	47%	33%	13%	0%

19	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	0%	20%	67%	0%	13%	0%
20	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	0%	67%	13%	13%	7%	0%
21	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	0%	87%	7%	7%	0%	0%
22	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	7%	73%	7%	7%	7%	0%
23	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	7%	47%	33%	7%	7%	0%

C. Personnel

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
24	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0%	0%	27%	47%	27%	0%
25	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0%	40%	47%	7%	7%	0%

26	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0%	13%	67%	20%	0%	0%
27	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0%	33%	47%	20%	0%	0%
28	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0%	7%	60%	33%	0%	0%
29	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0%	47%	27%	27%	0%	0%
30	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	0%	40%	40%	13%	7%	0%
31	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	0%	7%	27%	53%	13%	0%
32	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0%	13%	47%	33%	7%	0%
33	The district has a fair and	0%	33%	33%	7%	7%	0%

	timely grievance process.						
34	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0%	47%	27%	13%	13%	0%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
35	The district regularly communicates with parents.	0%	47%	27%	13%	13%	0%
36	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0%	13%	40%	33%	13%	0%
37	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0%	7%	33%	53%	7%	0%
38	District facilities are open for community use.	7%	53%	7%	13%	20%	0%

E. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
39	Parents, citizens, students.	0%	20%	33%	33%	7%	7%

	faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.						
40	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0%	27%	33%	20%	13%	7%
41	Schools are clean.	0%	47%	20%	20%	7%	7%
42	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0%	80%	7%	0%	7%	7%
43	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0%	80%	7%	0%	7%	7%
44	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	7%	73%	0%	7%	7%	7%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
45	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0%	20%	60%	7%	7%	7%
46	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal	0%	27%	47%	20%	0%	7%

	management techniques.						
47	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	0%	7%	47%	27%	13%	7%
48	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	0%	53%	33%	7%	0%	7%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
49	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	0%	47%	27%	13%	7%	7%
50	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0%	40%	47%	7%	0%	7%
51	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0%	20%	47%	27%	0%	7%
52	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0%	20%	53%	13%	7%	7%

53	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	0%	60%	20%	7%	7%	7%
54	Textbooks are in good shape.	0%	53%	33%	0%	7%	7%
55	The school library meets the student needs for books and other resources.	13%	53%	13%	13%	0%	7%

H. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
56	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	0%	27%	33%	33%	7%	0%
57	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0%	7%	40%	40%	13%	0%
58	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0%	20%	33%	40%	7%	0%
59	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0%	47%	40%	13%	0%	0%
60	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0%	33%	47%	13%	0%	7%
61	A good working arrangement	0%	60%	13%	20%	7%	0%

	exists between local law enforcement and the district.						
62	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%

I. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
63	Students regularly use computers.	0%	87%	7%	7%	0%	0%
64	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	0%	73%	13%	13%	0%	0%
65	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	0%	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
66	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	0%	87%	13%	0%	0%	0%
67	The district meets student needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	0%	87%	13%	0%	0%	0%
68	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced	0%	47%	40%	13%	0%	0%

	computer skills.						
69	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	0%	80%	13%	7%	0%	0%

Venus Independent School District

Appendix B

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The following comments convey perception and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the Comptroller or the review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

- We have a long way to go. So much has changed since July, but we've just begun.
- My own children, now age 20 and age 18, have gone through Venus ISD since middle school. They received a good education because of the teachers they had, not necessarily because Venus ISD was the most outstanding school district. Sports is a "god" and fine arts programs are slim. There were enough courses to prepare them for college, but only because of our distance-learning program. Special education ranks high among our student population, other students sometimes aren't challenged enough. We lack elective courses to meet their needs.
- District spends more money on coaches than reading teachers. Aides get no respect and little salary. And now must pay out of their pockets for college courses.
- The school has been through some budget problems but now has a wonderful new superintendent who I believe will help build this district, as it should be. The kids have problems. A lot of them are poor or disadvantaged. There are no small town recreation activity centers near so they are able to get into trouble creating a lot of sexually active students. We are growing. I'm hoping for the better. The staff works hard for little or nothing. You would be pretty proud of most of them. Hopefully we will rub off on the kids.
- We are a small school district so money is a problem. I think money is our solution as well. We have to offer higher wages and bring in more experienced teachers. Our teachers are overworked and underpaid. That definitely brings down the quality of work.
- Entirely too much monies are wasted by lights and heating cooling units being left on all year! Too much attention is paid to the athletic programs and not to education. The zero tolerance policy is a total FARCE - common sense was thrown completely out the window! School board members here lie, and create disturbances to get their way in regards to personal agendas. An air of mistrust and loathing, watching your back is prevalent here. Teachers are

unwilling to write students up that deserve it and quick to jump down the throats of those they consider meek, and the list goes on.

- Preventative maintenance on equipment is unheard of and discouraged! (No time!!) During spring break, summer, or anytime school is out, you will find every A/C or heater, lights burning, etc. even though buildings are vacant. No conservation!!!) District is too pro athletics, classroom instruction is secondary.
- I feel that Venus ISD provides a strong academic education for the students. Venus has about 62 percent of their student body on free or reduced lunches that the tax base is not enough to have teacher salaries equal to the districts around Venus. I feel that some students are not treated fairly. I know that in the building where I work that the school secretary's daughter is allowed to come in the building early while the other students are made to stay outside until 7:30 a.m. I worry about confidentiality for the students in our building because again the school secretary's children are allowed behind the counter where records are kept. I feel that I do not receive the administration leadership that is necessary for an effective teaching environment.

Venus Independent School District

Appendix C

PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

Venus Independent School District Management and Performance Review

(n = 4)

Demographic Data

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response				
		50%	25%	25%				
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response	
		75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	
3.	How long have you been employed by Venus ISD?			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
				100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4.	What grades are taught in your school?			PK-Grade 1	Grades 2-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	
				25%	25%	25%	25%	

A. District Organization and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1	The school board allows sufficient time for public input	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%

	at meetings.						
2	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3	School board members understand their role as policymakers and stay out of the day-to-day management of the district.	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%
4	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
6	Central administration is efficient.	50%	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%
7	Central administration supports the educational process.	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%
8	The morale of central administration staff is good.	25%	0%	25%	50%	0%	0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
9	Education is the main priority in our school district.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
11	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%	0%
12	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%
13	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	25%	25%	0%	50%	0%	0%
14	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
15	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
16	The district has effective						

	educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
	b) Writing	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
	c) Mathematics	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
	d) Science	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
	e) English or Language Arts	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
	f) Computer Instruction	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
	h) Fine Arts	0%	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%
	i) Physical Education	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	j) Business Education	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
	l) Foreign Language	0%	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
17	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	c) Special	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Education							
d) Head Start and Even Start programs	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%	
e) Dyslexia program	0%	75%	0%	0%	25%	0%	
f) Student mentoring program	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	
g) Advanced placement program	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	
h) Literacy program	0%	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%	
i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	
j) Summer school programs	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%	
k) Alternative education programs	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
l) "English as a Second Language" program	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
m) Career counseling program	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	
n) College counseling program	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	
o) Counseling the parents of students	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	
p) Drop out prevention	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	

	program						
18	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
19	Teacher turnover is low.	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%
20	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%
21	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0%	25%	0%	75%	0%	0%
22	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
23	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
24	Students have access when needed to a school nurse.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
25	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%

C. Personnel

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
26	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%
27	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0%	25%	0%	75%	0%	0%
28	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0%	50%	0%	25%	25%	0%
29	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
30	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
31	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
32	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
33	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%

	such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.						
34	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
35	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
36	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
37	The district regularly communicates with parents.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
38	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
39	District facilities are open for community use.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%

E. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
40	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
41	Schools are clean.	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
42	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
43	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
44	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
45	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
46	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%

	management techniques.						
47	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
48	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
49	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
50	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
51	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
52	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
53	Textbooks are in good shape.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%

54	The school library meets the student needs for books and other resources.	0%	75%	0%	25%	0%	0%
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H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
55	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	25%	50%	0%	25%	0%	0%
56	Food is served warm.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
57	Students have enough time to eat.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
58	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
59	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
60	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
61	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
62	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%

I. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
63	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
64	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
65	Buses arrive and leave on time.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
66	Adding or modifying a route for a student is easy to accomplish.	0%	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%

J. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
67	Students feel safe and secure at school.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
68	School disturbances are infrequent.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
69	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
70	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
71	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
72	Security	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

	personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.						
73	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0%	50%	25%	0%	25%	0%
74	A good working arrangement exists between local law enforcement and the district.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
75	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
76	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%

K. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
77	Students regularly use computers.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
78	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%
79	Computers are	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%

	new enough to be useful for student instruction.						
80	The district meets student needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
81	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%
82	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
83	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Venus Independent School District

Appendix C

PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The following comments convey perception and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the Comptroller or the review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

- It is my feeling that VISD does a tremendous job of using its limited resources to provide an above average educational opportunity for its students. Its facilities, technology and personnel will compare or exceed most districts its size.
- VISD is making big strides toward educational excellence. There is a bright future ahead for VISD if current central administrator continues current direction. I am excited about the future.

Venus Independent School District

Appendix D

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

Venus Independent School District Management and Performance Review

(n = 24)

Demographic Data

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response				
		38%	54%	8%				
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response	
		75%	0%	8%	0%	4%	8%	
3.	How long have you been employed by Venus ISD?			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
				67%	8%	13%	8%	4%
4.	What grades do you teach this year?							
	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third			
	8%	17%	8%	8%	13%			
	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth			
	4%	4%	13%	17%	29%			
	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth				
25%	25%	25%	21%					

A. District Organization and Management

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
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1	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	13%	54%	29%	4%	0%	0%
2	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	0%	63%	33%	4%	0%	0%
3	School board members work well with the superintendent.	4%	50%	33%	13%	0%	0%
4	The school board has a good image in the community.	0%	38%	21%	38%	4%	0%
5	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	29%	46%	17%	4%	4%	0%
6	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	17%	42%	21%	17%	4%	0%
7	Central administration is efficient.	4%	42%	17%	38%	0%	0%
8	Central administration supports the educational process.	17%	50%	17%	17%	0%	0%
9	The morale of central administration	8%	21%	50%	17%	4%	0%

staff is good.						
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B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
10	Education is the main priority in our school district.	25%	54%	4%	8%	4%	4%
11	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	25%	42%	4%	17%	8%	4%
12	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	4%	38%	42%	0%	13%	4%
13	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	4%	25%	38%	17%	13%	4%
14	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	13%	33%	4%	29%	17%	4%
15	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	8%	38%	4%	29%	13%	8%
16	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to	4%	33%	17%	25%	13%	8%

	teach and how to teach it.						
17	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	4%	54%	13%	21%	8%	0%
	b) Writing	4%	58%	17%	13%	8%	0%
	c) Mathematics	4%	88%	8%	0%	0%	0%
	d) Science	4%	54%	21%	21%	0%	0%
	e) English or Language Arts	4%	63%	13%	13%	8%	0%
	f) Computer Instruction	4%	58%	13%	21%	0%	4%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	4%	54%	13%	29%	0%	0%
	h) Fine Arts	8%	46%	17%	29%	0%	0%
	i) Physical Education	8%	67%	17%	8%	0%	0%
	j) Business Education	4%	29%	58%	8%	0%	0%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	8%	42%	42%	4%	0%	4%
	l) Foreign Language	4%	8%	42%	21%	17%	8%
18	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	13%	63%	17%	4%	4%	0%
	h)	4%	58%	17%	13%	8%	0%

Honors/Gifted and Talented Education							
c) Special Education	17%	58%	13%	4%	4%	4%	
d) Head Start and Even Start programs	4%	33%	54%	8%	0%	0%	
e) Dyslexia program	8%	29%	54%	8%	0%	0%	
f) Student mentoring program	4%	42%	25%	25%	4%	0%	
g) Advanced placement program	8%	25%	46%	17%	0%	4%	
h) Literacy program	0%	25%	50%	17%	4%	4%	
i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	4%	25%	42%	17%	8%	4%	
j) Summer school programs	4%	54%	8%	17%	13%	4%	
k) Alternative education programs	4%	58%	29%	4%	4%	0%	
l) "English as a second language" program	4%	33%	17%	46%	0%	0%	
m) Career counseling program	4%	17%	50%	21%	8%	0%	
n) College counseling program	7%	17%	58%	8%	10%	0%	
o) Counseling	0%	13%	46%	29%	13%	0%	

	the parents of students						
	p) Drop out prevention program	4%	17%	50%	17%	13%	0%
19	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	13%	38%	29%	20%	0%	0%
20	Teacher turnover is low.	8%	0%	8%	48%	46%	0%
21	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0%	33%	13%	38%	17%	0%
22	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	4%	29%	29%	25%	13%	0%
23	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	4%	0%	25%	42%	29%	0%
24	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	0%	42%	33%	13%	13%	0%
25	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	0%	67%	21%	8%	4%	0%
26	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors.	25%	46%	13%	17%	0%	0%

	science labs and art classes.						
27	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	13%	63%	8%	13%	4%	0%
28	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	21%	58%	21%	0%	0%	0%

C. Personnel

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
29	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0%	17%	0%	46%	38%	0%
30	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	8%	42%	13%	29%	8%	0%
31	Temporary workers are rarely used.	4%	38%	29%	21%	8%	0%
32	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0%	25%	38%	29%	8%	0%
33	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0%	13%	42%	33%	13%	0%
34	The district operates an effective staff development program.	13%	42%	4%	38%	4%	0%

35	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	21%	67%	4%	8%	0%	0%
36	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	4%	4%	42%	42%	8%	0%
37	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0%	13%	50%	21%	17%	0%
38	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0%	33%	54%	8%	4%	0%
39	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	4%	29%	17%	33%	13%	4%
40	The district regularly communicates with parents.	8%	63%	13%	8%	8%	0%
41	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0%	8%	38%	25%	29%	0%

42	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0%	8%	8%	42%	42%	0%
43	District facilities are open for community use.	13%	75%	4%	4%	4%	0%

D. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
44	The district plans facilities far enough in the future to support enrollment growth.	0%	42%	29%	17%	8%	4%
45	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	4%	21%	42%	21%	13%	0%
46	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0%	0%	83%	17%	0%	0%
47	The quality of new construction is excellent.	4%	46%	25%	17%	8%	0%
48	Schools are	0%	42%	8%	29%	21%	0%

	clean.						
49	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0%	29%	17%	50%	4%	0%
50	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0%	29%	8%	46%	17%	0%
51	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0%	58%	21%	21%	0%	0%

E. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
52	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0%	38%	50%	4%	8%	0%
53	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	0%	17%	71%	13%	0%	0%
54	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	0%	42%	17%	33%	8%	0%

F. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
55	Purchasing costs	0%	38%	21%	38%	4%	0%

	me what I need when I need it.						
56	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0%	38%	54%	8%	0%	0%
57	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0%	37%	46%	17%	0%	0%
58	Vendors are selected competitively.	4%	29%	63%	4%	0%	0%
59	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0%	29%	33%	25%	13%	0%
60	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	0%	71%	17%	13%	0%	0%
61	Textbooks are in good shape.	4%	63%	17%	13%	4%	0%
62	The school library meets the student needs for books and other resources.	25%	63%	4%	4%	4%	0%

G. Food Services

Survey	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly	No
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	Questions	Agree		Opinion		Disagree	Response
63	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0%	38%	13%	29%	21%	0%
64	Food is served warm.	4%	75%	13%	4%	4%	0%
65	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	8%	88%	0%	4%	0%	0%
66	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	13%	67%	13%	8%	0%	0%
67	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	13%	71%	8%	4%	4%	0%
68	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	17%	71%	4%	8%	0%	0%
69	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	17%	71%	0%	8%	4%	0%

H. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
70	School disturbances are infrequent.	13%	50%	17%	13%	8%	0%
71	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	17%	54%	17%	13%	0%	0%
72	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	8%	17%	21%	38%	17%	0%

73	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	4%	25%	25%	38%	8%	0%
74	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	4%	46%	42%	4%	4%	0%
75	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	4%	33%	50%	8%	4%	0%
76	A good working arrangement exists between local law enforcement and the district.	4%	38%	42%	17%	0%	0%
77	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	0%	42%	13%	29%	17%	0%
78	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0%	58%	21%	13%	8%	0%

I. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
79	Students regularly use computers.	17%	67%	4%	13%	0%	0%
80	Students have regular access to computer	8%	54%	17%	17%	0%	4%

	equipment and software in the classroom.						
81	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	8%	71%	0%	21%	0%	0%
82	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	17%	67%	13%	4%	0%	0%
83	The district meets student needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	13%	67%	13%	8%	0%	0%
84	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	4%	40%	50%	8%	0%	0%
85	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	21%	67%	4%	8%	0%	0%

Venus Independent School District

Appendix D

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The following comments convey teachers' perception of Venus ISD and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the Comptroller or the review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

- In my opinion, Venus ISD does not provide enough for G/T students. In the years I have taught there, I haven't ever received any accommodations for ESL students. Employee, especially teacher, morale is very low.
- Venus ISD hires many teachers who aren't certified and are in ELAPP or Alternative Certification. (I was hired without my certification). They stay the year and then go to another district. There is also a high turnover in campus administration. It is, I think, difficult for the children and community to have to deal with this.
- I have worked here two years. I cannot stand the way money is wasted. I live in a property rich district, and to see my money spent in the way it is here in this poor district makes me understand why they stay in debt all the time. The Robin Hood law is being taken advantage of here. Makes me wonder how many other districts do the same. For example, we have a town bus that picks up kids that live less than a half of a mile from school. Some of those kids are picked up at the two local day cares. I feel like there is a problem when my tax dollars go to help support a day care that cannot get its own vehicle, but the district keeps on doing it. This is my last year here. If this is the way Robin Hood works, then it needs to be done away with or give those people that support other districts with their tax dollars a say in their school system.
- VISD is an excellent school. The staff is one of the best you could ever hope to work with. However, we are not paid as well as the other schools around us. We suffer from not having access to a copier or laminator when we need it. Some of us have bought our own copiers and paper so we are able to have the copies we need to teach our students effectively. We are also in need of ESL materials.
- During the administration of the last superintendent the push was to modify as much as possible to make students successful. Summer school was a farce to promote students that refused to

complete assignments. The result is a large number of students that cannot perform on grade level. The new superintendent will, I hope, change this situation.

- Venus ISD is a great place to work.
- I haven't had any major concerns with Venus ISD. My children also attend school in Venus, since I teach in the district.
- Venus does not listen to the needs of teachers to effectively change the Pre-K/PDCD program. The classes are mixed with three, four and five year olds. These children need to be in separate classes. Teachers have asked to separate these age groups but no changes are made. Sanitary conditions are poor. New supplies are not provided to teachers equitably.
- The site-based committee has yet to meet this school year. We will get to sign the plan, but it will be written for us. The community has no educational vision. If only they could win, but until they do, spend, spend, spend. CATE students are overcrowded in labs that become unsafe with 23 plus students in labs designed to save on construction cost. The labs should handle 16 to 20 students but are often filled with 28 or 30. CATE students do not get 90 percent lab time when 24 students share 18 computers in a technology credit course.
- We work hard every year to improve our school district. Our district goal centers on student learning. We have financial difficulties like most districts in Texas. Venus has a high move-in rate, which I feel has a lot to do with some of the challenges we face. I love our school and enjoy working with the students in Venus, Texas. Thank you.
- I feel that teachers get paid more than what they should here at Venus. The paraprofessionals do most of the work and don't get paid for it. Some of the paraprofessionals only get paid between \$45 to \$55 a day. They do a lot of the teaching when teachers are not in the rooms. I also feel that the district only cares about making money rather than actually teaching the kids.

Venus Independent School District

Appendix E

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

Venus Independent School District Management and Performance Review

(n = 74)

Demographic Data

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

1. Gender (Optional)	Male	Female				
	50%	50%				
2. Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	
	54.9%	1.4%	21.1%	2.8%	19.7%	
3. What is your classification?	Junior	Senior				
	1.37%	98.65%				

A. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	4.1%	49%	26.0%	17.8%	2.7%
2	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	5.5%	39%	42.5%	11%	1.4%
3	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a) Reading	11%	66%	16.4%	6.8%	0%
	b) Writing	11%	73%	12%	4%	0%

	c) Mathematics	23%	67%	5.5%	4%	0%
	d) Science	13.7%	71%	8.2%	6.8%	0%
	e) English or Language Arts	16.4%	67%	8.2%	5.5%	3%
	f) Computer Instruction	11%	77%	9.6%	2.7%	0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	19.4%	71%	6.9%	1.4%	1.4%
	h) Fine Arts	11%	69%	14%	2.7%	4%
	i) Physical Education	8.2%	66%	19%	2.7%	4%
	j) Business Education	8.2%	60%	27%	4.1%	0%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	8.2%	52%	25%	14%	1.4%
	l) Foreign Language	4.2%	39%	14%	31%	13%
4	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	8.2%	67%	18%	5.5%	1.4%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	12%	63%	16%	5.5%	2.7%
	c) Special Education	16%	70%	11%	1.4%	1.4%
	d) Student mentoring program	2.8%	36%	39%	18%	4.2%
	e) Advanced placement program	11%	56%	21%	8.3%	4.2%
	f) Career counseling program	2.7%	36%	32%	26%	4.1%
	g) College counseling program	2.7%	38%	26%	25%	8.2%
5	Students have access, when needed, to school nurse.	9.5%	50%	11%	26%	4.1%
6	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	5.4%	58%	26%	5.4%	5.4%
7	The district provides a high quality education.	4.1%	53%	31%	8%	4.1%
8	The district has high quality	4.2%	42%	35%	14%	5.6%

teachers.					
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B. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	Schools are clean.	8%	51%	22%	11%	8.1%
10	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	8%	60%	19%	8%	5.4%
11	Repairs are made in a timely manner	6.8%	49%	26%	11%	8.1%
12	Emergency maintenance is handled timely.	14%	48%	27%	4%	6.8%

C. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13	There are enough textbooks in all my classes.	12%	46%	14%	19%	9.5%
14	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	12%	72%	12%	2.7%	1.4%
15	Textbooks are in good shape.	6.8%	51%	18%	19%	5.4%
16	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	22%	60%	5.6%	6.9%	5.6%

D. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	20%	58%	12%	4.1%	5.4%
18	The cafeteria's food looks	1.4%	9.5%	34%	26%	29.7%

	and tastes good.					
19	Food is served warm.	2.7%	41%	22%	19%	15%
20	Students have enough time to eat.	1.4%	30%	22%	22%	25.7%
21	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	6.8%	65%	13.5%	6.8%	8.1%
22	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	2.8%	19%	6.9%	43%	28%
23	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	8.2%	51%	27%	8.2%	5.5%
24	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	8.2%	51%	18%	11%	12.3%
25	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	6.8%	44%	32%	9.6%	8.2%

E. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26	I regularly ride the bus.	2.8%	13.9%	26.4%	23.6%	33.3%
27	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	4.2%	21.1%	67.6%	1.4%	5.6%
28	The length of my bus ride is reasonable.	2.9%	24.3%	64.3%	4.3%	4.3%
29	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	2.8%	26.8%	60.6%	5.6%	4.2%
30	The bus stop near my house is safe.	7.0%	28.2%	59.2%	1.4%	4.2%
31	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	9.9%	23.9%	63.4%	0.0%	2.8%
32	Buses arrive and leave on time.	4.2%	23.9%	63.4%	4.2%	4.2%
33	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	7.0%	22.5%	60.6%	5.6%	4.2%

34	uses seldom break down.	4.2%	21.1%	63.4%	5.6%	5.6%
35	Buses are clean.	1.4%	15.5%	70.4%	7.0%	5.6%
36	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	5.6%	15.5%	66.2%	7.0%	5.6%

F. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
37	feel safe and secure at school.	9.6%	58.9%	11.0%	9.6%	11.0%
38	School disturbances are infrequent.	6.8%	53.4%	24.7%	11.0%	4.1%
39	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	17.8%	45.2%	16.4%	11.0%	9.6%
40	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	5.4%	21.6%	23.0%	28.4%	21.6%
41	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	6.8%	18.9%	24.3%	36.5%	13.5%
42	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	10.8%	52.7%	29.7%	2.7%	4.1%
43	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	8.1%	37.8%	35.1%	10.8%	8.1%
44	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	6.8%	31.1%	51.4%	5.4%	5.4%
45	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	9.6%	28.8%	35.6%	9.6%	16.4%
46	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	2.7%	35.1%	37.8%	16.2%	8.1%

G. Computers and Technology

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
47	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	9.5%	62.2%	8.1%	9.5%	10.8%
48	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	16.2%	56.8%	14.9%	8.1%	4.1%
49	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	13.5%	55.4%	17.6%	5.4%	8.1%
50	The district offers enough classes in computer fundamentals.	10.8%	55.4%	20.3%	9.5%	4.1%
51	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	6.8%	43.2%	32.4%	14.9%	2.7%
52	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	18.9%	56.8%	14.9%	6.8%	2.7%

Venus Independent School District

Appendix E

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The following comments convey perception and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the Comptroller or the review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

- The district has an overall good educational program with few flaws. There are some things that can be improved like longer lunch, and better work with law officials.
- I feel that it could be a lot better. I moved from a 5A school and the educational level was much lower.
- I think when it comes to race, (African American, Anglo. . .) that they don't tell kids to stop calling or using racist comments.
- Whatever!!!
- I have been here for 3 years since summer of 1999 and this school needs more foreign language besides Spanish. It's real easy to pass the classes. This school needs a GSA, a no hatched rule in the school book and no sexual orientation (harassment for gays) cause it gets hard sometimes trying to pay attention in school and trying to do good in school.
- Some of the teachers here are nice enough to help us learn while a whole bunch of them just sit there and talk about students behind their backs saying things and accusing them of doing things that they haven't done. Too much discrimination against students who are not Anglo or jocks!
- Discrimination from staff and teachers.
- Most of the teachers talk bad about the students but do not confront them about it and tell them how they really feel.
- The district has a good education program and the distance learning program. Helps College bound students to get a head start.
- It's an OK school. But the restrooms by the cafeteria smell bad - especially after lunch. The teachers are friendly. I'm impressed with the way things are going. The counselor could spend more time with seniors to get ready for college.
- I think the education at Venus ISD is highly cared for. All students in each school get the best education available to them.
- D.L. program is very helpful in preparing students for college.
- This is probably one of the best schools that I have attended. I have made close relationships with many teachers.

- I think VISD is a good school but there are things that need to be fixed.
- After moving to Venus from a major metropolitan school I found the education in Venus to be of a higher quality. The environment is also more enjoyable and secure.
- Venus is a great school. All schools have their flaws. The teachers try hard, I believe. I'm proud to be at this school.
- Overall I like this school. Overall it is also a safe environment. Our teachers are excellent and resourceful.
- The Distance Learning program is great. It allows college bound students to attend classes while in high school. Students can gain college hours while in high school. Great program!
- Food is not good. We need real food.
- I would like it if one teacher was a little more respectful to us and would hear our side of the story before jumping to conclusions. Thank you.
- I hate this school.
- It is not too good. They aren't fair at all. They favor the Anglo kids more than others. Not fair.
- No opinion.
- I feel that there should be more information about college available to the students. I think they should start providing more money for theater arts program.
- Stop wasting money on athletics because our athletics are bad. Well most of them. And some teachers need not to accuse kids of doing drugs.
- I love this school, but we definitely need computer classes for people. More advanced with computers like myself.
- In the past, the district has been very poorly managed, but with the new superintendent, I believe that things will change. There are some good educators at the high school, but their hands are tied by poor high school management. The high school management also tolerates teachers whose classes are more of a movie appreciation course than a history or Spanish. The school also hinders students who want to go above and beyond occasionally, but do not want to be athletes. So much money is put into our unproductive athletic program when it could be put to aid perfecting academic extra curricular activities.
- More food. Ex: Two slices of pizza rather than one. Better food choices. More time to eat and get to taste our food. It's a pretty good school but some of the teachers are too mean and old. We need some good teachers that like to interact with every student not just the cool ones who are involved in sports. Not everybody has the same talents. So they should treat everybody the same way.
- It's good, I like it. Foods not that good, but I'll live.

- This is an all around good school. It gives the top students an opportunity to further their education through Distance Learning. On the other hand, we do have teachers who slack off, and don't teach much. I believe that our math department is very strong, but I only had one teacher throughout high school in English. And I don't feel that we covered enough material.
- Well, the school needs to be cleaned more often and soap needs to be put in ALL the restrooms not just two of them. The food should only be cooked once not reheated three times and not to be burnt and cold and nasty. It should at least have some taste to it. They shouldn't spend so much money on the football team when teachers can't even get chalk or other necessary items.
- My main complaint is the food. It's really not that bad, but they don't give you nearly enough food. I suggest stop wasting money on athletics and athletic department which is going nowhere fast and start feeding the students at lunch. I can promise you, that 80 percent of the student's care more about actually getting full at lunch than what uniform the football team loses with this season.
- The school is fine but because we live out in the country. Most of the kids are taking some kind of drugs.
- I think if our teachers and administrators worked more for our kids and less for themselves that this school would be a lot better off. Also I think that everyone needs to get on top of stuff. For example I am a senior and need to be applying for college and scholarships yet I can't get my G.P.A. or class rank. And I can't get any help with my financial aid stuff. And I think the school should help with that.
- The vice principal isn't as nice to students as she should be. She seems to give students a hard time. I see a lot of students that dislike her.
- It is fun sometimes.

Venus Independent School District

Appendix F

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

Venus Independent School District Management And Performance Review

(n = 15)

Demographic Data

Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

1.	Gender (Optional)	No Response	Male	Female			
		13.0%	27.0%	60.0%			
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	No Response	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
		7%	60%	0%	20%	0%	13%
3.	How long have you lived in Venus?		No Response	0-15 years	16-10 years	11 or more years	
			0%	53%	13%	33%	
4.	What grade level(s) does your child(ren) attend?						
	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third		
	27%	7%	0%	20%	20%		
	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth		
	7%	13%	20%	13%	13%		
	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth			
33%	7%	13%	7%				

A. District Organization and Management

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
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1	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	0%	60%	33%	7%	0%	0%
2	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	0%	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
3	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	13%	47%	27%	7%	7%	0%
4	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	13%	60%	20%	7%	0%	0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
5	The district provides a high quality of services.	0%	53%	13%	27%	7%	0%
6	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	0%	53%	20%	20%	7%	0%
7	The needs of the college-bound student	0%	40%	33%	13%	13%	0%

	are being met.						
8	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0%	33%	40%	20%	7%	0%
9	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	0%	67%	13%	13%	0%	7%
	b) Writing	0%	67%	13%	13%	0%	7%
	c) Mathematics	0%	73%	13%	7%	0%	7%
	d) Science	0%	73%	13%	7%	0%	7%
	e) English or Language Arts	0%	60%	27%	7%	0%	7%
	f) Computer Instruction	0%	60%	13%	13%	7%	7%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0%	67%	20%	7%	0%	7%
	h) Fine Arts	0%	60%	20%	13%	0%	7%
	i) Physical Education	0%	73%	13%	0%	7%	7%
	j) Business Education	0%	40%	40%	13%	0%	7%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0%	47%	33%	13%	0%	7%
	l) Foreign Language	0%	40%	40%	7%	7%	7%
10	The district has effective special programs for the following:						

a) Library Service	7%	73%	13%	0%	7%	0%
b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	7%	40%	20%	13%	7%	13%
c) Special Education	20%	53%	7%	7%	13%	0%
d) Head Start and Even Start programs	20%	47%	27%	7%	0%	0%
e) Dyslexia program	20%	13%	40%	7%	7%	13%
f) Student mentoring program	0%	53%	27%	7%	7%	7%
g) Advanced placement program	0%	27%	53%	13%	0%	7%
h) Literacy program	7%	40%	40%	7%	0%	7%
i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0%	33%	40%	13%	0%	13%
j) Summer school programs	7%	33%	20%	13%	13%	13%
k) Alternative education programs	7%	60%	20%	0%	0%	13%
l) "English as a second language" program	7%	33%	47%	0%	0%	13%
m) Career counseling program	0%	20%	60%	13%	0%	7%

	n) College counseling program	0%	13%	53%	27%	0%	7%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	13%	33%	27%	7%	13%	7%
	p) Drop out prevention program	0%	13%	60%	20%	0%	7%
11	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	7%	40%	20%	27%	0%	7%
12	Teacher turnover is low.	0%	27%	20%	20%	20%	13%
13	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0%	20%	40%	20%	13%	7%
14	A substitute teacher rarely teaches my child.	20%	40%	27%	13%	0%	0%
15	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	13%	47%	27%	13%	0%	0%
16	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	7%	47%	33%	13%	0%	0%
17	Students have access. when	13%	73%	13%	0%	0%	0%

	needed, to a school nurse.						
18	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	7%	60%	13%	7%	7%	7%
19	The district provides a high quality education.	0%	53%	7%	27%	7%	7%
20	The district has a high quality of teachers.	7%	40%	13%	13%	20%	7%

C. Community Involvement

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
21	The district regularly communicates with parents.	0%	47%	13%	40%	0%	0%
22	District facilities are open for community use.	7%	53%	40%	0%	0%	0%
23	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	7%	40%	13%	33%	7%	0%

D. Facilities Use and Management

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
24	Parents, citizens, students, faculty. staff.	0%	53%	27%	13%	13%	0%

	and the board provide input into facility planning.						
25	Schools are clean.	7%	73%	13%	13%	0%	0%
26	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	7%	67%	13%	13%	7%	0%
27	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	7%	53%	20%	13%	13%	0%
28	The district uses very few portable buildings.	7%	73%	13%	7%	7%	0%
29	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	7%	47%	33%	13%	0%	0%

E. Asset and Risk Management

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
30	My property tax bill is reasonable for the educational services delivered.	0%	53%	13%	27%	13%	0%
31	Board members and administrators do a good job explaining the use of tax dollars.	0%	47%	27%	27%	0%	0%

F. Financial Management

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
32	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0%	47%	40%	20%	0%	0%
33	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	0%	33%	47%	20%	0%	0%
34	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	0%	33%	60%	13%	0%	0%
35	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	0%	40%	60%	7%	0%	0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
36	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	7%	80%	0%	20%	0%	0%
37	Textbooks are in good shape.	7%	80%	7%	7%	0%	0%
38	The school library meets student needs for books and	0%	87%	0%	13%	0%	0%

	other resources.						
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H. Food Services

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
39	My child regularly purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.	27%	40%	7%	20%	7%	0%
40	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	20%	67%	7%	0%	7%	0%
41	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	7%	33%	27%	13%	20%	0%
42	Food is served warm.	7%	40%	27%	13%	13%	0%
43	Students have enough time to eat.	7%	60%	13%	20%	0%	0%
44	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	7%	60%	13%	20%	0%	0%
45	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	7%	33%	27%	40%	0%	0%
46	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	13%	67%	13%	7%	0%	0%
47	Cafeteria staff	13%	47%	27%	13%	0%	0%

	is helpful and friendly.						
48	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	13%	53%	20%	7%	0%	7%

I. Transportation

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
49	My child regularly rides the bus.	27%	33%	20%	7%	13%	0%
50	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	20%	33%	40%	0%	0%	7%
51	The length of the student's bus ride is reasonable.	13%	47%	20%	7%	7%	7%
52	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	13%	53%	27%	0%	0%	7%
53	The bus stop near my house is safe.	13%	53%	13%	0%	7%	13%
54	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	27%	47%	13%	7%	0%	7%
55	Buses arrive and depart on time.	20%	53%	13%	7%	0%	7%
56	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	20%	40%	27%	7%	0%	7%

57	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	13%	53%	20%	13%	0%	7%
58	Buses seldom break down.	7%	53%	27%	7%	0%	7%
59	Buses are clean.	20%	33%	13%	20%	0%	13%
60	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	0%	47%	40%	0%	0%	13%

J. Safety and Security

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
61	Students feel safe and secure at school.	0%	80%	7%	7%	0%	7%
62	School disturbances are infrequent.	0%	67%	13%	13%	0%	7%
63	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	20%	33%	20%	7%	0%	20%
64	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	7%	33%	33%	13%	13%	0%
65	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	7%	40%	27%	20%	7%	0%
66	Security personnel have a good working relationship	13%	60%	27%	0%	0%	0%

	with principals and teachers.						
67	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0%	53%	33%	13%	0%	0%
68	A good working arrangement exists between local law enforcement and the district.	0%	67%	27%	7%	0%	0%
69	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	7%	53%	20%	13%	7%	0%
70	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0%	60%	33%	13%	0%	0%

K. Computers and Technology

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
71	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	0%	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
72	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	0%	80%	13%	7%	0%	0%
73	The district meets student needs in	0%	80%	13%	7%	0%	0%

	classes in computer fundamentals.						
74	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	0%	53%	33%	13%	0%	0%
75	Students have easy access to the Internet.	0%	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%

Venus Independent School District

Appendix F

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

The narrative comments convey the perceptions and opinions of parent survey respondents and don't necessarily reflect the findings and opinion of the Comptroller or the review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments reviewed.

- I would like to say that it has helped my son; he has learned so much. I hope it keeps on helping. Thank you.
- From my point of view, the administrative staff has done a good job of informing me of my daughter's progress. I'm please with Venus ISD so far.
- High school students need to be better prepared for college.
- Venus is a good school district but the counselor at the high school should be more organized and keep better records to help students who are going to college.
- I am very pleased with the schools in Venus. My only concern is the relationship between student and teachers. A child should not be humiliated in class by the teacher, at any grade level. And treat all students the same no matter what the situation may be. And another complaint or my biggest complaint is parent's dropping their children at any bus stops; older children being dropped off at younger children's, without the permission of the parent.
- We moved from the Arlington ISD in 2002 to the VISD, and my third grader's education has improved greatly. In the AISD, he was put aside and labeled ADHD when, in fact, he only needed an extra boost from his teachers. He is not labeled at the VISD as anything other than a child. His grades are improving - on the A/B honor roll all this year! He does not show any signs of being an ADHD patient and I do not treat him as such- and neither does the district - which I appreciate! I'm happy that we made the move here and feel that all of my children are receiving the education they so well deserve! Most of my answers are "no opinion" only because they do not pertain to my children at this time, or I simply do not have the facts to formulate an opinion. I do know the district can use as much help as it can get and if my survey relays that, then I've done my small part. Thank you.
- I feel the education level is low. My son had never done homework at home. He likes his school too much. He is an A student, I feel because it is too easy. Thanks.

- Ala escuela de Venus le falta mucho por mejorar: sobre todo en lo que a los alimentos, el transporte y las atenciones de la gente: y quizas hasta racismo (The school of Venus needs a lot in order to improve: especially the food, transportation and the attendance: and maybe the racism.)
- I think that the Venus educational system is mediocre. And will not be what it needs to be until we start putting money into teachers. My child was irreparably damaged (emotionally) by this first/second grade teacher who used punishment rather than to put the effort into learning why the child wasn't finishing his work. He spent every recess at the fence doing "jail time" finishing papers. None of this was mentioned at meetings. My son told me at end of second grade one teacher saved my child in third grade, helped his self-esteem-he was doing honor roll work. Then his fourth grade teacher refused to talk to with him. She hated my son and it was apparent. The principal, at the time, refused to address any situation. The teacher's problem was deep post natal depression. I recognized the look and symptoms. It wasn't addressed. The gifted program was in name only. How will these children compete, in college, with gifted, or even non-gifted, children who's minds have been worked and flexed like the muscle it is. I'd rather have a good teacher than a new computer or new football uniforms or another basketball court.
- School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others: Some board members don't listen when other board members ask questions. It appears that some of the board is more concerned with getting the meeting over then resolving the issues. Some of the board members don't come prepared to the meetings, or don't attend meetings regularly. The board doesn't want to hear negative comments, and some of the board members seem to automatically ignore the comments from people that have made prior negative comments.
- The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader. The new superintendent has really not had a chance to show that she is the instructional leader, since she has been spending much of her time dealing with financial issues. Even though she has been dealing with a lot of financial issues, she has still been able to make some changes (better reporting to the board of failures rates and testing) in this area. One of our key concerns is that VISD started a project to align the curriculum a few years ago and it is still not done.
- Also, discipline is a key concern. These concerns are more directed at the campus administrators then the superintendent. VISD has a high rate of teen-pregnancy, which may be a result of the freedom that are children are given at the middle and high school level. Previously this year a number of girls were removed from the

volleyball team for stealing, which appears to have been going on for a number of seasons.

- The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager. The new superintendent has been able to convince the board that VISD was in financial trouble, especially if it continued its prior practices. Since she has been here, the district has hired a business manager. This should help the district to improve the way it performs its business/financial activities toward the way they should be.
- A change that already has been made, is that the district no longer pays employees with cash. Even though board members had brought the legality of this practice to the board's attention, the majority of the board chose to continue this practice.
- Question regarding activities funds (funds in the red), poor management and oversight (timely reporting of transactions), the legal use of these funds (scholarships, sponsoring non-school baseball teams) are areas of concern (mainly under the past superintendent). Also, what is considered student fund raising activities (i.e. selling the placement of advertisement on district property)
- Booster clubs reporting their activity and to what detail, to the district, per UIL rules, is also a concern.
- The previous business deals between a current school board member and VISD is an issue of public concern. (Not abstaining from voting). The bidding process for purchasing and selling items has been an area of concern. Also the use of purchase orders in the purchasing process has been extremely limited in the past.
- The relationship that exists between the city and the school district is a concern. There is no legal document stating what that relationship is or what it consist of (not just the library, but the use of the old administration building for vehicle parking, use of school equipment, use of school facilities for summer programs, etc). It appears that the city may be the group that is receiving the better end of the deal.
- The collection of delinquent taxes is a concern.
- The relationship between VISD and Keene Alternative School is a concern. (At one time, VISD had it's own AEP).
- The relationship between VISD and Faulk Cleaning company is a concern.
- School vehicles and equipment used by some employees is a concern.
- The district provides a high quality of services: The services that VISD provide are limited. The staff consists of some high quality teachers, those that are still developing (beginning teachers), and then those that are just putting in time. Children also have very few

electives to choose from. A number of VISD faculty teach/present the material one way and one way only.

- VISD faculty is not used in the most effective manor (number of students in the class, number of classes a teacher teaches, area of teaching specialty). VISD has a tendency to offer the courses that the teachers are willing to teach not what the children need.
- A number of the VISD faculty, do not expect the children of VISD to be able to achieve or accomplish much.
- A number of the faculty use the "over worked" or too many students excuse.
- Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective: I have attended board meetings in the past where the previous superintendent was asked if the proposed budget included "wish list" of all campuses, and he replied only those that he had received.
- Under the new superintendent it has yet to be determined. Currently, there are a number of teachers at the High School that would like to split the athletic period in half (one part could be used for band, the other for athletics). This would also reduce the credit problem at the high school.
- The needs of college bound students are not being met. Very few of VISD graduates attend college. Those that attend seem to have difficulty attaining passing grades. Also, VISD does not hold college nights (most high schools do), nor assist parents in the financial aspect of obtaining a college education. As of this date we have not received any information regarding college options for our ninth grader, which I believe that the TEC states is suppose to be done. It also appears that the faculty of the high school decides which students are college bound, with those children receiving most of the benefits (distance learning, knowledge of testing dates, scholarships). It also seems strange to us that almost all of the children that are staff dependents receive these benefits, which is a small percentage of the VISD population. Maybe it is because these people have knowledge of what is being offered or is available, versus the non-employees (residents) that do not.
- The needs of the work-bound students are being met: Agree and disagree are both checked, because some are and some are not. It seems that certain children are chosen and some are not. There is a appearance, just like with the college bound students that this may be based on the relationships that exist between the family and school staff, or if the child's parent has knowledge of what is offered and pushes the issue.
- The district has effective educational programs. Please take note that the district has been working on aligning the curriculum for at least the last three years. In the beginning of this year, it was stated that the curriculum alignment would be accomplished by the end

of the 2002-03 school year. At this point in time, there has been no visible progress on this project.

- Reading: Review the TAAS scores. The AR program offered at the middle school has a limited number of books for children to choose from. The majority of the books that are available are for the lower level reader. Currently the Middle School has combined the eighth grade writing and reading classes into one. It is our understanding, that this was done because one of the teachers that was hired could not control her class. At the high school level, those children that take pre-AP and AP courses have a very difficult time passing the AP test. Speaking with children and other parents in the community, some of the English teachers teaching techniques seem to be a concern. Comments of wasted time and outrageous assignments (eating a cricket) are made frequently.
- Writing: I have had the opportunity to read writing examples of a number of children within VISD. There is definitely a need here. From talking with some of the teachers, it appears that the students were not given the writing instruction that they should have received in the previous years. Parents make comments that VISD students do not have the proper training to write a paper after graduating from high school.
- Mathematics: This is probably VISD strongest area. Teachers like ___ and ___ are examples of the teachers that VISD needs more of. Please take note: Some of the other teachers in the math department maybe as good, but they have not been teaching at VISD long. I have noticed that some of the eighth grade students have a difficult time in counting money and making correct change.
- Science: Venus has some good science teachers and then there are some really bad teachers. Some of the teachers make their classes very interesting for the children, increasing their desire to learn. While some of the other teachers making their classes really boring. Also, it seems that some teachers have difficulty covering all the material. Two teachers at the middle school last year covered different amounts of the eighth grade science material.
- Computer Instruction: Very limited instruction is offered in this area. It also appears that for some reason very few children are interested. This fall, I was told by one of the computer teachers that her average class size was four to five. As a tax payer I have a hard time accepting class sizes this small. Also, it seems that some of teachers are learning the material as they are teaching the children.
- Social sciences: Look at TAAS scores. One of the teachers is known as the movie man. No textbooks are issued in this class, but the students watch movies day after day.
- Fine arts: Very limited offering. We also seem to have a high turnover of teachers in this field.

- Physical education: Program appears to be adequate. As a taxpayer I cannot understand why the district washes P.E. uniforms. It appears that it is a waste of money to pay a person a teacher's salary to wash uniforms. When we went to school it was our responsibility that the uniforms were clean. It also has been stated that uniforms are loaned out for various reasons.
- If physical education includes athletics then VISD does not provide an effective program. If you review the student participation level, you will find that in most sports it decreases. Comments of favoritism (number of coaches per sport, money spent on football versus other sports, disciplinary actions taken or not taken, playing time and positions on a team), undo yelling, lack of coaching skills and lack of interest in anything besides football by the athletic director are very common.
- Business education: Very limited class offerings.
- Foreign languages: Limited offering and parents are not notified when Spanish III is offered or not. This year only one child will graduate distinguished. Also, the level of instruction and material covered is significantly different based on who is teaching (Spanish I).
- Honors/Gifted and Talented Education: The G/T program is mainly pre-AP & AP courses at the high school. No additional enrichment material or activities is being offered to these children. When DEC visited VISD, in early fall 2002 there was a G/T meeting, but otherwise there seems to be very little activity in this area, both at the high school and middle school.
- Special Education: Johnson County Coop is responsible for this area to a degree.
- Some of VISD personnel don't want to follow special education requirements. VISD personnel believe that their approach is better than what psychologists and ARD committees develop. Our child's BIP states that the school is supposed to communicate with us weekly. It took approximately 12 weeks at the beginning of the school year for this to start working the way it should. Some school personnel don't understand student confidentiality. A number of VISD classroom teachers do not understand the different disabilities and how to handle/instruct the students. They want to teach one way and one way only. VISD testing process is interesting. We have experienced our child's IQ, going from 111 to 137, within less than 3 months. Data that was used by school psychologist to support his report regarding our child's evaluation was destroyed. The state psychologist licensing board has reprimanded this person for this action. The former superintendent released confidential information regarding the identification of a special education child in the open portion of a board meeting. Students at the middle school were seeing a psychologist without

the parents consent or notification that the child was participating in the program.

- Dyslexia program - does VISD have one? Our child had been identified as 504-dyslexic by another school district. After less than a year here, the child was tested and removed from the dyslexia program. This child still has a great difficulty writing, reading and spelling.
- Advanced placement program: Limited availability and parents are not notified of what is available.
- Literacy program: This may be the area where the community library falls. The city of Venus pays the school district \$1000 a year, and VISD picks up the rest of the bill to keep the library open an additional 10 hours a week. Very few people, especially non-students, use the library during these extra hours. Book fines and over due books are probably another area that this project is costing the school district. The hours that the library is open is also based on school employees' schedules. It is usually closed spring and Christmas break, when the students could benefit the most from it.
- Programs for students: The numbers of activities that are offered to the children have decreased over the years (look at previous yearbooks). The major activities offered are sports or music (band, choir). The amount of money that we spend on the different activities is not equitably spent. In some of the activities, the teams and positions are picked prior to anyone ever trying out. Favoritism exists in some activities and some campuses. The rules for participation vary greatly between the different activities, and very little of the rules are written down.