

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

August 22, 2001

The Honorable Rick Perry
The Honorable William R. Ratliff
The Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney
Members of the 77th Legislature
Commissioner James E. Nelson

Fellow Texans:

I am pleased to present my performance review of the Veribest 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 teacher and children, where it belongs. To aid in this task, I contracted with Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

I have made a number of recommendations to improve VISD's efficiency. I also have 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 53 detailed recommendations that could save Veribest ISD more than \$798,438 over the next five years, while reinvesting more than \$29,200 to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to reach \$769,238 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 also am pleased to announce that the report is available on my Window on State Government Web site at www.window.state.tx.us/tspr/veribest/.

Sincerely,



Carole Keeton Rylander
Texas Comptroller

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2001, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander began a review of the Veribest Independent School District (VISD) as part of a six-district project that also included reviews of the neighboring San Angelo, Wall, Grape Creek, Water Valley and Christoval school districts. These six districts are located near each other in Tom Green County. Based upon 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 53 recommendations could result in net savings of \$769,238 over the next five years.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review

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

Recognizing that only 51 cents of every education dollar is spent on instruction, Comptroller Rylander's goal is to drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom. Comptroller Rylander also has ordered TSPR staff to share best practices and exemplary programs quickly and systematically with all the state's school districts and with anyone else who requests such information. Comptroller Rylander has directed TSPR to serve as a clearinghouse of the best ideas in Texas public education.

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

- Ensure students and teachers receive the support and resources necessary to succeed;
- Identify innovative ways to address the district's core management challenges;
- Ensure administrative duties are performed efficiently, without duplication, and in a way that fosters education;
- Develop strategies to ensure the district's processes and programs are continuously assessed and improved;
- Challenge any process, procedure, program or policy that impedes instruction and recommend ways to reduce or eliminate obstacles; and

- Put goods and services to the "Yellow Pages Test": government should do no job if a business in the Yellow Pages can do that job better and at a lower cost.

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

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

TSPR in Veribest ISD

VISD is located in Tom Green County approximately 8 miles east of San Angelo on FM Highway 380. Veribest is a farming community that was originally named Mullins. After a conflict arose when the Post Office discovered another Texas town with the same name, a contest was held to find another name. Veribest was selected after a resident spotted a bread package by that name in a store.

VISD includes a high school, middle school and elementary school and serves a second campus location, The Roy K. Rob (RKR) Posted Adjudication Center, for 12- to 17-year-old males who have been convicted of a non-violent felony and have drug and/or alcohol abuse problems. The district is served by the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Regional Education Service Center XV (Region 15) in San Angelo.

The Comptroller's office contracted with Gibson Consulting Group Inc., an Austin-based firm, to assist with the review. The team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents, business leaders and community members and held a public forum on March 27, 2001 at the Veribest High School from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. To obtain additional comments, the review team conducted small focus group sessions with, teachers, administrators and board members. Details from the public forum and focus group sessions appear in **Appendix A**. The Comptroller's office also received letters and phone calls from parents, teachers and community members.

In an effort to ensure that stakeholders had an opportunity to give input, TSPR sent surveys to teachers, parents and students. A total of 80 respondents answered surveys: 11 teachers, 65 parents and four students completed written surveys. Details from the surveys appear in **Appendices B through D**.

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

VISD selected "peer districts" for comparisons based on district similarities in student enrollment, student performance, community and student demographics. The districts chosen were Coolidge, Novice, Water Valley and Panther Creek.

Exhibit 1 compares the demographic characteristics of VISD, its peer school districts, Region 15 and the state.

**Exhibit 1
Demographics of VISD, Peer Districts,
Region 15 and State Student Populations
2000-01**

	Enrollment	African American	Anglo	Hispanic	Other	Economically Disadvantage
Water Valley	315	0.6%	79.4%	18.4%	1.6%	38.7%
Veribest	272	0.7%	61.4%	36.0%	1.9%	30.5%
Coolidge	251	23.9%	43.0%	33.1%	0.0%	72.1%
Panther Creek	217	0.0%	86.6%	12.4 %	0.9%	37.8%
Novice	98	2.0%	82.7%	15.3%	0.0%	75.5%
Region 15	50,694	3.6%	47.8%	47.9%	0.7%	53.5%
State	4,071,433	14.0%	42.0%	41.0%	3.0%	49.2%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

During its six month review, TSPR developed recommendations to improve operations and save taxpayers \$798,438 over five years. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach \$769,238.

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

Acknowledgments

The Comptroller's office and Gibson Consulting Group Inc. wish to express their appreciation to the VISD Board of Trustees, retired Superintendent Dr. Ed Grimm and incoming Superintendent Mr. Lane Jackson, as well as district employees, students, parents and community residents who helped during the review.

Veribest ISD

In 2000-01, VISD served a population of 272 students, with 61.4 percent Anglo and 36 percent Hispanic. Nearly 31 percent of the student body of the district is considered to be economically disadvantaged.

The district's annual budget is \$2.2 million for 2000-01. In that year, VISD ranks in the middle of the peer districts regarding property tax rate and property value per pupil(**Exhibit 2**).

Exhibit 2
VISD Adopted Tax Rate and Taxable Property Value
Compared to Peer Districts
2000

District	Adopted Tax Rate	Taxable Property Value/Pupil
Coolidge	\$1.696	\$78,016
Veribest	\$1.500	\$186,363
Novice	\$1.500	\$241,995
Water Valley	\$1.500	\$181,785
Panther Creek	\$1.260	\$203,706

Source: Comptroller's Office, Property Tax Division 2000.

On August 16, 2001, the Texas Education Agency released the TAAS results for the 2000-01 school year. VISD received an overall Academically Acceptable Rating, down from a Recognized Rating in 1999-2000. Because this information came late in the review process and the cumulative test results will not be available until November 2001, the data presented throughout the rest of this report reflects 1999-2000 information.

The percent of VISD students passing TAAS was highest among its peers in math, second highest in reading, second lowest in writing and second highest in all tests taken and above the regional and state averages in all categories (**Exhibit 3**).

Exhibit 3
Percent of VISD, Region 15 and State
Students Passing TAAS, All Levels
1999-2000

Entity	Reading	Writing	Math	All Tests
Water Valley	92.3	91.2	90.4	85.7
Coolidge	93.4	86.5	90.4	87.8
Novice	90.7	100.0	95.3	88.6
Veribest	94.5	89.6	95.5	89.2
Panther Creek	96.8	91.7	94.7	90.8
Region 15	88.5%	89.3%	89.8%	82.2%
State	87.4%	88.2%	87.4%	79.9%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

While VISD had the second highest percent of students passing all test taken at 89.2 percent, a rate that is 7 percent higher than Region 15 and more than 9 percent higher than the state average, the district is faced with a number of challenges:

- Regaining control of district finances;
- Planning for the future of Veribest High School; and
- Encouraging community involvement.

Key Findings and Recommendations:

Regain control of district finances.

Develop a target balance for the general fund and manage to it. VISD's fund balance has steadily declined since 1997. An inadequate fund balance puts the district at risk of financial crisis should there ever be a need for an immediate, emergency source of funds. The district should develop a realistic budget and control expenditures by having all departments identify expenditures that can be reduced and placing a line item in the budget to increase the fund balance by a minimum of 10 percent per year. By controlling expenditures, the district can increase its fund balance to an optimum level.

Monitor the budget closely and tighten the system of internal controls. VISD staff should closely monitor the budget and keep the board informed of the district's financial position. Detailed procedures describing the steps

for all critical accounting functions and preparing bank reconciliations in a timely manner will allow the district to detect immediately and investigate any errors or irregularities.

Incorporate specific performance measures into the superintendent's evaluation. The district is facing a number of challenges including student enrollment, a declining fund balance and a need for future facility planning. The district should set specific, measurable goals for the superintendent and hold him accountable for accomplishing those measures.

Reduce staff and develop staffing formulas for all employee categories. VISD's staff over the last five years has increased at more than twice the rate of student enrollment. The district has no staffing formula and, with a declining fund balance, cannot afford to continue this rate of increase. Developing staffing guidelines for all categories of employees will enable the district to increase or reduce staff positions fairly when the student population increases or declines.

Establish evaluation measures for cafeteria operations. VISD's cafeteria is not a self-supporting function, and the district does not use any performance measures to evaluate its operation. Using assessment tools to evaluate its efficiency and effectiveness will help the cafeteria become more productive and self-sufficient.

Establish purchasing procedures that comply with state law. VISD does not seek competitive bids in accordance with TEA guidelines. The goal in purchasing is to obtain the best goods available at the lowest prices. By obtaining bids and quotes for purchased goods and services, the district will ensure that they are meeting purchasing requirements set by state law and obtaining items at reasonable prices.

Plan for the future of Veribest High School.

Review the opportunities and challenges of operating Veribest High School. Due to a lack of a strong high school experience, several important aspects of the curriculum and the overall educational plan were not in place when the school started in 1996-97. Some of these problems persist today. A committee made up of school and community members should be established to consider all options and come up with a plan of action.

Implement a strategic planning process linked to the budget. VISD does not have a long-range strategic plan to guide decisions or link district goals to planned expenditures. Strategic planning enables districts to define goals and objectives, establish priorities and determine specific

implementation steps. Linking the planning to the budget adds accountability and ensures that district resources are focused on achieving its goals.

Develop a facilities master plan that addresses all facility needs over next five to seven years. One of the most critical issues facing VISD is their facilities, and the district is without a long range plan. A long range facilities plan that addresses the high school and all other buildings will ensure that facility needs are met.

Participate in Lone Star program through the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) for reducing energy costs. VISD has not taken advantage of energy management programs that could save the district in energy costs. SECO offers a number of programs and services that could help the district conserve energy and save money.

Encourage community involvement.

Encourage the public to attend school board meetings. Many parents and teachers do not believe the board encourages community participation. Posting meeting notices on the Internet and in businesses and stores throughout the area will help the district to communicate to the public that they are a valuable part of the educational process.

Post VISD's policies and school news on the district's Web site. VISD does not put its policies or school news on its Web site and district news is limited to a weekly newsletter published by the high school English class. VISD should use their Web site for communicating school policies, board decisions as well as current and upcoming activities in their district to parents and community members.

Establish partnerships with area businesses. VISD does not routinely solicit donations from or encourage partnerships with businesses in Tom Green County. The district is small and has few businesses within its boundaries. By encouraging the employers of parents to participate in district projects, VISD can bring in needed support for the district's operation and student programs.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

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

- ***VISD's reading initiative maintains high expectations for students.*** VISD has implemented Accelerated Reader, a computerized program that helps the teacher develop individual plans and assists students in their reading. Reading Renaissance is another program used by the district that gradually increases the difficulty level and encourages students to take books home to read with their parents.
- ***VISD ensures that services are provided for special education students by participating in the Small Schools Cooperative.*** By participating in the cooperative, VISD receives many quality services such as expert diagnosticians, therapists and psychologists, training materials and literature, and periodic updates to current state and federal regulations to help meet the needs of their students.
- ***VISD's emergency crisis management plan effectively prepares the district for emergencies.*** VISD established a crisis management plan that provides a methodology and emergency evacuation plans for dealing with situations like tornadoes, fire, bomb threats and inclement weather. The plan has emergency phone numbers and a chain of command list that can be easily accessed by faculty and staff.
- ***Mandatory direct deposit streamlines the payroll process and reduces costs.*** VISD requires that all employees are paid through direct deposit which saves money by streamlining the payroll process and is convenient for employees.
- ***VISD's technology plan provides a guide for success.*** VISD has a thorough technology plan that articulates the mission, identifies goals and contains strategies to achieve objectives. Additionally, each strategy has a timeline, an estimation of cost and a person assigned to it to encourage success.
- ***Grant funds are used to purchase and integrate new computers for student learning.*** VISD effectively uses grant funds to support its technology needs by purchasing new computers and upgrading its T-STAR satellite and its cable to support distance learning.
- ***VISD inexpensively tracks bus fuel use.*** VISD uses a gas card system for fueling buses, where separate gas cards are used for each bus. This system provides a report on fuel use for each vehicle. The rates charged by the gas cards are competitive and the reports help identify problems with the buses.

Savings and Investment Requirements

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

TSPR recommended 53 ways to save VISD \$798,438 in gross savings over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities would cost the district \$29,200 during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of \$769,238 by 2005-06.

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

Year	Total
2001-02 Initial Annual Net Savings	\$78,038
2002-03 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$165,725
2003-04 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$165,725
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$165,725
2005-06 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$165,725
One Time Net (Costs)/Savings	\$28,300
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2001-2006	\$769,238

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 5**. The page number for each recommendation is listed in the summary chart for reference purposes. Detailed implementation strategies, timelines and the estimates of fiscal impact follow each recommendation in this report. The implementation section associated with each recommendation highlights the actions needed 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 that the VISD board ask its administrators to review these recommendations, develop an implementation plan and monitor its progress. As always, TSPR staff is available to help implement its proposals.

Exhibit 5
Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

#	Recommendation	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1 District Organization and Management								
1	Implement a strategic planning process that links the District/Campus Improvement Plan to the budget. p. 22	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2	Encourage the public to attend school board meetings and ensure that adequate time is allowed to hear all public concerns. p. 24	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3	Provide VISD's board with meaningful, well-organized information for each board meeting. p. 25	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
4	Prepare more detailed board minutes and improve the format. p. 28	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
5	Use timed agendas to better manage board meetings p. 29.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

6	Place board policies on the district's Web site. p. 29	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
7	Ensure that all board members are aware of continuing education requirements. p. 31	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
8	Incorporate specific performance measures into the superintendent's performance evaluation to improve accountability. p. 34	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
9	Develop staffing formulas for all employee categories and reduce staff accordingly. p. 38	\$60,486	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$544,374	\$0
10	Develop an employee handbook and distribute it to all employees. p. 39	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
11	Establish performance criteria for non-teaching staff members and school administrators and conduct regular employee evaluations. p. 40	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$500)
12	Post news and	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	bulletins on the district's Web site. p. 43							
13	Establish partnerships with area businesses. p. 43	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Chapter 1 Totals	\$60,486	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$544,374	(\$500)
Chapter 2 Education Service Delivery and Performance Measures								
14	Review PEIMS data collection methods and establish a system to verify the accuracy of PEIMS data before submitting it to TEA. p. 54	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
15	Employ fully certified teachers in their appropriate areas to the extent possible. p. 55	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
16	Closely review all opportunities and challenges regarding the operation of Veribest High School. p. 56	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
17	Develop functional curriculum guides and a curriculum management plan that includes all instructional programs. p. 58	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$600)
18	Effectively communicate with	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	the Small Schools Cooperative to improve services. p. 64							
19	Develop and implement pre-referral practices to ensure that all students are adequately served. p. 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
20	Fully implement the <i>Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students</i> . p. 68	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$6,000)	\$0
21	Update the school-to-career program to meet TEA recommendations. p. 71	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
22	Develop district/campus improvement plans that provide detailed information regarding compensatory funds to comply with state mandates. p. 74	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
23	Practice tornado and fire evacuation drills. p. 77	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
24	Install fire alarms in all portable buildings. p. 78	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$2,340)
	Chapter 2 Totals	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$6,000)	(\$2,940)

Chapter 3 Financial Management

25	Transmit direct deposit payroll data to the bank electronically. p. 87	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
26	Form a committee of superintendents, Region 15 representatives and representatives from the Texas Education Agency to explore the opportunities for shared financial services. p. 90	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
27	Develop a target balance for the general fund and manage to it. p. 92	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
28	Monitor the budget closely and prepare budget amendments in a timely manner. p. 94	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
29	Develop and document procedures for critical accounting functions. p. 95	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
30	Establish a committee of staff and administrators to assess the state employee health insurance plan and help determine the district's course of action. p. 100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

38	Participate in the Lone Star program administered by the State Energy Conservation Office to reduce energy costs. p. 121	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
39	Involve schools in energy conservation. p. 122	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
40	Develop disaster recovery plan for technology. p. 127	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
41	Develop minimum performance standards for personal computers and track vital statistics to ensure that obsolete equipment is retired. p. 128	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
42	Purchase refurbished buses and develop a bus replacement plan. p. 132	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$40,500
43	Coordinate an expanded driver training program with other districts in Tom Green County. p. 133	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$600)	\$0
44	Adopt a program to perform regular preventive maintenance inspections on	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	each school bus in the fleet. p. 134							
45	Establish evaluation measures and track data to analyze cafeteria operations. p. 142	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$400)	(\$60)
46	Implement a staffing productivity measure and reduce cafeteria staffing accordingly. p. 144	\$10,473	\$18,851	\$18,851	\$18,851	\$18,851	\$85,877	\$0
47	Purchase a point-of-sale system for food services. p. 146	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$2,400)
48	Annually assess meal rates to ensure that costs are recovered for full price meals. p. 147	\$6,237	\$7,485	\$7,485	\$7,485	\$7,485	\$36,177	\$0
49	Turn off the vending machines 30 minutes before the first cafeteria serving time until 30 minutes after the last cafeteria serving time. p. 148	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
50	Use daily attendance information by grade to determine the amount of food to prepare for daily lunch menus. p. 149	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

51	Annually conduct a survey of VISD students to find out what food items they would like to be served for lunch. p. 150	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
52	Aggressively seek to identify and qualify all eligible students for free or reduced priced meals. p. 151	\$0	\$17,575	\$17,575	\$17,575	\$17,575	\$70,300	\$0
53	Enter into a countywide food-purchasing cooperative. p. 152	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$21,210	\$0
	Totals-Chapter 4	\$18,752	\$45,953	\$45,953	\$45,953	\$45,953	\$202,564	\$32,040
	Gross Savings	\$81,438	\$169,125	\$169,125	\$169,125	\$169,125	\$757,938	\$40,500
	Gross Costs	(\$3,400)	(\$3,400)	(\$3,400)	(\$3,400)	(\$3,400)	(\$17,000)	(\$12,200)
	Total	\$78,038	\$165,725	\$165,725	\$165,725	\$165,725	\$740,938	\$28,300

Total Savings	\$798,438
Total Costs	(\$29,200)
Net	\$769,238

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the Veribest Independent School District (VISD) in three subsections:

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

The effectiveness of a district's organization and management may be evaluated against several critical success factors: a vision that is clearly communicated to staff and community members; an efficient and logical organizational structure supporting site-based decision-making; a planning, budgeting and improvement process that ensures resources are used efficiently and support district goals; a thorough and objective performance evaluation system; sound and consistent policies that comply with applicable laws; and board actions that demonstrate an understanding of members' roles as planners, policy-makers and performance monitors.

BACKGROUND

Veribest, like many towns in Texas, has an interesting history. A bread package logo was responsible for the community name "Veribest." Located eight miles east of San Angelo, Texas on FM Highway 380, the town of Veribest was originally named Mullins. A conflict arose when the Post Office discovered another Texas town with the same name. A contest ensued to find another name for the West Texas farming community. While shopping at the store next to the Post Office, a local resident caught sight of a bread package named "Veribest" and she entered that name in the contest. The catchy name was selected and replaced Mullins.

Veribest School District #10 was established on July 2, 1889. The school that exists today was built in 1927. Since then, the school has been remodeled and updated several times to meet the needs of the students. In 1996, the board voted to add a high school, and in 1999-2000, the district graduated its first senior class. VISD's total enrollment for 2000-01 is 272 students. Of that population, approximately 30.5 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged.

For this review, VISD selected peer districts for comparison based upon similarities in size, location, enrollment and property value. The districts chosen were Coolidge, Novice, Panther Creek, and Water Valley. Their enrollment and accreditation status are presented in **Exhibit 1-1**.

Exhibit 1-1
VISD and Peer District Comparison Data
2000-01

District	Enrollment	Accreditation Status *	Ethnicity					Economically Disadvantaged
			Anglo	Hispanic	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	
Veribest	272	Recognized	61.4%	36.0%	0.7%	0.4%	1.5%	30.5%
Coolidge	251	Recognized	43.0%	33.1%	23.9%	0.0%	0.0%	72.1%
Novice	98	Exemplary	82.7%	15.3%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	75.5%
Panther Creek	217	Exemplary	86.6%	12.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	37.8%
Water Valley	315	Recognized	79.4%	18.4 %	0.6%	0.0%	1.6%	38.7%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) 2000-01.

** Accreditation data based on 1999-2000 reports.*

Exhibit 1-2 shows total budgeted revenues and revenues per student for VISD and its peers. VISD had budgeted revenues of \$2.2 million in 2000-01. Compared to the peer districts, VISD had the second-lowest revenue. In revenue per student, VISD was the lowest of its peer group.

Exhibit 1-2
VISD Budgeted Revenues
Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Total Revenue	Revenue Per Student
Water Valley ISD	\$2,878,405	\$9,138
Coolidge ISD	\$2,378,344	\$9,475
Panther Creek ISD	\$2,289,829	\$10,552
Veribest ISD	\$2,204,087	\$8,103
Novice ISD	\$1,270,337	\$12,963

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-3 shows that VISD's total budgeted operating expenditures for 2000-01 were nearly \$1.9 million. Compared to its peer group, VISD had the second-lowest operating expenditures and had the lowest operating expenditures per student of the group.

**Exhibit 1-3
VISD Budgeted Operating Expenditures
Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01**

District	Total Operating Expenditures	Total Operating Expenditures Per Student
Water Valley ISD	\$2,552,912	\$8,104
Coolidge ISD	\$2,071,588	\$8,253
Panther Creek ISD	\$1,963,677	\$9,049
Veribest ISD	\$1,885,339	\$6,931
Novice ISD	\$1,181,733	\$12,059

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

In 2000-01, Texas school districts received an average of 48.5 percent of their revenue from local sources, 43.6 percent from state sources and 3.3 percent from federal sources. VISD receives 63 percent of its revenue from the state, which is above the state average but below most peer districts. (**Exhibit 1-4**).

**Exhibit 1-4
VISD, State and Peer District Revenue Sources
as a Percentage of Total Revenues
2000-01**

District	Local/Other Revenue	State Revenue	Federal Revenue
Coolidge ISD	15.3%	81.4%	3.3%
Novice ISD	29.0%	68.0%	3.0%
Water Valley ISD	30.7%	67.3%	2.0%

Veribest ISD	34.5%	63.0%	2.5%
Panther Creek ISD	37.5%	60.3%	2.2%
State	53.1%	43.6%	3.3%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

VISD spends 62.9 percent of its revenue on instruction, which is more than any of its peer districts and the state average. (**Exhibit 1-5**).

Exhibit 1-5
VISD and Peer District Expenditures for
Instruction as a Percentage of Total Operating Expenditures
2000-01

District	Total Operating Expenditures	Expenditures for Instruction	Instruction as Percentage of Total Operating Expenditures
Veribest ISD	\$1,885,339	\$1,185,805	62.9%
Novice ISD	\$1,181,733	\$668,023	56.5%
Coolidge ISD	\$2,071,588	\$1,168,475	56.4%
Water Valley ISD	\$2,552,912	\$1,430,301	56.0%
Panther Creek ISD	\$1,963,677	\$1,074,865	54.7%
State	\$23,994,222,366	\$13,871,475,883	57.8%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

VISD serves its 272 K-12 students at two campus locations. The district's main campus has a single permanent structure for elementary students and six portable buildings for the high school students. In 1996 the board of trustees voted to open a high school in VISD. Prior to this, VISD students in grades 9 through 12 attended either Paint Rock ISD in Concho County or Wall ISD in Tom Green County. In May 2000, the district graduated its first high school class of 19 students. The May 2001 graduating class had four students.

In September 1999, the district's second campus location, the Roy K. Rob (RKR) Posted Adjudication Center, opened in Veribest. This facility is for 12- to 17-year-old males who have been convicted of a non-violent felony

and who have had drug and/or alcohol abuse problems. RKR serves male youths from all over Texas. The minimum security, 48-bed residential facility is part of the state's juvenile justice system and is operated by Southwest Key of Austin. In accordance with a formal contract between Southwest Key and VISD, the district provides educational services to the center's students. VISD receives state funding for providing these educational services.

Initially, the district served six RKR students with 2.5 teacher positions and one full-time aide. Enrollment at the facility increased to approximately 40 students by February 2000. As of April 2001, the district provided four teachers, two aides and an administrator/teacher. The administrator/teacher spends approximately 75 percent of his time teaching and 25 percent in an administrative capacity.

In 1997 the district's fund balance was \$449,478; in the fiscal year ending 2000, the fund balance was \$103,916, a decrease of almost 77 percent over this three-year period. A fund balance is the difference between the district's assets and its liabilities, and represents investments in fixed assets, contributed capital and retained earnings. Fund balances or reserve balances are established by school systems to operate like a savings account, and serve as a source of funds in case of emergencies or as a mechanism for funding large purchases not normally affordable within a single year.

The TEA provides an optimum fund balance calculation to help school districts in Texas set spending and savings targets. VISD's fund balance was almost \$94,000 below the optimum balance on August 31, 2000. In addition, according to data submitted by the district to the TEA for fiscal 2000-01, budgeted expenditures exceed budgeted revenues by nearly \$43,000. This will further deplete the district's fund balance.

In September 1999, Veribest voters approved a \$3 million bond issue to fund the construction of a new high school. Initial plans called for a 38,000-square-foot facility that included eight classrooms, distance-learning capabilities, laboratory spaces for science, computers and home economics, a 500-seat gymnasium, a cafeteria and library. At the time of the bond election, VISD's board of trustees anticipated that students would begin classes in the new facility in fall 2001.

Prior to the bond election, VISD's Board of Trustees agreed that if state funding from the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) program was not approved for the high school, the construction bonds would not be issued. Late in 1999, when the district learned that they were not going to receive

any state facilities funding, they withdrew their IFA application from the program. VISD has applied for the IFA funding in 2001.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. GOVERNANCE

In Texas, a school district's organization begins with an elected board of trustees. Residents of the state's districts elect school board members either at-large, district-wide or from single-member districts that cover a portion of the school district.

The organization and management of a school district requires cooperation between elected members of the board of trustees and staff of the district. The board's role is to:

- set goals and objectives for the district in both instructional and operational areas;
- determine the policies that will govern the district;
- approve the plans for implementing those policies;
- select key management;
- establish property tax rates; and
- approve staffing levels, pay rates and the annual budget.

The board also determines facility needs and calls bond elections as necessary to support those needs.

Section 11.252 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) provides the requirements for district-level planning and decision-making. Each Texas school district must have a district improvement plan (DIP) that is developed, evaluated and revised annually. The plan must include:

- a comprehensive needs assessment addressing student performance on the Academic Excellence Indicators;
- measurable district performance objectives for the appropriate Academic Excellence Indicators for all student populations;
- strategies for improving student performance;
- resources needed for implementing strategies;
- staff responsible for ensuring the accomplishment of each strategy;
- timelines for monitoring implementation; and
- evaluation criteria for determining if the strategies are improving student performance.

The DIP must be developed by a districtwide committee comprised of board members, district staff, principals, teachers and citizens.

Section 11.252(c) of the TEC allows districts with one campus to combine the district- and campus-level committees and the DIP and the campus improvement plan (CIP) into one plan. VISD's site-based decision-making (SBDM) team prepares a combined DIP/CIP as allowed by state law. The principal, teachers and parents serve on the SBDM team.

VISD's board of trustees consists of seven members serving terms of three years, with elections held annually. The terms for at least two of the trustees expire each year.

All members are elected at large. On May 5, 2001, the district elected two new board members. Alta McClellen and Glen Moeller were elected to replace retiring board members Cody Scott and Dan Reed. The current board is shown in **Exhibit 1-6**.

**Exhibit 1-6
VISD Board of Education
2000-01**

Board Member	Title	Term Expires	Full Years of Service as of 5/2001
Danny Holik	President	May 2003	4 years
Glen Moeller	Trustee	May 2004	0 years
Vance Lankford	Secretary	May 2002	2 years
Calvin Boatright	Trustee	May 2003	13 years
Russell Gully	Trustee	May 2002	2 years
Alta McClellen	Trustee	May 2004	0 years
Bruce Gully	Vice-President	May 2003	4 years

Source: VISD, Board of Trustees List, May 2001.

Board meetings are held on the third Monday of each month. The public has an opportunity to provide input at each of these meetings; public comments are limited to five minutes per person. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the school library. Seating appears to be adequate for the size of the audience at most board meetings.

School board agendas are developed by the superintendent and the board president and incorporate requests from all board members. Packets of background materials are distributed to board members on the Thursday or Friday preceding the board meeting.

FINDING

VISD does not have a long-range strategic plan to guide key decisions or to link district goals to planned expenditures. The combined DIP/CIP addresses student performance, the learning environment and community involvement in schools. However, the plan is not tied to the district's budget, nor does it provide a measurement and accountability mechanism for ensuring progress toward district goals is tracked and evaluated regularly. In addition, the DIP/CIP does not address any non-instructional goals or long-term issues such as facilities. VISD's district goals for 2000-01 are shown in **Exhibit 1-7**.

Exhibit 1-7 VISD Goals for 2000-01

Goal	Description
Goal 1	All students will achieve a minimum of one year's growth in reading, math and language arts each school year.
Goal 2	Technology will be utilized to improve student learning and organizational efficiency in VISD.
Goal 3	VISD will improve all aspects of the school climate and learning environment to promote student success.
Goal 4	Parents and community members will become more fully involved partners in the education of children by 2001.
Goal 5	English as a Second Language students will develop reading and writing skills and will become fluent in spoken English as rapidly as individually possible.
Goal 6	A comprehensive gifted and talented curriculum will be developed for K-12 students.
Goal 7	VISD will develop a counseling program that addresses the student's academic, psychological and post high school needs.
Goal 8	VISD will address all areas of weakness identified by the Corrective Active Plan Task Force.
Goal 9	VISD will decrease substance abuse and incidents of violence through quality instruction and implementation of appropriate curricula and programs for EC-12 students.
Goal 10	Veribest ISD will develop a long-range plan to address increasing curriculum needs for grades K-12.

Source: VISD District/Campus Improvement Plan 2000-2001.

SBDM team members said that their team has no input in the budget process. As a result, the team may set a goal that does not have adequate funding allocated to achieve it. One example of this is Goal 7 as listed in **Exhibit 1-7**. The district has a single counselor position whose time is divided between the K-12 school and the RKR center. It will be difficult with this level of resources for VISD to develop this counseling program.

The district plans to build new school facilities, but does not have the financial resources available to carry out the plans. The district is counting on state funding assistance for building the new facilities, but because of the district's high property wealth and the minimal fund balance, obtaining this funding seems unlikely.

Through the lack of connection between planning and the budget, and failure to measure results through a rigorous program evaluation process, VISD is missing an opportunity to take advantage of a readily available tool for effective management.

Effective strategic planning includes:

- direction and focus from the school board and a steering committee to set priorities or major goals;
- broad-based and diverse committees set up to address the established priorities and develop activity plans addressing each priority;
- activity plans that contain measurable goals, dates and assignments of responsibility for implementation;
- two-way communication between the governing body and the committees during the plan development period;
- decisive governance that uses the recommendations of the committees to the greatest degree possible when approving the final plan;
- performance-based annual monitoring and adjusting of activity plans; and
- budgets requiring expenditures tied directly to the overall goals and priorities of the district.

Strategic planning enables school districts to define goals and objectives, establish priorities and determine specific implementation strategies. The process begins as a school district assesses its strengths and weaknesses, both in instructional and support areas. From broad goals, specific strategies can be developed. One of the most critical strategies involves the allocation of resources. Priorities are set, with some goals targeted immediately, while others are deferred until additional resources become available.

Long-range strategic planning tied to the budget is necessary for a district's success.

Recommendation 1:

Implement a strategic planning process that links the District/Campus Improvement Plan to the budget.

The district should expand the mandated improvement planning process into a true strategic planning process. The process should include goals for the DIP that affect the non-instructional function of the district. The DIP/CIP plan should be expanded so it becomes a meaningful part of the district's decision-making process. For example, the DIP/CIP plan could become the basis for evaluating accomplishments and determining spending priorities. Finally, the plans should be integrated with the budget. Specific objectives, such as a balanced budget, target expenditures per student, pupil-to-teacher ratio and the percentage of expenditures spent on instruction should be developed.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Board of Trustees establishes a series of public forums to discuss district priorities with community, teachers, principals and other district staff members.	September 2001
2.	The Board of Trustees sets district priorities.	November 2001
3.	The SBDM team meets to prepare the DIP/CIP. The team meets periodically with the superintendent.	December 2001 - February 2002
4.	The SBDM team presents the DIP/CIP to the Board of Trustees.	February 2002
5.	The Board of Trustees reviews and approves the DIP/CIP.	March 2002
6.	The SBDM team, superintendent and board of trustees meet to assign staff responsibility for carrying out the plan and to establish measurement criteria.	March 2002
7.	The Board of Trustees meets to develop the budget in relation to the DIP/CIP. The SBDM team is involved as necessary.	April - June 2002
8.	The SBDM team adjusts the DIP/CIP as necessary as the budget is developed.	June 2002
9.	The SBDM team meets periodically with the board of trustees to monitor the progress of the plan.	Quarterly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Many VISD parents and teachers believe the board does not encourage community participation. **Exhibit 1-8** shows a survey of parents by TSPR where 35 percent of the parents responding stated that school board meetings do not allow sufficient time for public input and 38 percent of parents believe that the board members do not listen to the opinions and desires of others.

Exhibit 1-8
VISD Parent Survey Results
District Organization and Management*

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	7.7%	47.7%	9.2%	21.5%	13.8%
School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	10.8%	36.9%	13.8%	20.0%	18.5%

Source: TSPR survey of VISD parents, April 2001.

** Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

In **Exhibit 1-9**, more than 35 percent of the teachers said they believe that the board does not listen to the opinions and desires of others.

Exhibit 1-9
VISD Teacher Survey Results
District Organization and Management

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	17.6%	47.1%	23.5%	11.8%	0.0%
School board members	11.8%	52.9%	0.0%	29.4%	5.9%

listen to the opinions and desires of others.					
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Source: TSPR survey of VISD teachers, April 2001.

VISD's board meeting agenda includes a section for public comment at every meeting; however, the district does not have a local board policy relating to time limits on parent or community input. Members of the public are required to sign in and state the topic they will address before a board meeting. The VISD board meeting minutes note the names of the individuals who spoke before the board and the topic of the discussion.

During the on-site visit for this performance review, the former superintendent told TSPR that VISD board meeting agendas were posted only on the door of the superintendent's office. Subsequent to the on-site visit, however, the new superintendent has started posting notices at the local post office and at a convenience store in a nearby community in addition to posting them on the door to the administrative offices.

Many districts encourage public participation by posting notices at post offices, convenience stores or restaurants. This practice makes meetings more accessible to the public and communicates to the public that they are a valuable part of the educational process. Some school districts post meeting notices on the Internet along with copies of minutes and other information that might be of interest to the community.

Recommendation 2:

Encourage the public to attend school board meetings and ensure that adequate time is allowed to hear all public concerns.

By encouraging the public to attend board meetings and allowing adequate time during the meetings for public input, the VISD board can improve public perception of the VISD Board of Trustees.

The board should instruct the superintendent to continue posting meeting notices and agendas in the post office and the convenience store. In addition, the board should also instruct the superintendent to post agendas in school hallways and on the district's Web site.

In addition to allowing the public more time for addressing the board, the board of trustees should provide feedback to the community regarding issues and concerns raised by posting minutes from board meetings on the district's Web site.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent begins to post notices of the board meetings at other locations in addition to the central office including the district's Web site.	September 2001 and Ongoing
2.	The board listens to the community and staff by allowing the public to have adequate time to voice their concerns and incorporates public input into their decisions.	September 2001 and Ongoing
3.	The board directs the superintendent to post agendas and minutes from board meetings on the district's Web site.	September 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Information contained in VISD's board packets is not well-organized and does not provide any analysis that might prove helpful during board deliberations. A typical board packet, prepared by the superintendent and delivered to board members on the Thursday or Friday prior to the next Monday's meeting, contains:

- an agenda;
- minutes from last meeting;
- a principal report;
- a counselor report;
- general ledger printouts; and
- a check register.

The reports from the principal and counselor are each in different formats and some reports contain typos and other errors. In addition, the general ledger reports are line-item-detail reports that do not provide any summary information such as cash on hand at the end of the month or year-to-date financial standing. Board members are provided a cash report, but this information is provided during the board meeting.

In the January 2001 board packet, the agenda states that the board will review and approve a budget amendment, but the amendment data was not included in the board packet.

Providing a detailed analysis of the information to the school board allows individual members to obtain a better understanding of the issues to be discussed. They also help meetings run more smoothly.

Recommendation 3:

Provide VISD's board with meaningful, well-organized information for each board meeting.

The board packets should provide a comprehensive analysis of information and include an agenda cover sheet to introduce the agenda item to the board members. The cover sheet should contain the following information:

- agenda item number;
- agenda item title;
- date;
- presenter name;
- type of agenda item (action or discussion);
- summary or background information;
- fiscal impact of action, if applicable;
- administrative consideration;
- administrative recommendation; and
- space for recording actions taken by the board.

A cover sheet is a useful tool for helping board members quickly understand the main points of the agenda items and the position of the administration.

In addition to an agenda cover sheet, board packets should also contain staff reports prepared in a standard format to facilitate ease in their review. Summarized financial data with a brief synopsis prepared by the superintendent, showing comparisons of budgeted amounts to actual amounts for both monthly and year-to-date results should also be provided in board member packets.

Board meetings should run more effectively and in less time with the cover sheets, because the board members will have a clearer understanding of the issues and know administrator's recommendations and considerations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent creates an agenda item coversheet and gets the board's approval.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent and district staff prepare an agenda item cover sheet for the items they will be presenting to the board.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent prepares a standard administrative report template for the principal and counselor reports.	October 2001
4.	The sunerintendent prepares summarized financial information	October

which includes budget-to-actual spending comparisons, along with a written synopsis of financial results for the period.	2001
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD's board minutes do not sufficiently describe the basis for district decisions, limiting the public's ability to hold the board accountable. Minutes are taken by the board member designated as board secretary, rather than by an employee of the district. Minutes include the votes taken by each board member; the motions made; including names of individuals making and seconding the motions; the resolution; the date of the board meeting; and times of call to order and adjournment.

The minutes do not contain the agenda number and agenda item title, nor do they elaborate on the discussions held at the meeting for each agenda item. For example, minutes for the February 19, 2001 board meeting provide the following descriptions of board votes:

Cody moved to continue to contract with Tom Green County Election Bureau concerning election procedures. Russell seconded the motion and it passed 5 to 0.

Russell moved to approve contract with First Southwest Company to apply for IFA funding. Bruce seconded the motion and it passed 5 to 0.

These descriptions do not state whether there was any discussion, nor does it describe the content of the discussion.

The format of the minutes does not have titles and agenda items to separate the topics. This makes it difficult to determine the end of one subject and the beginning of another. **Exhibit 1-10** presents an example of the format of the board minutes used by other school districts:

**Exhibit 1-10
Sample Board Minutes**

<p>Item #XXXX</p> <hr/> <p>Citizen Participation</p>	<p>Notes: This section should include the individual's name, the issue they are addressing and all discussions made between this individual and the board and district staff.</p>
<p>Item #XXXX</p> <hr/> <p>Request for Approval of Agenda</p> <p>7 Voted Yes 0 Voted No 0 Abstained.</p>	<p>Notes: Need only indicate who made the motion and second.</p>
<p>Item #XXXX</p> <hr/> <p>Discussion Item – Financial Report</p>	<p>Notes: This section should include main points of the discussions made among the board members and district staff and summarize the key elements of the financial report.</p>
<p>Item #XXXX</p> <hr/> <p>Action Item – Review the Coca Cola Contract and Take Appropriate Action</p> <p>6 Voted Yes 1 Voted No (name) 0 Abstained</p>	<p>Notes: In addition to the final outcome, motion made and the seconding of the motion, this section should include main points of discussion among board members and district staff with a clear indication of the process applied by the board and factors considered in making the decision.</p>

Source: TSPR, April 2001.

The minutes should give a clear indication of the process applied by the board and the factors considered in making decisions. Any person not in attendance at the board meeting should be able to read the minutes and clearly discern the issues at hand concerning a particular board decision.

Recommendation 4:

Prepare more detailed board minutes and improve the format.

The secretary of the board should develop more detailed minutes, using a tape recorder if necessary. The board secretary should also number agenda items and include the title of each agenda item in the minutes. Further, the board should change the formatting to create a more reader-friendly document. This will improve the board's accountability to the community by describing each decision thoroughly and in an organized manner.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The secretary takes detailed board meeting notes including what was said and by whom, using a tape recorder if necessary.	September 2001
2.	The secretary assigns each agenda item a number and formats the report to show a clear distinction between the different agenda items and the type of item recorded.	September 2001
3.	The secretary includes descriptions of discussions made for each agenda item, with particular emphasis on items that require a vote.	September 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD's board meetings last approximately four hours. Board meetings typically begin at 7 p.m. and last until approximately 11 p.m., as shown in **Exhibit 1-11**.

Exhibit 1-11
Length of VISD Board Meetings
2000-01

Date of Board Meeting	Type of Meeting	Time Meeting Called	Time Meeting Ended	Total Time for Board Meeting
9/18/00	Regular	7 p.m.	10:45 p.m.	3 hours 45 min.
10/23/00	Regular	7 p.m.	11:40 p.m.	4 hours 40 min.
11/20/00	Regular	7 p.m.	10:55 p.m.	3 hours 55 min.
11/27/00	Special	7 p.m.	10:41 p.m.	3 hours 41 min.
12/18/00	Regular	7:04 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	2 hours 26 min.
1/22/01	Regular	7:01 p.m.	11:25 p.m.	4 hours 24 min.
2/19/01	Regular	7 p.m.	11:07 p.m.	4 hours 7 min.

Source: VISD board meeting minutes for dates presented.

Some school districts manage board meetings by establishing timed agendas, including estimates for any time spent in executive session.

Otherwise, board meetings can become too lengthy and discourage community involvement.

Recommendation 5:

Use timed agendas to better manage board meetings.

Allotting time to each agenda item will help keep board meetings on track and allow meetings to adjourn at a more reasonable time. In addition, timed agendas help ensure the board does not get bogged down on particular issues.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and board president establish times for discussion of each major item on the agenda.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent and board president monitor the established times and make adjustments if necessary.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district maintains its policy manual on paper, which requires excessive effort to update and distribute. Maintaining hard copies of school policies can be costly in both labor hours and supplies. Additionally, fewer people have access to the policies.

The district maintains a Web site that contains general information about the school district. The district's technology coordinator maintains this site. Some school districts use their Web site to keep community members and parents apprised of the current activities of their district as well as a mechanism for communicating board decisions and policies.

Recommendation 6:

Place board policies on the district's Web site.

The district could save money by having students upload the administrative policy manual to the district's Web site. Once established, district staff would be responsible for maintaining and updating the online policy manual.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with the technology coordinator to discuss placing district policies on the Web site.	October 2001
2.	The technology coordinator has students convert files and place the policy manual online.	December 2001
3.	The superintendent ensures that online policies are updated as board policies are updated.	January 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Five of the seven VISD trustees did not take the number of continuing education hours required by state law from January 1, 1999 through December 31, 1999. In addition, a first-year board member did not take the required three hours of orientation on the Texas Education Code (TEC).

Texas school board members are required to take at least three hours of level two courses; however, all continuing education courses taken by the VISD board of trustees were level three.

The requirements, published by TASB, reflect Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part II, §61.1. Continuing Education for School Board Members is presented in **Exhibit 1-12**.

Exhibit 1-12 Overview of Continuing Education Requirements For School Board Members

Type of Continuing Education	First Year Board Member	Annual Requirements of Experienced Board Member
Orientation to the TEC	3 hours	Not required
Update to the TEC	Incorporated into Orientation to the TEC	After legislative session: of sufficient length to address major changes
Team-building Session/Assessment	At least 3 hours	At least 3 hours

of Continuing Education Needs of the Board-Superintendent Team		
Additional Continuing Education, based on assessed need and Framework for School Board Development	At least 10 hours	At least 5 hours
Total Minimum Number of Hours	16 hours, plus local district orientation	8 hours, plus update

Source: TASB, Leadership Team Services, January 28, 2000.

The hours of training attended by each board member from January 1, 1999, through April 2001, are presented in **Exhibit 1-13**. The district's records do not reflect whether the first-year board member met the applicable training requirements. He has served on the board since May 2000.

Exhibit 1-13
Continuing Education Hours Attended by VISD Board Members
1999-2000 through 2000-01

Board Member	Continuing Education Hours	
	1/1/99-12/31/99	1/1/00-2/15/01
Bruce Gully	8.0	4.5
Calvin Boatright	0.0	4.5
Cody Scott	8.0	4.5
Dan Reed	3.0	2.0
Danny Holik	2.0	2.0
Russell Gully	6.0	2.0
Vance Lankford	2.0	2.5

Source: VISD Board Member Continuing Education Reports, January 1, 2001.

Continuing education requirements help board members perform their duties and stay informed on current issues in schools.

Recommendation 7:

Ensure that all board members are aware of continuing education requirements.

The superintendent should monitor board training at least quarterly and inform board members if they have not met the requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The superintendent determines the number of hours, by tier level, that each board member needs to meet the requirements.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent contacts the TEA's Regional Education Service Center XV (Region 15) and TASB and requests course and conference schedules.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent prepares a report for each board member showing the number of hours taken for the specified school year, the number of hours needed (by tier level) and suggested courses that can be taken including dates, times, locations and costs, if any.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent distributes the report to each board member on a quarterly basis.	November 1, 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

It is assumed that board members will be able to take courses from Region 15 at no additional cost or attend additional sessions at TASB conferences. This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

B. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

A superintendent hired by the board serves as chief executive officer for a period of time stipulated by a contract that is subject to renewal, non-renewal or dismissal. District superintendents are responsible for determining the number of staff needed to accomplish district objectives, preparing and recommending an annual budget and supervising day-to-day operations.

While the school board is responsible for creating policy, the superintendent is responsible for implementing and carrying out that policy. The superintendent must also manage the district in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible. Section 11.201 of the TEC states that the superintendent primarily holds:

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

The TEC requires each school district to establish campus-level planning and decision-making committees that consist of representative professional staff from the school, parents, business representatives and community members. These committees advise and work with school administrators on campus planning, goal setting, budgeting, and decision-making.

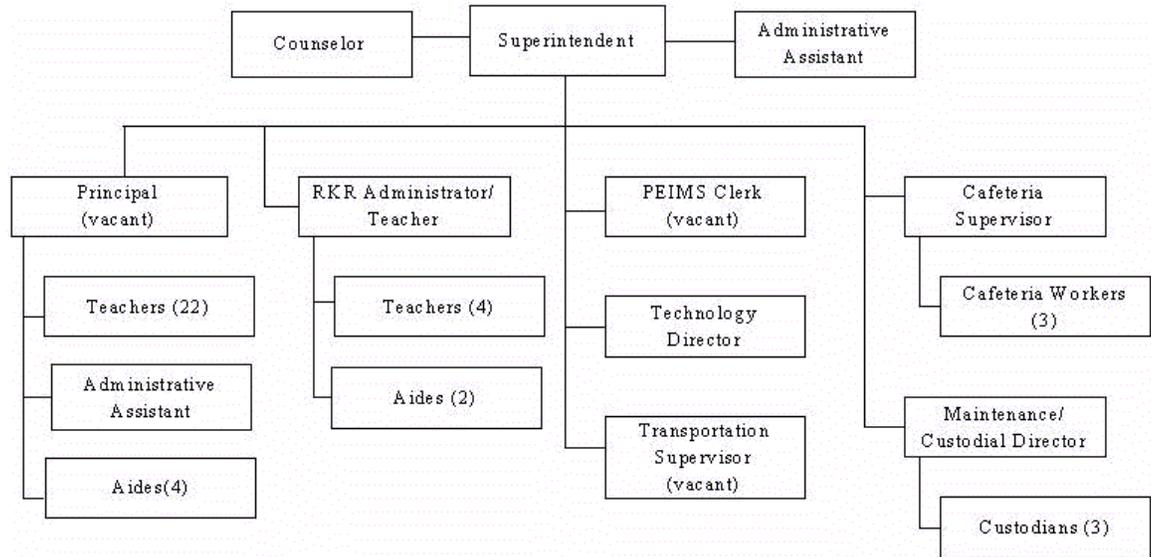
By law, school districts must establish a district-level planning and decision-making committee configured like the campus committees. At least two-thirds of the elected professional staff representatives from the district must be classroom teachers. Section 11.252(a) of the TEC requires that "each school district have a district improvement plan that is developed, evaluated, and revised annually in accordance with district policy, by the superintendent with the assistance of the district-level committee. The purpose of the district improvement plan is to guide district and campus staff in the improvement of student performance for all student groups in order to attain state standards in respect to academic excellence indicators (dropout rates, percentage of graduating who meet course requirements established for a recommended high school program, results of Scholastic Aptitude Test)."

Every two years, the law requires each school district to evaluate effectiveness of its decision-making and planning policies, procedures and staff development activities related to district and campus-level decision-making and planning. The evaluation is to be performed to ensure that district policies, procedures and staff-development activities are effectively structured to boost student performance.

The district is managed by a superintendent who directs personnel management, facilities use and management, asset and risk management, financial management, purchasing, technology, student transportation, food services and discipline management.

VISD's superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the district. Seven positions report directly to the superintendent. **Exhibit 1-14** shows the organization chart of VISD.

**Exhibit 1-14
VISD's Organization**



April 2001 *Source: VISD's Business Office, April 2001.*

When the on-site work for this performance review began in April 2001, Dr. Ed Grimm was VISD's superintendent. However, Dr. Grimm retired on June 15, 2001, and the school board hired Lane Jackson to take the superintendent position effective July 1, 2001. The board screened more than 17 applicants, narrowing the field to eight applicants for interviews. The board of trustees and the site-based committee interviewed the candidates before making an offer to Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Jackson was the superintendent in Blackwell Consolidated ISD, located north of Veribest in Nolan County. Mr. Jackson has eight years experience as a superintendent.

FINDING

The superintendent's performance evaluation does not contain specific measures of performance. The lack of specific measures of performance results in a highly subjective review of the superintendent.

VISD uses an appraisal based on seven evaluation criteria:

- School improvement;
- Board/superintendent relations;
- Administration and school climate;
- Personnel management;
- Management of fiscal and facilities functions;
- Student management; and

- Professional growth and development.

The superintendent is evaluated using one of seven rating levels: superior, outstanding, exceeds expectations, satisfactory, acceptable/improvement needed, unsatisfactory/improvement required and unacceptable performance.

The district faces a number of challenges including increasing enrollment, a declining fund balance and future facility planning. The board must clearly communicate its expectations to the superintendent, or VISD, like so many other districts, will see itself blaming or praising the superintendent for things based purely on subjective perceptions rather than on clear and measurable criteria.

Many school districts include specific measures for making superintendent evaluations more objective, letting facts demonstrate performance. For example, many schools establish targets such as student performance gains and hold the superintendent responsible for achieving or maintaining those targets.

Recommendation 8:

Incorporate specific performance measures into the superintendent's performance evaluation to improve accountability.

The board's annual appraisal of the superintendent should include a review of performance against specific, measurable criteria. Some of the criteria that VISD should include in the superintendent's performance evaluation are preparing a balanced budget and achieving targets for the fund balance approved by the board, for operating expenditures per student and for the percentage of operating expenditures spent on instruction.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board includes specific district objectives in the superintendent's evaluation. In subsequent years these objectives will be identified in the district improvement plan.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent prepares a comparison of actual performance against stated objectives and presents it to the board at least one month prior to the superintendent's performance evaluation.	December 2001
3.	The board compares actual to target performance and mentions specific measures of performance in the written evaluation of the superintendent.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

C. PERSONNEL

Personnel management is critical for a school district. 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 fair and workable policies, procedures and training are important for the recruitment and retention of competent staff. The district superintendent is responsible for all oversight of personnel management at VISD.

Exhibit 1-15 shows average teacher salaries for VISD, its peer districts and the state. VISD ranks second-lowest in average teacher salaries among the peer districts. The highest average teacher salary rate among the peers is Panther Creek ISD, which pays its teachers an average of \$2,338 more annually than VISD. VISD also falls below the state average by \$4,305.

Exhibit 1-15
VISD and Peer District Average
2000-01 Teacher Salaries

District	Average Salary for Teachers
Panther Creek	\$36,392
Water Valley	\$35,710
Coolidge	\$34,277
Veribest	\$34,054
Novice	\$32,546
State	\$38,359

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-16 compares VISD teacher salaries with those of its peers and with the state average. As the exhibit shows, VISD ranks lowest among the peer districts in beginning teacher salaries and is below the state average of \$27,007. In the category of salaries for teachers having one to five years of experience and the category of more than 20 years

experience, VISD ranks third highest among the peer districts. VISD ranks second highest in the six to ten years of experience category, and is also higher than the state average in this category. For the category of salaries for teachers having 11 to 20 years of experience, VISD ranks second lowest among peers, but is higher than the state average.

Exhibit 1-16
VISD and Peer District Average Teacher Salary
by Years of Experience
2000-01

Years of Experience	Coolidge	Novice	Panther Creek	Veribest	Water Valley	State
Beginning Teachers	\$26,240	N/A	\$31,763	\$25,640*	N/A	\$27,007
1-5 years	\$28,984	\$26,760	\$26,886	\$28,045	\$29,066	\$28,758
6-10 years	\$33,597	\$30,277	\$30,118	\$34,216	\$34,535	\$33,499
11-20 years	\$40,671	\$36,332	\$42,851	\$40,560	\$40,842	\$39,499
More than 20 years	\$42,800	\$40,798	\$40,798	\$42,600	\$44,132	\$43,602

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

**VISD Administration Office.*

Exhibit 1-17 shows that VISD has the highest average salary for administrators compared to its peers, but pays \$9,425 less than the average state administrative salary. In VISD, the superintendent is paid an annual supplement of \$3,600 for driving a regular bus route. When taking this supplement into account, VISD's administrator annual salary is \$62,000.

Exhibit 1-17
VISD and Peer District
Central Administrative Salaries
2000-01

District	Average Salary for Central Administration
Veribest	\$65,600
Water Valley	\$62,000

Coolidge	\$60,000
Panther Creek	\$60,000
Novice	\$55,100
State	\$75,025

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

FINDING

VISD's total staffing has risen nearly 114 percent over the last five years, while student enrollment for the same period rose only 55 percent. Some of this increase is attributed to the addition of the high school and enrollment growth at the RKR facility.

Exhibit 1-18 shows the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) positions at VISD.

Exhibit 1-18
VISD Staffing and Enrollment
1996-97 through 2000-01

Staff	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Counselor	0.5	0.50	0.7	1.0	1.0	100.0
Instructional Officer	0.5	0.50	0.3	1.0	1.1	112.1
Principal	0.7	0.67	1.0	1.0	1.2	74.2
Nurse	0.6	0.00	0.4	1.0	1.0	66.7
Superintendent	0.3	0.33	1.0	0.3	1.0	233.3
Teacher	15.6	16.3	21.3	26.2	26.9	72.7
Educational Aide	4.0	6.0	5.0	4.9	6.5	62.2
Auxiliary	1.5	4.8	7.6	11.9	11.9	693.3
Total	23.7	29.1	37.3	47.4	50.6	113.5
Enrollment	176	203	208	231	272	54.5

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

The district does not use staffing allocation formulas to determine appropriate levels of staffing for each category of employee. Teacher staffing has increased by nearly 73 percent, and there has been a significant increase in auxiliary employees with a total of more than 11 positions. The district could not identify the 11 auxiliary employees and felt that was a reporting error.

The staffing increases over the past five years have resulted in both the student-to-teacher and the student-to-staff ratios being lower than the state average, as seen in **Exhibit 1-19**.

Exhibit 1-19
Student/Teacher and Student/Staff Ratios
2000-01

	2000-01	State Average
Student-to-Teacher Ratio	10.1:1	14.9:1
Student-to-Staff Ratio	5.4:1	7.5:1

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Workforce planning is critical to the success of a district and its students. Consistent staffing guidelines for all categories of employees enable districts to increase or reduce staff positions when student population increases or declines.

Recommendation 9:

Develop staffing formulas for all employee categories and reduce staff accordingly.

The new superintendent has recognized that both instructional and auxiliary staff should be reduced and has begun reducing staff through attrition. Since auxiliary staffing is addressed later in this report, this recommendation will concentrate on reducing the instructional staff by four positions for 2002-03, which will bring it more in line with student enrollment increases.

Additionally, implementing and hiring freeze on non-critical vacancies and developing staffing formulas that have some flexibility for special needs will ensure that all areas of district operation are treated with equity in the hiring of staff.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent implements a hiring freeze on specific positions and only fills critical vacancies.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent reviews existing staffing levels for all non-teaching categories and determine baseline needs for the district.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent and the principal review existing staffing levels for instructional staff and determine baseline needs for the district.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent approves staffing allocation guidelines, freezes hiring for any overstaffed positions and makes appropriate transfers of personnel pending full implementation in the coming school year.	November 2001
5.	The superintendent implements staffing guidelines.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

For purposes of this estimate, the calculation is based on a beginning teacher's salary of \$24,240 annually with no stipend, a variable benefits rate of 18 percent and an annual fixed benefits rate of \$1,640. Reducing four positions will result in annual savings of \$120,972.

Starting teacher salary	\$ 24,240
Variable benefits	1.18
	<u>\$ 28,603</u>
Fixed benefits	\$1,640
Total salary and benefits	<u>\$30,243</u>
Multiply by 4	<u>\$120,972</u>

The fiscal impact is calculated by reducing staff by four teachers starting in 2002-03 based on a current beginning teacher's salary with no stipend (\$24,240). First year estimates are reduced by one-half based on the hiring freeze and attrition.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Develop staffing formulas for all employee categories and reduce staff accordingly.	\$60,486	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$120,972	\$120,972

FINDING

VISD does not have an employee handbook to provide a summary of district policies, benefits, employee obligations and policy violations. The

lack of a handbook results in employees being less informed about policies and procedures. The district does have a teacher handbook that was developed by VISD's principal.

An employee handbook typically contains:

- a summary of employment policies;
- evaluation procedures;
- compensation and benefits descriptions;
- leave and absence policies;
- employee relations and communications;
- employee conduct and welfare;
- general procedures; and
- termination procedures.

Employee handbooks can be helpful to employees, especially new hires, by providing valuable data in an easily accessible format. Information such as payroll processing procedures, payroll policies, leave benefits, sexual harassment prevention policies and safety precautions are vital knowledge for all employees. Employees who are well-informed in what they should and should not be doing, and who have readily accessible information regarding employment matters, are more prepared to do their jobs.

Recommendation 10:

Develop an employee handbook and distribute it to all employees.

By developing an employee handbook, the district will have a well-informed work force.

The superintendent should request assistance from the principal in developing an employee handbook. Sources such as TASB and Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) can also be used.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the principal to draft an employee handbook.	February 2002
2.	The principal contacts TASB, TASBO and other organizations to obtain guidance for developing an employee handbook.	February 2002
3.	The principal develops an initial draft of an employee handbook.	March 2002
4.	The superintendent reviews the handbook and submits it to the	April 2002

	board for review.	
5.	The board reviews and approves the handbook.	April 2002
6.	The superintendent distributes the handbook to all non-teaching employees.	May 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not have performance criteria established for non-teaching staff members, nor does the district provide formal written employee evaluations to non-teaching staff. The lack of performance criteria or written evaluations for non-teaching staff leaves employees uncertain of their roles and the expectations placed upon them.

Performance criteria should provide expectations for employees as well as feedback on their performance. Performance criteria help employees become more efficient and effective in their jobs by helping them plan their work and know their expectations, by providing periodic evaluations based on the established criteria, and by providing corrective feedback or reward for performance. In addition, a formal employee evaluation process provides employees with an opportunity to submit feedback to their supervisors.

Recommendation 11:

Establish performance criteria for non-teaching staff members and school administrators and conduct regular employee evaluations.

Establishing performance criteria for non-teaching staff will help VISD employees become more effective in their jobs.

VISD should use TASB guidelines to develop an employee performance appraisal system.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board of trustees directs the superintendent to establish performance criteria for all non-teaching employees.	December 2001
2.	The superintendent prepares performance criteria for each position and submits them to the board of trustees.	February 2002

3.	The board of trustees reviews and approves the established performance criteria.	February 2002
4.	The superintendent distributes all performance criteria to the appropriate non-teaching personnel.	March 2002
5.	The superintendent uses TASB and other resources to develop employee performance evaluations for each district position.	April 2002
6.	The superintendent begins to conduct employee evaluations for each non-teaching position.	May 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

VISD can obtain a TASB personnel guide that includes evaluation templates for a one-time fee of \$500.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Establish performance criteria for non-teaching staff members and school administrators and conduct regular employee evaluations.	(\$500)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

D. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local school districts were established to be responsive to the needs of their community, which includes students, parents, non-parent residents, taxpayers, businesses, other political subdivisions and special interest groups. By the same token, if the community is to respond appropriately to the district's needs and concerns, it must be well informed about issues facing the district. For this reason, districts need mechanisms to disseminate information and to gather feedback from community members.

Effective two-way communication enables school districts to win the confidence, support and involvement of their local communities. Similarly, school districts need the support of local organizations and businesses to enhance educational programs. A good partnership and outreach program needs to be in place; one that fosters the district's relationship with the community and supports school activities.

Texas school districts use a variety of methods to generate community involvement. Some school districts have large departments dedicated to this job, while smaller districts must rely on a handful of people who perform a variety of community relations duties. The board of trustees can also play an important role in community involvement. Boards perceived as accessible and sensitive to citizens' concerns are less likely to be seen as insulated from the community.

An effective school district community relations program can be established through regular communication with the media, parents, business and community leaders, students and employees.

Community involvement usually includes activities that enable parents, business leaders and others with an interest in public education to have a voice in a school district's activities. Many of these activities can be visible in the community, so the superintendent or a high-ranking administrator usually handles the coordination of these activities.

In VISD, the district's superintendent is largely responsible for community involvement, although the principal and teachers are also involved.

FINDING

VISD does not post news or messages for parents and the community on its Web site. The district does produce a weekly newsletter, published by the high school English class under the direction of the Journalism teacher. The newsletter is taken home to parents each week by students.

Despite this effort, a large percentage of parents and teachers feel that the district does not communicate well with parents. **Exhibits 1-20** and **1-21** summarize the results of the TSPR surveys administered to parents and teachers for their opinions on the district's organization and management issues.

**Exhibit 1-20
Parent Survey Responses**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The district regularly communicates with parents.	7.7%	33.8%	6.2%	43.1%	9.2%
District facilities are open for community use.	12.3%	56.9%	18.5%	7.7%	4.6%
Schools have plenty of volunteers to help students and school programs.	13.8%	44.6%	15.4%	18.5%	7.7%

Source: TSPR survey of VISD parents, April 2001.

As shown in **Exhibits 1-20** and **1-21**, 52 percent of VISD parents and 36 percent of VISD teachers surveyed feel that the district does not communicate regularly with parents. Given that VISD does not have its own local television and radio stations, a district newsletter and web page are the best means of communicating to the public.

**Exhibit 1-21
Teacher Survey Responses***

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The district regularly communicates with parents.	0.0%	54.5%	9.1%	36.4%	0.0%
The local television and	0.0%	27.3%	0.0%	27.3%	45.5%

radio stations regularly report school news and menus.					
Schools have plenty of volunteers to help students and school programs.	0.0%	36.4%	9.1%	45.5%	9.1%
District facilities are open for community use.	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%	0.0%	9.1%

*Source: TSPR survey of VISD teachers, April 2001. * Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

Many school districts that maintain Web sites use this mechanism to inform parents and community members of important district news or bulletins and any upcoming events. VISD has an instructional technology class and could easily incorporate a similar program, which would keep the community well-informed about district activities.

Recommendation 12:

Post news and bulletins on the district's Web site.

Posting news and bulletins on the district's Web site will enable VISD to further ensure that they are communicating to parents and the community.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with the instructional technology teacher to plan for including news and bulletins on the district's Web site.	October 2001
2.	The instructional technology teacher implements the plan.	November 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not routinely solicit donations from businesses in the community and within Tom Green County. With the exception of the contributions made by the Concho Valley Electric Cooperative when

partnering with the district in the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) program, there have been few business or community contributors to the district.

Another large business, Ethicon has been approached about helping support the district, but they have not been interested in participating. The superintendent and board members say there are few other businesses in the town of Veribest.

Some small school districts near larger communities tap businesses in those communities to form partnerships. Other districts have created education foundations composed of business leaders, parents and other interested parties who sponsor fund-raising activities such as community carnivals and golf tournaments.

Recommendation 13:

Establish partnerships with area businesses.

While there are few businesses in Veribest, VISD could begin by asking parents if their employer would be interested in becoming a partner with the district. The district could also request the PTA or similar organizations assist in identifying businesses. VISD would benefit from business relationships either monetarily through donations and sponsorships or mentoring programs by employees of these businesses. In return, VISD could provide free advertising in the district newsletter or on the Web page.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with PTA and other organizations to solicit their assistance.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent writes an article in the VISD newsletter requesting parent and community assistance.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent and principal contact organizations and pursue business partnerships and determine what the business will provide the school.	November 2001 through May 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter discusses the Veribest Independent School District's (VISD's) educational service delivery system and student performance measures in three sections:

- A. Student Performance
- B. Special Programs
- C. Safety and Security

Effective educational service delivery requires appropriate instructional guidance, capable teachers, adequate resources and a thorough understanding of students' instructional needs. Well-designed and implemented instructional programs are essential to meet the needs of all students in VISD. Instructional leadership from VISD's central office and at the schools is directly responsible for these programs' effectiveness.

BACKGROUND

VISD selected four Texas school districts to serve as peer districts for comparison purposes: Water Valley, Coolidge, Novice and Panther Creek ISDs. Three of these districts are in the immediate geographical area, and Coolidge ISD is located in central Texas. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided information on the state-mandated student achievement test scores, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and other student performance measures.

Exhibit 2-1 presents demographic information for VISD, the selected peer districts, Regional Education Service Center XV (Region 15) and the state.

Exhibit 2-1
Demographic Characteristics
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
2000-01

District	Student Enrollment		Ethnic Groups					Economic Disadvantaged	
	Number	5 Year Percent Change*	Percent African American	Percent Hispanic	Percent Anglo	Percent Other	Percent Minority	Percent	5 Year Percent Change*
Water	315	(21.3%)	0.6%	18.4%	79.4%	1.6%	20.6%	38.7%	(2.8%)

Valley									
Veribest	272	54.5%	0.7%	36.0%	61.4%	1.8%	38.6%	30.5%	(25.4%)
Coolidge	251	(5.3%)	23.9%	33.1%	43.0%	0.0%	57.0%	72.1%	(12.4%)
Panther Creek	217	(12.1%)	0.0%	12.4%	86.7%	0.9%	13.3%	37.8%	(33.3%)
Novice	98	(12.5%)	2.0%	15.3%	82.7%	0.0%	17.3%	75.5%	9.7%
Region 15	50,696	(3.8%)	3.6%	47.9%	47.8%	0.7%	52.2%	53.5%	5.1%
State	4,071,433	6.3%	14.4%	40.5%	42.1%	3.0%	57.9%	49.2%	2.3%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01 and AEIS 1996-97.

**Percent Change is defined as 2000-01 values minus 1996-97 values divided by 1996-97 values.*

Demographics, staffing and financial data for each school district and school are reported in TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports. These reports are sent to each school and district and are available on TEA's Internet Web site, www.tea.state.tx.us. The latest AEIS data, published by TEA in November 2000, are for 1999-2000. Selected information is available for 2000-01 as submitted by districts to the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) in the Fall 2000 data submission. These data will be used whenever possible and when compatible with data from 1999-2000 that cannot be updated. PEIMS information is also available at the TEA Web site. There is potential in small districts for a small number of staff or students to have a large impact on stated percentages, so TSPR takes care when interpreting differences among peer districts and state averages.

For 2000-01, VISD's enrollment was 272. This is an increase of more than 50 percent in the five-year period beginning in 1996-97. However, almost half of this increase occurred from 1999-2000 to 2000-01 (from 231 to 272). VISD added a high school in 1996-97, accounting for much of this enrollment increase. Two of the peer districts are approximately the same size as VISD. Panther Creek ISD is somewhat smaller, and Novice ISD is only about one-third the size of the three larger districts. Minority student enrollment in the districts ranges from 13.3 percent in Panther Creek ISD to 57 percent in Coolidge ISD. VISD falls in the middle with a 38.6 percent minority student enrollment.

At 30.5 percent, VISD has the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students among its four peer districts. Between 1996-97 and 2000-01, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the state has increased by about two percent. In VISD, the percentage of economically disadvantaged decreased by 25 percent in the same time period. All of the peer districts except Novice ISD showed a decline in the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

As shown in **Exhibit 2-2**, VISD ranks in the middle in instructional expenditures per student, at \$4,669 per student, when compared to its peer districts. Only Novice ISD, which is considerably smaller, has a per-pupil expenditure for instruction significantly different from the other districts. Approximately 72 percent of the district's instructional expenditures are directed to regular instruction. This percentage is the highest among the peer districts. The PEIMS reports show that there are differences in the expenditure patterns among VISD and its peer districts. The calculated amounts per student are based on the district enrollment in 1999-2000.

Exhibit 2-2
Actual Instructional Expenditures
VISD, Peer Districts and State
1999-2000

District	Total Expenditures	Instruct. Expend Per Student*	Percent Regular	Percent Gifted & Talented	Percent Special Educ.	Percent Career & Tech.	Percent Bil/ESL	Percent Compensatory
Novice	\$1,348,861	\$6,506	61.1%	0.5%	12.4%	7.8%	0.0%	14.2%
Panther Creek	\$2,426,124	\$5,086	56.8%	1.8%	18.0%	6.2%	0.0%	12.7%
Veribest	\$2,084,013	\$4,669	71.5%	0.3%	15.3%	5.5%	0.0%	6.3%
Water Valley	\$3,249,351	\$4,645	66.0%	2.3%	14.8%	5.6%	0.0%	6.9%
Coolidge	\$2,301,242	\$4,457	57.4%	0.2%	14.6%	6.1%	0.1%	18.1%
State	\$31,639,852,010	\$3,738	61.5%	1.7%	15.2%	4.0%	3.7%	11.7%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 1999-2000.

*Includes instruction and instructional leadership expenditures.

As shown in **Exhibit 2-3**, VISD reported the third highest percentage of students identified as special education when compared to its peer

districts. The percentage of students enrolled in the bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in most peer districts is significantly lower than the percentage of students enrolled in bilingual/ESL statewide. VISD ranks in the middle of percentage of students enrolled in career and technology education programs.

**Exhibit 2-3
Student Enrollment by Program
2000-01**

District	Percent Bilingual/ESL	Percent Career & Technology	Percent Gifted & Talented	Percent Special Education
Panther Creek	0.5%	35.0%	12.9%	21.2%
Veribest	5.9%	29.4%	2.6%	19.9%
Novice	0.0%	50.0%	9.2%	22.4%
Coolidge	13.5%	21.9%	5.6%	19.5%
Water Valley	0.3%	36.2%	4.8%	17.5%
Region 15	6.8%	22.9%	8.1%	13.9%
State	12.5%	18.9%	8.4%	12.1%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-4 shows the percentage of professional staff in various categories. VISD ranks in the middle compared to its peers regarding percentage of teachers, but is above the state average. VISD is close to the state average in the other staffing areas except percent minority teachers, where all of the peer districts are well below the state average.

**Exhibit 2-4
Professional Staff
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
2000-01**

Professional Staff	Water Valley	Veribest	Panther Creek	Coolidge	Novice	Region 15	State Avg.
Teachers	62.3%	53.2%	54.2%	68.3%	51.8%	50.1%	50.6%
Professional Support	3.7%	6.4%	3.4%	5.1%	8.9%	6.8%	7.9%
Campanis	3.7%	2.1%	4.7%	5.1%	3.2%	2.6%	2.4%

Administration							
Central Administration	1.3%	2.0%	2.4%	2.6%	3.6%	1.1%	1.0%
Educational Aides	0.0%	12.8%	11.8%	2.6%	10.8%	12.4%	10.3%
Auxiliary Staff	29.1%	23.5%	23.5%	16.4%	21.7%	27.0%	27.7%
Percent Minority Teachers	3.0%	3.7%	0.0%	7.5%	7.0%	16.7%	26.2%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-5 shows teacher experience and turnover rates for VISD and its peer districts. VISD has the largest percentage of beginning teachers and the lowest percentage of teachers with six to 10 years of experience. VISD has a teacher turnover rate of 15.5 percent, which is about equal to the state average. The average salary of \$31,034 for beginning teachers and \$34,216 for teachers with between 6 and 10 years experience in VISD appears to be a little high. Teacher salaries are based to a large extent on total years of experience. The principal indicated that the salaries listed are not correct, but he could not explain the discrepancy.

Exhibit 2-5
Teacher Experience and Turnover Rate
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
2000-01

	Veribest	Panther Creek	Novice	Coolidge	Water Valley	Region 15	State Average
Beginning Teachers	40.9%	21.7%	0.0%	11.2%	0.0%	4.9%	7.8%
1-5 Years Experience	21.9%	8.7%	28.0%	22.5%	32.0%	23.2%	27.3%
6-10 Years Experience	3.7%	17.4%	28.7%	32.6%	29.6%	18.6%	18.1%
11-20 Years Experience	14.9%	30.4%	29.4%	26.2%	23.7%	28.9%	25.3%
Over 20 Years	18.6%	21.7%	14.0%	7.5%	14.8%	24.5%	21.5%

Experience							
Average Years Experience	8.0	13.3	9.0	9.1	11.0	11.7	9.5%
Turnover	15.5%	10.3%	20.3%	17.4%	10.3%	13.6%	15.0%
Beginning Teacher Salary	\$31,034	\$31,763	N/A	\$26,240	N/A	\$26,256	\$27,007
Average Teacher Salary 6-10 Years	\$34,216	\$30,118	\$30,277	\$33,597	\$34,535	\$32,834	\$33,499

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

As seen **Exhibit 2-6**, VISD and its peer districts report no teachers without a degree. VISD did report more teachers with a Masters or Doctorate degree than all but one of its peer districts, but it is below the state average of 23.4 percent. Neither VISD nor any of its peer districts reported having to use special permits for teachers.

Exhibit 2-6
Teacher Degrees
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
2000-01

	Veribest	Coolidge	Water Valley	Panther Creek	Novice	Region 15	State Avg.
No Degree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	1.3%
Bachelor	85.1%	78.7%	94.1%	87.0%	90.9%	82.4%	74.8%
Master/Doctorate	14.9%	21.3%	5.9%	13.0%	9.1%	16.6%	23.4%
Doctorate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.5%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-7 shows that, with the exception of Coolidge ISD, VISD and its peer districts reported lower annual dropout rates than either Region 15 or the state. VISD and two of its peers reported zero dropout rates. VISD reported the highest attendance rate at 97.2 percent, which is above the state average of 95.4 percent. Attendance rates are a significant portion of the calculation for the amount of state aid received by a district.

Exhibit 2-7
Annual Dropout and Attendance Rate
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
1999-2000

	Veribest	Novice	Panther Creek	Water Valley	Coolidge	Reg 15	State Avg.
Dropout Rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	2.3%	1.5%	1.6%
Attendance Rate	97.2%	97.0%	96.7%	96.3%	95.5%	95.8%	95.4%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

Under the state's school accountability system, TEA assigns annual ratings to each district and school based upon (1) TAAS, (2) attendance, (3) dropout rates and (4) data quality. In 1999, TEA added two new rating categories: Unacceptable: Data Quality, a district-level rating, and Acceptable: Data Issues, a school-level rating. The accountability system includes five ratings for districts: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, Academically Unacceptable and Unacceptable: Data Quality.

To receive an Exemplary rating, at least 90 percent of all students, as well as 90 percent of African-American, Hispanic, Anglo and Economically Disadvantaged students, 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. In 2000, to be rated Academically Acceptable, 50 percent of each student group must pass TAAS. Beginning in 2000, scores for students with disabilities and from the TAAS Spanish version of reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 6 were included in the accountability calculations. Although the state accountability system also considers attendance and dropout rates, TAAS is the primary determining factor in ratings. According to TEA, failure to meet TAAS standards is the primary reason that a school is rated Low-performing. However, other factors such as data quality can affect ratings.

Exhibit 2-8 shows that VISD and three of four peer districts were rated Recognized in 1995-96. VISD, along with Coolidge and Panther Creek ISDs, has been rated Recognized in four of the five years and Exemplary in the other year.

Exhibit 2-8
Accountability Ratings

**VISD and Peer Districts
1995-96 through 1999-2000**

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Veribest	Recognized	Recognized	Exemplary	Recognized	Recognized
Coolidge	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Exemplary	Recognized
Panther Creek	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Exemplary
Novice	Recognized	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Recognized	Exemplary
Water Valley	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Recognized

Source: TEA, AEIS 1995-96 through 1999-2000.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Effective instruction depends upon adequate human and fiscal resources and on support from the district's central office. The school administrative and instructional teams must be qualified and active in planning and implementing the curriculum. TAAS performance, the primary factor in determining a district's accountability ratings, depends on effective instruction.

TAAS is administered in grades 3 through 8 and in grade 10. TAAS includes a reading and mathematics test in grades 3 through 8 and in grade 10 and a writing assessment in grades 4, 8 and 10. Science and social studies tests are included at grade 8, but are not included in determining accountability ratings. Because there are five tests administered in grade 8, this grade level usually has the lowest percentage of students passing all tests taken. The Spanish version of TAAS is given in grades 3 through 6.

On an incremental basis, between 1999-2000 and 2002-03, changes will be made to the TAAS administration schedule, particularly at the high school level. By 2002-03, TAAS will be administered in grades 9, 10 and 11. Reading and mathematics tests will be added at grade 9. The exit-level examination will be moved to grade 11 and will include science, social studies, English language arts and mathematics. A science test will be added to grade 5.

FINDING

For 1999-2000, VISD had the second highest percentage, 89.2 percent, of students passing all tests taken among its peer districts, which is over 9 percent higher than the state average of 79.9 percent. Information by grade level is not examined given the small number of students in VISD. One student passing or not passing TAAS can alter the percentage passing each subject area by up to 5 percent at any one grade level. However, as seen in **Exhibit 2-9**, there is a greater degree of stability when information is combined across all grade levels and presented for all tests taken. VISD has the second lowest percentage gain from 1995-96 to 1999-2000.

Exhibit 2-9
Percentage of Students Passing TAAS, All Tests Taken (Grades 3-8, & 10)
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
1995-96 through 1999-2000

District	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change from 1995-96 to 2000	Percent of Students Tested 1999-2000
Panther Creek	87.0%	91.4%	83.3%	89.5%	90.8%	4.4%	90.8%
Veribest	81.3%	85.0%	78.8%	92.0%	89.2%	9.7%	87.9%
Novice	79.4%	67.4%	40.0%	80.5%	88.6%	11.6%	90.2%
Coolidge	74.0%	85.7%	76.8%	86.9%	87.8%	18.6%	83.7%
Water Valley	70.3%	76.4%	66.7%	82.7%	85.7%	21.9%	91.8%
Novice	79.4%	67.4%	40.0%	80.5%	88.6%	11.6%	90.2%
Region 15	69.0%	76.2%	73.6%	80.7%	82.2%	19.1%	90.6%
State	67.1%	73.2%	73.1%	78.1%	79.9%	19.1%	90.2%

Source: TEA, AEIS Reports 1995-96 through 1999-2000.

**Recalculated from original posting to include special education and grade 3 and 4 Spanish TAAS.*

***Recalculated from original posting to include special education and grade 3-6 Spanish TAAS.*

Across the state, performance declined slightly from 1996-97 to 1997-98 when special education and Spanish TAAS scores were added in the computations for accountability purposes. VISD scores also declined, but quickly recovered to a high level of performance. While VISD has a higher Admission, Review and Dismissal exemption rate, 9.2 percent in 1999-2000, it is not significantly higher than the state average of 7.1 percent. VISD tests slightly fewer students, 87.9 percent, than the state average of 90.2 percent. However, this is also not a significant difference. VISD employs a variety of instructional strategies to achieve high performance levels on TAAS, including instructional software programs and tutoring students that need TAAS remediation. The district is very proud of their reading program and holds high expectations for all elementary students regarding reading. Students are actively engaged in reading activities throughout the school day.

VISD has a clear goal stated in its District Improvement Plan (DIP) to improve reading performance. In 1995-96 the district implemented the Accelerated Reader program. With this program, the district has made reading a top district priority. Accelerated Reader is a computerized program that assists the teacher in recording the reading and comprehension levels of each student, helps the teacher develop individual plans and students improve their reading.

In 1999-2000, the district also implemented the Reading Renaissance program, a program that enhanced the Accelerated Reader program already in place. The program is designed to increase the number of books a student reads and to gradually increase the difficulty level. The program also rewards students for reading books and encourages students to take books home to read with their parents. While the district has not formally evaluated the effectiveness of the program, informal evaluations, performance on TAAS and teacher opinion indicate that this program is successful in increasing reading comprehension.

COMMENDATION

VISD has implemented a reading initiative and maintains high expectations for student reading that have improved overall student performance.

FINDING

There are internal data consistency problems that impact the quality of data submitted to Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and used for analysis in VISD. For example, there are no teachers reported in AEIS as having any special permits, but the principal said that there are approximately five teachers teaching outside of their certified areas. Another example of data inconsistency concerns the number of special education students. According to AEIS, there are 50 special education students for 1999-2000. A report from the Small Schools Special Education Cooperative lists 58 students, while a district analysis says there are 73 students.

The district also reports problems with PEIMS data for teacher salaries. PEIMS shows that VISD paid beginning teachers with less than one year of experience \$30,764 on average for 1999-2000. The principal and district staff said that this amount is incorrect.

VISD has a dedicated PEIMS data entry position located in the central office. The district does not have a formal, systematic review process to ensure the accuracy of data submitted to PEIMS. PEIMS is a complex system requiring careful attention to detail. The accuracy of PEIMS data is

critical for appropriate analyses, and it is the primary source of information that controls funding received by the district.

Recommendation 14:

Review PEIMS data collection methods and establish a system to verify the accuracy of PEIMS data before submitting it to TEA.

A review of the processes related to PEIMS would ensure that collection and submission problems are noted and resolved. Specifically, administrative leaders such as the superintendent, principal and instructional leaders should be responsible for checking data related to their areas to make sure that PEIMS data is correct. Identified errors should be corrected before the information is sent to TEA.

Additionally, VISD needs to continue to receive extensive PEIMS training from Region 15 and make PEIMS data accuracy a factor in the performance evaluation of the PEIMS clerk.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent, principal and instructional leaders review 2000-01 PEIMS data and data collection methods to identify where inaccuracies may occur.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent, principal and instructional leaders develop a plan to correct data inaccuracies and distribute the plan.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent, principal and instructional leaders implement the plan.	October 2001 and Ongoing
4.	The superintendent ensures that the PEIMS coordinator continuously receives training through Regions 15 and includes PEIMS data accuracy as a factor in performance evaluation.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD has used teachers to teach in subject areas outside of their certification. Even though the AEIS report for VISD indicates that there are no teachers that have requested an emergency permit, the principal

said that there are at least five teachers with an instructional assignment outside their area. In these cases, parents were notified by letter.

District Teaching Permits are used when a degreed person who is uniquely qualified to teach a particular assignment does not hold any type of teaching credential. A district can also activate a Temporary Exemption Permit for a certified, degreed teacher who is not certified for a particular classroom assignment.

Qualified and certified teachers are essential for providing high quality instruction.

Recommendation 15:

Employ fully certified teachers in their appropriate areas to the extent possible.

To reduce the need for teachers teaching in subject areas where they are not certified, some districts try to improve recruitment of qualified teachers. One way to do this is to develop relationships with area colleges that educate teachers. Other districts annually monitor this situation to determine any underlying issues or causes for not having all teachers certified.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The superintendent ensures that all teachers have appropriate certification and meet all state requirements for employment.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent obtains appropriate temporary permits for teachers when necessary.	September 2001 and Ongoing
3.	The superintendent monitors certification issue.	May 2002 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Veribest High School, which opened in 1996-97, has not had effective implementation or improvement plans. Due to a lack of a strong high school-based experience, several important aspects of the curriculum and the overall educational plan were not in place when the school started.

Listed below are situations that have hindered the ability of the school to provide quality educational services for students.

- When the high school was planned, a four-year graduation plan was not created, and course sequences were not adequately planned. For 2000-01, the district has put in place a four-year graduation plan.
- The district did not develop a student handbook until 1999-2000. The student handbook lacks important information regarding several of the school's programs. Only one paragraph is dedicated to special education, English as a second language and gifted and talent education. The handbook does not provide an adequate description of these programs, and it does not provide contact names for a parent to obtain more information. The student handbook presents a list of the three types of graduation plans available, but there is no description of the plans.
- While it is not uncommon for teachers in small school districts to have a heavier teaching load than larger school districts, one teacher in VISD last year taught five different courses.
- Opportunities for students to take advanced courses, take advanced placement exams, enroll in local colleges for dual-enrollment or participate in distance learning were not budgeted when the high school opened. Some of these courses are the only services for gifted and talented students, but they have not been available. The principal said the school would begin offering Advanced Placement (AP) courses in 2001-02.
- Several VISD staff commented that there has been no structure or direction and there are no clear goals and objectives to meet.
- The district did not adequately take into account the need for a high school library. As a result, the current library, which has successfully served students in kindergarten through grade 8, cannot effectively serve the needs of grades 9 through 12. Teachers said that they rarely use the library for high school students. One staff member said, "We might as well say that we don't have a high school library."
- Public opinion has suffered as a result of the district's lack of planning. Some parents and teachers do not feel that the district is providing an overall quality education. When asked if the district has high quality teachers, 30 percent of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Thirty-four percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "The district provided a high quality education."

Some schools in Texas and across the nation are continuously finding new and innovative ways to obtain additional funding or are creating new educational delivery concepts. Two such school districts in Texas, Santa

Gertrudis and Driscoll ISDs, created a new concept for educating students at the high school level. These two districts, in conjunction with Texas A&M University - Kingsville created Academy High School. Using a year-round school calendar, the program follows a performance-based academic program. Texas A&M University - Kingsville provides classrooms, laboratory and office facilities for the high school. Students work at their own pace and are tested to determine readiness to begin each successive level of instruction. Qualified students have the opportunity to take college-level courses beginning their freshman year. Local organizations such as the King Ranch have been actively involved in supporting this program.

Corporate and public partnerships are also becoming common arrangements. *Fiscal Notes* (January 2001), a publication of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, notes that "Public-private partnerships in public school facilities construction and ownership have the potential to offer innovative and cost-effective methods to meet the demand of a growing school-age population." The publication also notes that companies should be allowed to create and maintain school facilities and allow employees' children admission preference to such schools. The report notes that these schools save tax money and allow a greater share of the money to go toward instruction, since the companies also finance part of the educational program.

Other possibilities include cooperative agreements with neighboring districts to share courses and teachers, where each district shares teacher's salary and mileage costs; distance learning, enabling students to take courses that might otherwise not be available locally; and multi-age classes with mixed-age groupings, especially at the elementary level, when student enrollment at a particular grade level is much higher than the normal amount.

Recommendation 16:

Closely review all opportunities and challenges regarding the operation of Veribest High School.

The Veribest education community, including the superintendent, teachers, the principal and all board members should carefully consider all options regarding the operation of the high school. The district should look at opportunities to share teachers and pursue cooperative agreements with nearby districts, develop distance learning capabilities and consider multi-grade classroom possibilities when appropriate. Also, the district should investigate partnering with one or more neighboring schools for a shared high school, finding corporate or university partnerships or closing the

high school temporarily until the district is financially and organizationally prepared to effectively operate a high school.

A committee to review Veribest High School should be established, composed of staff and community members. Committee members must be able to research obtaining a corporate sponsor, contracting with a private firm for services and exploring all other possibilities. The superintendent and the school principal should be actively involved in this process.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and the school principal ensure that all areas of deficit regarding the high school are assessed and that a goal, strategy and corrective action plan is developed for every area.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent establishes a high school committee composed of staff and community members that actively pursue corporate and university sponsors or partners and consider all other possibilities regarding Veribest High School.	September 2001
3.	The committee will update the superintendent and board on a monthly basis regarding efforts.	September 2001 and Monthly
4.	The committee makes its recommendation to the superintendent.	March 2002
5.	The superintendent presents committee's recommendation to the board for consideration.	March 2002
6.	The board considers all options regarding the continued operation of the high school and decides course of action.	April 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

FINDING

VISD's curriculum is driven by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), a guideline for the knowledge and skills that students should possess at each grade level. However, the district does not have updated curriculum guides. The district uses other instructional programs, like Accelerated Reader and Saxon Math, that provide guidance to the district. These programs are very specific and effective, but cannot take the place

of general curriculum guides. No comprehensive curriculum development and management exists.

A lack of curriculum coordination can create a disconnected curriculum plan for students. The school principal and staff in the middle school said that there is a lack of vertical alignment between elementary and middle school and between middle and high school.

One of the DIP's goals is to "...develop a long-range plan to address increasing curriculum needs for grades K-12." Though the district is aware of the need to improve the curriculum guides, the district does not have a designated curriculum leader or a committee of teachers responsible for developing and defining the district's curriculum. VISD does not update curriculum guides regularly, and it does not have a detailed curriculum development plan. The principal said that he is aware of this problem and plans to begin taking steps to improve the district's curriculum management plan.

Region 15 has developed the Curriculum Collaborative Project (CCP), a collaboration between Region 15 and Region 5 to provide a curriculum aligned with TEKS and TAAS for Region 15 schools. A comprehensive curriculum guide set purchased from CCP costs approximately \$600. Schools can implement these guides in standard form or can customize each guide to fit their own instructional needs. More than 45 school districts are members of the Region 5 cooperative, the Curriculum Leadership Cooperative (CLC).

Port Arthur ISD (PAISD) is an active member of the Region 5 CLC. Through the CLC, curriculum is continuously being updated. The CLC provides a series of benchmarks and goals for each grade level and subject area, following the TEKS. In addition to spending between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually on curriculum revisions, PAISD participates in Project ABCD, a statewide project that provides the district with an additional \$7,500 per year for curriculum revision.

Grape Creek ISD (GCISD), an active member of CCP, has purchased a curriculum guide set from CCP and is in the process of customizing all of its curriculum guides. GCISD has made its curriculum available to district staff on the district's intranet Web site, providing easy access to the curriculum for GCISD staff. Also, making revisions online is easier than printing multiple paper documents.

Recommendation 17:

Develop functional curriculum guides and a curriculum management plan that includes all instructional programs.

Curriculum guide development should include both the regular instructional programs and all other educational programs, such as bilingual/ESL, gifted and talented and career and technology. The district should consider using the existing resources available through Region 15 and, if possible, VISD should make arrangements with Grape Creek ISD to use their intranet curriculum resources. The district should develop a detailed curriculum management plan that provides a step-by-step plan for developing and updating guides for all grade levels.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts Region 15 and becomes a member of the Curriculum Learning Cooperative.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent assigns a group of teachers to serve as the district Curriculum Advisory Council (CAC). CAC members would include all principals and two teachers each from the elementary, middle and high school.	September 2001
3.	The CAC reviews the CLC guides and determines the extent to which they need to be modified to fit VISD instructional objectives. The CAC develops a comprehensive plan for all curriculum areas, including a chart illustrating the major curricular emphases by grade and by subject and a schedule for addressing all kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum areas at the rate of one or two per year. The CAC ensures that articulation and vertical planning issues are considered.	November - December 2001
4.	The CAC develops a curriculum revision cycle that provides for reviewing and revising all curriculum guides on a four-year cycle. The CAC decides how many teams of teachers will be required for each curriculum guide.	February 2002
5.	The superintendent reviews the proposed plan and submits to the board.	February 2002
6.	The board reviews and approves the curriculum management plan.	March 2002
7.	The CAC establishes teams of teachers and support staff to write guides in their curricular areas to provide teachers the information needed to plan and deliver effective instruction.	Ongoing
8.	The CAC and the superintendent revise the guides as needed.	Ongoing
9.	The superintendent contacts Grape Creek to determine the feasibility of using Grape Creek's intranet curriculum.	Spring 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The basic curriculum guide packet from Region 15 costs approximately \$600. If the CAC determines additional modifications are needed, groups of teachers will update the curriculum guides. The district should use four teams of two teachers each during the school year and on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Develop functional curriculum guides and a curriculum management plan that includes all instructional programs.	(\$600)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

B. SPECIAL PROGRAMS (PART 1)

Educational programs like special education, gifted and talented education, bilingual and compensatory education are provided in Texas schools to meet the requirements of students with special needs. In addition, career and technology programs are offered to allow students to gain entry-level employment with the skills necessary to enter a high-skill, high-wage job or to continue with post-secondary education once they graduate from high school.

Special Education

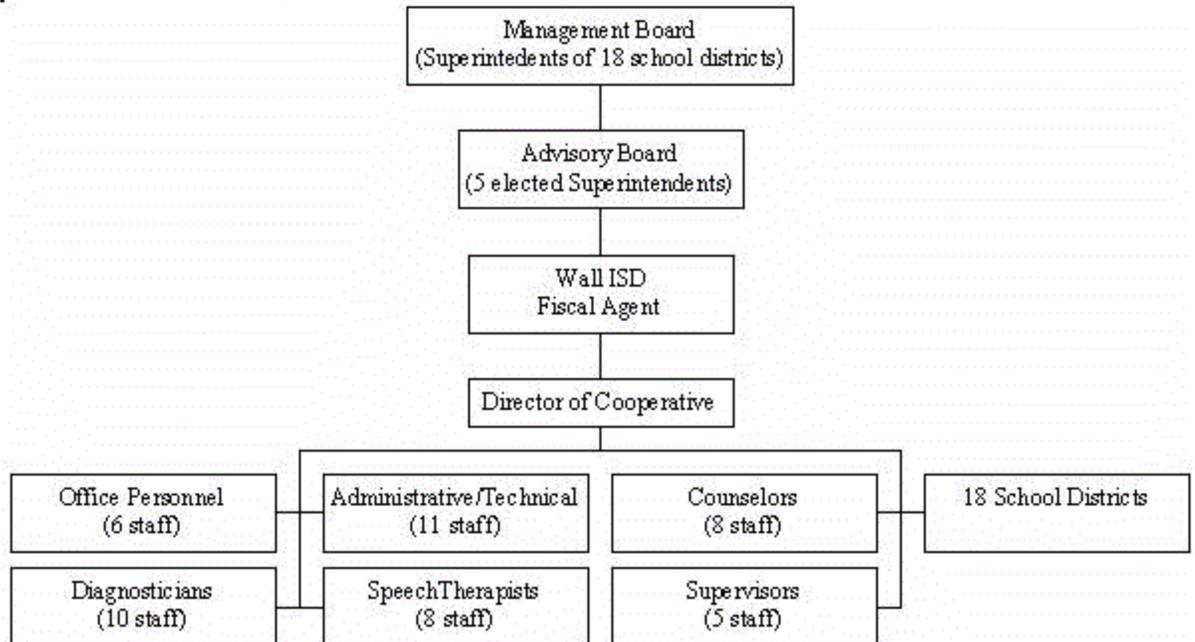
The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires districts to provide appropriate public education for all children with disabilities regardless of the severity of the handicap. Education is to be provided in the least restrictive environment, and students with disabilities are to be included in state and district assessment programs. This law, which is designed to protect children and parents in the educational decision-making process, requires districts to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each child. The IEP should include the input of regular education teachers and be clearly aligned with those of children in general classrooms.

VISD is a member of the Small Schools Cooperative (Cooperative). The Cooperative is one of 137 shared-service arrangements in the state designed to assist member districts in serving and providing educational services to all students with disabilities through age 21. The Cooperative includes 18 school districts and serves approximately 1,500 students.

Exhibit 2-10 presents the organizational chart for the Cooperative. The management board of the Cooperative is composed of superintendents from each member school. The management board meets twice each year and elects members to serve on the Cooperative's advisory board. The advisory board meets monthly and includes superintendents from four member districts and the superintendent of the Cooperative's fiscal agent district. The advisory board's role is limited to decisions involving the daily operations of the Cooperative.

Wall ISD serves as the fiscal agent for the Cooperative. As fiscal agent, Wall ISD is responsible for applying for and receiving funds for the Cooperative and prepares all budgets on behalf of the Cooperative.

Exhibit 2-10
Small Schools Cooperative
Special Education Organization



Source: 1999-2000 Small Schools Cooperative.

The Cooperative provides a wide range of services that include initial student assessment, equipment, special units, staff training, software and legal updates. In addition, the cooperative hires teachers and aides for multi-district classes and interpreters for the deaf, contracts with a child/adolescence psychiatrist, psychologists, counselors, physical therapists and occupational therapists. Homebound services are also provided. The Cooperative operates several multi-district classes designed to meet the needs of these students. These classes are housed throughout the member districts.

Exhibit 2-11 shows VISD, Region 15, the state and peer district special education program enrollment information for 1999-2000 and 2000-01. Overall, there is a wide range between VISD and its peer districts in the number and percentages of students receiving special education services and the number of special education teachers. For 1999-2000, VISD ranked second highest in the percentage of students enrolled in special education at 21.6 percent, almost 10 percent higher than the percentage of students identified statewide as receiving special education services, and almost 8 percent higher than Region 15. In 1999-2000, 10.4 percent of the teachers in VISD were special education teachers, as opposed to 6.3 percent in 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-11
Number and Percent of Special Education Students and Teachers
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
1999-2000 and 2000-01

District	Special Education Student Enrollment				Special Education Teachers (FTEs)			
	1999-2000		2000-01		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Panther Creek	50	23.5%	46	21.2%	1.9	8.5%	2.0	8.7%
Veribest	50	21.6%	54	19.9%	2.7	10.4%	1.7	6.3%
Novice	20	19.8%	22	22.4%	0.9	5.9%	1.0	7.0%
Coolidge	52	19.6%	49	19.5%	2.9	12.0%	2.8	10.5%
Water Valley	60	17.3%	55	17.5%	1.5	4.2%	2.4	7.1%
Region 15	7,178	14.0%	7,066	13.9%	377.2	9.7%	407.2	10.6%
State	482,427	12.1%	492,045	12.1%	25,784	9.6%	27,410	10.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000, PEIMS 2000-01 and Small Schools Cooperative.

Exhibit 2-12 shows that VISD has the second highest percentage of actual expenditures allocated to special education compared to its peer districts. However, VISD spends \$4,128 per student, an amount lower than the state average of \$5,937 per student and lower than its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-12
Actual Expenditures for Special Education
VISD, Peer Districts and State
1999-2000

District	Number of Students Enrolled	Actual Special Education Expenditures	Percent of Actual Expenditure	Per Student Expenditure
Water Valley	60	\$346,204	14.8%	\$5,770
Panther Creek	50	\$285,532	18.0%	\$5,710

Novice	20	\$98,863	12.4%	\$4,943
Coolidge	52	\$219,266	14.6%	\$4,217
Veribest	50	\$206,396	15.3%	\$4,128
State	482,427	\$2,863,938,472	15.2%	\$5,937

Source, TEA, PEIMS 1999-2000.

Exhibit 2-13 presents definitions of the primary instructional arrangements for special education.

Exhibit 2-13
Students Enrolled in Special Education
Instructional Arrangement and Ethnicity
1999-2000

Description of Basic Programs
<p><i>Mainstream-</i> To ensure the least restrictive environment appropriate for each student, district personnel first consider providing services in regular education with supplementary aids. Students with disabilities who spend all of their classroom hours in a regular classroom are called "mainstreamed."</p> <p><i>Resource</i> - These students have a combination of regular classes and resource classes. In a resource class, some students are pulled out from the regular classroom for specific instruction or tutoring.</p> <p><i>Vocational Adjustment class (VAC)</i> - This setting provides educational and vocational services to eligible secondary students. Students are instructed in job readiness skills.</p> <p><i>Self-Contained classes.</i> If a student's disability is so severe that satisfactory education cannot take place in a regular classroom, the student will be served in a separate "self-contained" classroom.</p> <p><i>Behavior Management Units - (BIP)</i> Special education students who are disruptive in the regular classroom are sent to the BIP, a separate classroom that serves as an in-school alternative placement classroom primarily for emotionally disturbed students.</p> <p><i>Adaptive Physical Education</i> - These classes provide specialized physical education curriculum for students who are unable to benefit from the regular physical education program.</p> <p><i>Homebound</i> - This program provides at-home services for students at all grade</p>

levels that cannot attend school because of illness, injury or expulsion.

Source: TEA Division of Special Education.

The majority of special education students in VISD, 34, are in a resource classroom. The Cooperative reported that only four students are mainstreamed.

FINDING

The Cooperative provides many quality services to VISD. The most valuable services mentioned by staff include the availability of expert diagnosticians, therapists and psychologists; training materials and literature related to various special education topics; and periodic updates to current state and federal regulations and laws. The Cooperative also provides special education units housed in several neighboring districts that meet the needs of VISD students.

In the TSPR survey, approximately 70 percent of parents and over 80 percent of VISD teachers said that the special education program is an effective education program.

The Cooperative provided a technology-based education system, INVEST Learning, for every member district. The Cooperative purchased both the hardware and the software for each of the member districts. The program was installed on a server so additional computer stations could be added in the future.

COMMENDATION

By participating in the Small Schools Cooperative, VISD ensures that services are provided to the district's special education students.

FINDING

Though the Cooperative provides many effective and needed services to VISD's students enrolled in special education, there is a lack of communication between the Cooperative and district staff. The relationship between the Cooperative and the district is not as positive as the relationship between the Cooperative and other neighboring districts. Though this lack of communication has not necessarily hindered the effective delivery of services, it does limit district staff from taking full advantage of all the services available through the Cooperative. In past years, the district has tried to pull out of the Cooperative. Although district staff is satisfied with the professional qualifications and assistance from the Cooperative's staff, the district was denied an additional special

education aide position, and the superintendent said that the Cooperative is taking too much funding from the allotment that the district receives from the state.

The Cooperative reported that for 2000-01, of the \$294,509 in special education funding received by VISD, the Cooperative was paid \$174,906. **Exhibit 2-14** shows that VISD reserved \$90,152 for teacher salaries and an additional 10 percent, or \$29,450, for miscellaneous expenses. In 1999-2000, the district approached the Menard Special Education Cooperative to discuss joining that Cooperative. Though the superintendent said that the Menard Special Education Cooperative was more cost effective for a small district like VISD, the district decided against this move, primarily because of the extended distance that students would have to travel to receive services in Menard.

**Exhibit 2-14
Small Schools Cooperative
Budget Allocations for VISD**

State Funds	VISD Miscellaneous*	VISD Salaries	Cooperative	
2000-01	\$294,509	\$29,450	\$90,152	\$174,906

Source: Small Schools Cooperative.

Communication regarding the special education program is weak. While the Cooperative provides parent brochures and other literature related to the special education program, the teachers at VISD did not have any available material regarding the program to provide the review team, and the district's Web site does not provide any description of the program or links to sites that provide resources and information.

While over 70 percent of parents surveyed said that the special education program is an effective education program, 15 percent thought that the program was not effective. Though the 15 percent number represents a relatively low percentage, it was the highest percentage of parental dissatisfaction with the special education program when compared to a sample of five neighboring districts that also participate in the Cooperative. Community feedback illustrates some of this dissatisfaction. One respondent noted, "We have a special education program that is not serving the needs of our students because of the lack of training the special education teacher has, and the lack of programs available."

Recommendation 18:

Effectively communicate with the Small Schools Cooperative to improve services.

These services include training, brochures, literature and legal updates. The district should also establish more effective communication with the director, diagnosticians and school psychologists.

VISD's special education program should actively participate in the resources that are available through the Cooperative. Likewise, the Cooperative staff should ensure that literature, booklets and information sheets are available and that VISD staff are aware of training opportunities in the Cooperative and through Region 15.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of the Cooperative, the school principal, two regular teachers and the special education teachers conduct a needs assessment of the special education program.	September 2001
2.	The special education teachers prepare a detailed description of the special education program and make this description available on the district's Web site and distribute it to all parents.	September - October 2001
3.	The director of Special Education and the special education teachers review the needs assessment and develop goals, objectives and strategies to improve the special education program. The team develops a comprehensive matrix for areas of need and develops a schedule for addressing all areas.	November - December 2001
4.	The district meets with the Cooperative staff four times per year to review modifications and improve communication.	September 2001 Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

While VISD and the Cooperative provide helpful information for teachers regarding several special education topics like assessment and referrals transitions, it does not focus enough on preventing unnecessary referrals. VISD does not provide detailed pre-referral intervention strategies for regular education teachers to use when they encounter students that require extra help. This is the first step in determining if a student will ultimately be eligible for special education.

To serve the multiple needs of all students with disabilities and to comply with IDEA's requirements, the 1997 amendment to the IDEA states that an effective special education program should implement pre-referral intervention practices in regular education. When a student experiences an academic problem in the regular education program, an intervention can and should occur to solve the problem. If steps taken to solve the problem by the regular education teacher do not produce results, the problem should be referred to special education staff.

Though teachers provide services for students who are experiencing difficulties, these services are not coordinated or reported using a pre-referral inventory. It is difficult for a teacher to know what intervention strategies have already taken place unless there is a record of these activities. As a result, the teacher may use strategies previously proven unsuccessful or refer the student for special education without first exploring the alternatives. No campus-level committee exists to assess a student's needs before they are referred to special education. VISD's pre-referral process does not identify a designated coordinator at each school. Increased communication between the Cooperative and the special education teacher and the regular education program in terms of pre-referral practices is needed.

If a student receives additional services, such as one-to-one instruction, tutoring or other assistance from the classroom teacher, counselor or other school staff member, and improvement is not observed, a special education referral may be warranted. If effective pre-referral practices are not in place, teachers may duplicate services, like tutoring, that have already been provided to the student in a previous year, when, in fact, a special education intervention may be appropriate. As a result, students may be identified for special education services too late to receive the full benefits of the services. Effective pre-referral practices can minimize the number of referrals to special education.

One neighboring district, Grape Creek ISD, has instituted a pre-referral system in the elementary school. A special education pre-referral committee was formed that meets when a teacher requests a meeting or when a student is being considered for referral. A form, called the Pre-Referral Checklist for Regular Classroom Teachers, is used to ensure that educational efforts and strategies are provided and/or considered for the student prior to referral to special education. These efforts are also documented for future reference.

Mount Pleasant ISD (MPISD) established the Campus Intervention Team (CIT), which is designed to "...provide strategies for intervention when a need begins to arise for any student." Each CIT is made up of one Maximum Achievement Learning Lab (MALL) teacher, the school

counselor, the student's classroom teacher and the principal. Once a teacher fills out a pre-referral form on any student with difficulties, the committee conducts a meeting to discuss the student's needs. The goal of this process is to identify, document and implement intervention strategies, always considering the least restrictive alternatives first. According to principals and teachers in MPISD, in 75 to 80 percent of cases, school modifications accomplish needed results with the least restrictive environment for the student.

Recommendation 19:

Develop and implement pre-referral practices to ensure that all students are adequately served.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The principal designates a Campus Intervention Team (CIT) coordinator and determines who will serve on the team.	September 2001
2.	The principal and the director of the Small Schools Cooperative arrange for staff development for all CIT members.	October 2001
3.	The principal conducts monthly meetings with the CIT to discuss the effectiveness of the team and to provide continuous feedback.	October 2001
4.	The principal informs parents about CIT procedures.	November 2001
5.	The principle and the director of the Small Schools Cooperative periodically evaluate the CITs to ensure they are actively involved in pre-referral activities and are making appropriate decisions.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Gifted and Talented

Texas state law requires all school districts to identify and provide services for gifted and talented students. Section 29.122 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) states that school districts "shall adopt a process for identifying and serving gifted and talented students in the district and shall establish a program for those students in each grade level." In 1990, the State Board of Education adopted the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*. This plan is a guide for meeting the law's requirements. In 1996, the SBOE updated the plan to incorporate

TEC Section 29.123 requirements. The updated plan forms the basis for program accountability for state-mandated services for gifted and talented students.

Exhibit 2-15 shows enrollment figures and expenditures for the gifted and talented program in VISD and its peer districts. VISD ranks last among its peer districts in the expenditure amount per gifted and talented student and spends significantly less than the state average. TEA does not report actual expenditures for regional service centers. The percentage of students identified as gifted and talented in VISD, 2.6 percent, is six percent lower than the state average. **Exhibit 2-15** also shows that while Veribest identified seven students, the district did not employ any teachers with a gifted and talented certification.

Exhibit 2-15
Gifted/Talented Students, Teachers and Expenditures
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
2000-01

District	G/T Student Enrollment		G/T Teachers		Expenditures for G/T	
	Number	Percent	Number*	Percent	Expenditure	Amount per Student
Water Valley	15	4.8%	0.4	1.2%	\$27,038	\$1,803
Panther Creek	28	12.9%	0.9	3.9%	\$31,469	\$1,124
Novice	9	9.2%	0.0	0.0%	\$6,551	\$728
Coolidge	14	5.6%	0.0	0.0%	\$5,163	\$369
Veribest	7	2.6%	0.0	0.0%	\$2,200	\$314
Region 15	4,117	8.1%	64.7	1.7%	N/A	N/A
State	342,855	8.4%	6,089.5	2.2%	\$308,262,248	\$899

*Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01. *Expressed in full-time equivalents.*

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

B. SPECIAL PROGRAMS (PART 2)

In VISD, gifted and talented elementary students are served through a pullout program for two to three hours a week. In the middle school, the district employs one certified gifted and talented teacher that provides science enrichment for grade 7 gifted and talented students. Sixth-grade students are

also offered a gifted and talented class during homeroom. Some students may also enroll in the pre-AP program. The district's coordinator for Gifted and Talented Education said that the district is in the process of improving the program's instructional approach in the middle school. High school students will be served through advanced placement courses.

FINDING

Veribest's gifted and talented program is not effectively serving the educational needs of the district's gifted and talented students.

The 1998 District Effectiveness and Compliance (DEC) visit by TEA showed that the district was not sufficiently addressing all components of the State Plan regarding gifted and talented education program. Specifically, the DEC visit identified areas of weakness that include the process of selecting students and the lack of learning opportunities available for gifted and talented students.

In February 2001, the School Financial Audit Division of TEA reviewed VISD's Annual Financial Report for 1999-2000. The review found that "Based on comparison of three-year averages of direct costs with three-year averages of allotments, the district did not expend at least 85% of state funding allotments for the gifted and talented program." Data reported in the AEIS report also shows a disparity between the number of students identified and the number of teachers employed to serve gifted and talented students (**Exhibit 2-15**).

The district does not provide parental brochures or information for parents regarding the gifted and talented program. Information describing how students are nominated, selected, tested and served in the program is not available. The district's Web site does not mention any services available for gifted and talented students.

The district does not have updated curriculum guides for any of the gifted and talented classes. The DIP goal number six states that "A comprehensive gifted and talented curriculum will be developed for K-12." The DIP states that by May 2001 guides for the program will be developed, and by August of 2001, "program organization will be designed to meet the needs of these students." As of March 2001, the district had not developed any curriculum guides for the gifted and talented program. Any organizational planning regarding how gifted and talented students will be served was not provided. The district has not developed a written plan regarding how the program will be redesigned. The principal said that continued improvement, particularly in the district's middle and high school program, and the improvement of curriculum guides for the gifted and talented program is needed.

The principal said that there is no cooperation with neighboring districts regarding gifted and talented education and that increased communication with other schools in the area is needed. The district, does however, participate in a Gifted and Talented Cooperative with Region 15. Forty-two schools participate in this cooperative. Through this agreement, Region 15 should provide the following services:

- assistance with district and regional planning;
- assistance with program evaluation;
- assistance with identification of potential students participants;
- staff development;
- technical assistance; and
- assistance to the school district with the development of curriculum for the gifted and talented learner.

Staff in Region 15 indicated that the majority of services provided are centered around the state-mandated training for gifted and talented certification required by TEA. District staff said that the Region 15 did not provide other services contained in the contract, like program evaluation or development of curriculum. Region 15 also held a Spring Authors Conference for students and a student seminar. For 2000-01, VISD paid \$1,918 to be a member district.

Several Regional Education Service Centers have established cooperative relationships with neighboring districts. Region 17 has established an Advanced Academic Cooperative. As a member, districts receive training, legal updates, demonstrations, on-site technical assistance, a resource library for gifted and talented education and advanced academics. They also become members of the regional gifted and talented advisory council. Member districts pay a fee per student, with a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$5,000 or \$7,500, depending on services requested. Region 5

has also established an Advanced Academic Services Cooperative with area schools.

Recommendation 20:

Fully implement the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*.

This recommendation can be accomplished in a number of ways. One approach is to develop the resources and approaches completely within VISD. By creating an internal task force of teachers and administrators, VISD can focus more on the steps needed to achieve a full implementation of the state plan. A five-member committee, composed of four teachers and one administrator, would be charged with developing a plan to bring full implementation of the state plan.

Another alternative is to actively pursue a relationship with neighboring districts to create an Advanced Academics Cooperative. Member districts should reassess the services that are needed and determine which services Region 15 is adequately providing. Region 15 should be requested to serve as a liaison between districts to establish relationships that go beyond the services currently provided by the region.

With an expanded agreement, districts could share teachers, curriculum and other resources. A summer exchange program would help gifted and talented teachers. The implementation strategies and fiscal impacts are based on improving the district program without seeking a cooperative arrangement until the internal gifted and talented program is more effective.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent creates a district-level Advanced Academics Advisory Committee.	September 2001
2.	In conjunction with Region 15 staff, the Advanced Academics Advisory Committee conducts a needs assessment of the gifted and talented program.	September - December 2001
3.	The committee determines the extent to which the district is implementing the recommendations in the <i>Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students</i> (State Plan.)	September - December 2001
4.	The Advanced Academics Advisory Committee and Region 15 develop a three-to-five year plan for achieving exemplary status as outlined in the State Plan and secures staff and board	Ongoing

	approval.	
5.	The Advanced Academics Advisory Committee develops measures to ensure that the district follows the State Plan and incorporates these measures into the campus improvement plans.	August 2002
6.	The superintendent and Region 15 review the contract for gifted and talented services and ensure that appropriate services were provided to the district.	Ongoing
7.	The superintendent takes the lead to approach neighboring districts and Region 15 to create an Advanced Academics Cooperative that would create the means to share teaching staff, services and expertise.	Ongoing
8.	The Advanced Academics Advisory Committee contacts other school districts with exemplary, cost-effective gifted and talented programs and other regions that have Advanced Academic Cooperatives.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

To implement this recommendation, \$1,200 is estimated to cover travel expenses and the registration fees for one state conference per year.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Fully implement the <i>Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students</i> .	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1,200)	(\$1200)	(\$1,200)

Career and Technology Education

All students, whether they continue their education after high school or not, eventually go into the workforce. Texas Administrative Code (TAC) chapter 74 subchapter A requires school districts to offer career technology education courses selected from three of eight career and technology areas: agricultural science and technology, business, health science technology, home economics, technology/industrial technology, marketing, trade and industrial and career orientation.

The *State Plan for Career and Technology Education 2000-2002*, required under Texas Education Code (TEC) §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. The plan is based on the premise that a rigorous

academic foundation contributes to success in school and in life, that all students should be provided equal opportunities to succeed and that career and technology education should complement and enhance academic preparation by enabling students to apply academic principles to a variety of community and career situations.

Exhibit 2-16 presents the number and percentage of students enrolled in career and technology courses in VISD, its peer districts, Region 15 and the state.

Exhibit 2-16
Actual Expenditures for Career and Technology
VISD, Peer Districts, Region 15 and State
1999-2000

District	Number and Percent of Students Enrolled		Number and Percent of CATE Teachers		Actual Career & Technology Expenditures	Percent of Actual Expenditure	Per Student Expenditure
	Number	Percent	Number*	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount
Coolidge	38	14.3%	0.9	3.8%	\$91,790	6.1%	\$2,416
Novice	33	32.7%	1.1	7.7%	\$62,206	7.8%	\$1,885
Panther Creek	76	35.7%	3.0	13.2%	\$98,415	6.2%	\$1,295
Water Valley	124	35.7%	3.0	8.1%	\$131,595	5.6%	\$1,061
Veribest	71	30.7%	2.7	10.3%	\$74,331	5.5%	\$1,047
Region 15	11,645	22.8%	213.1	5.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A
State	741,806	18.6%	11,445	4.3%	\$759,455,669	4.0%	\$1,024

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

*Expressed in full-time equivalents.

The percentage of students enrolled in career and technology, 30.7 percent, is in the middle in comparison to its peer districts and is higher than the state average. VISD's \$1,047 expenditure per student is the lowest among its peer districts and is slightly higher than to the state average. VISD has the highest percentage of career and technology (CATE) teachers with the exception of Panther Creek ISD.

VISD also offers courses in Agricultural Science and Technology, Family and Consumer Services and one Office Education course.

FINDING

VISD lacks a comprehensive, updated Career and Technology Education program that includes preparation for entry-level employment in high-skill, high-wage jobs or for continued education. While the district's Agricultural Science and Family and Consumer Services courses are comprehensive, only a limited number of options exist for students interested in technology education or other trade and industrial education.

The Career and Technology Education program is not mentioned in the student handbook, and any opportunities related to technology education, distance learning or opportunities to take college-courses are not included. There is no articulation agreement with area colleges, except for those that relate to the agricultural and family education classes. An articulation agreement, a formal written contract between a public school system and a post secondary institution, coordinates occupational training to eliminate unnecessary duplication of course work and provides that students are awarded college credit for work completed in high school.

The Technology Education Essential Knowledge and Skills adopted in 1997 are guidelines to assist planning, developing and implementing Career and Technology Education programs. The guidelines provide a framework that describes what students should know and be able to do in six technology content areas and recommends a sequence of courses for middle and high school programs. TEA defined these six areas as: Bio-related Technology, Computer Technology, Construction Technology, Energy Power, Manufacturing Technology and Transportation Technology. Sample trades include Electric Engineering Technician, Electrician, Computer System Analysts, Computer Programmer and CAD Drafter. Some of these courses are not available in VISD.

In addition to technology education, there are several trade and industrial education courses that are not currently available for VISD students. Some examples include graphic arts, plumbing, criminal justice, photography and cosmetology.

The district does not adequately to inform students and parents of the advantages of the tech prep program and the benefits of earning college credit through cooperative and concurrent enrollment called "articulation.". The district's Web site, for instance, does not publicize options that are available to students through area colleges. The Web site provides links to neither distance learning opportunities nor to the Concho Valley School to Work/Tech Prep Program. Tech Prep is a sequence of

Vocational/Technical courses that can be taken for college credit leading to an associate degree and beyond.

Several area districts, like Wall and Grape Creek ISDs, have articulation agreements with area colleges. The tech prep program at Wall High school, for instance, has an agreement with Howard College. Howard College provides courses for students that include Health Occupations, General and Mechanical drafting and Culinary Arts.

Through the Concho Valley School To Work/Tech Program, students can take career courses at Howard University in American Sign Language, Business Office Technology, Computer Assisted Design, Computer Information Systems, Information Systems, Criminal Justice, Health Occupations and Intergenerational Studies.

Tech prep courses provide quality, expanded options and student services. The courses are fully accredited and faculty members must meet the same accreditation standards as those required by four-year colleges and universities. The emphasis in tech prep courses is on teaching real-world applications of learning and on smaller class sizes that enhance faculty/student interaction.

Exemplary tech prep programs frequently offer day, evening and weekend classes and flexible time lengths. Self-paced classes are common. Student support services, such as basic skill assessment, career aptitude/interest assessments and learning labs/tutorial support, help guarantee success.

Recommendation 21:

Update the school-to-career program to meet TEA recommendations.

The district should move from a program with an emphasis on vocational agriculture and family and consumer sciences to a program that offers vocational programs that include all six employment and vocational areas identified by TEA.

VISD has opportunities to strengthen its program to provide additional benefit to its students. The district should review and consider replicating best practices used in central Texas by Austin Community College and the local public school districts in its service area. Austin Community College has publications and information sources available on the Web site for the School Relations Office at www.austin.cc.tx.us/highschl/.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	Develop articulation agreements for course offerings with local	Fall 2001
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	colleges and universities.	
2.	Counselors help students understand the benefits of tech prep courses.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent, high school principal and local board develop a request for proposal for a regional vocational needs assessment.	Fall 2001
4.	The superintendent, high school principal and Vocational director consider the findings from the Life Track surveys to plan a transition to a balance of courses in the six areas defined by TEA.	September 2001
5.	The superintendent directs a change in course offerings.	Spring 2002
6.	The superintendent, high school principal and Vocational director consider course enrollment, Life Track findings and post-graduate plans to maintain an appropriate mix of school-to-career courses.	Ongoing
7.	The superintendent and counselor develop an awareness campaign for students, beginning in middle school, that promotes the advantages of technical training programs.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be accomplished with existing resources.

Compensatory Education

In addition to the regular classroom instruction program, VISD provides special support for students at risk of dropping out and students who are not performing at grade level. In 1997, TEC Section 42.152 was amended to include reporting and auditing systems covering the appropriate use of compensatory education allotment funds first authorized in 1975. State compensatory fund rules allow a great deal of flexibility for identifying students and creating successful programs, but these funds must be used in a supplemental fashion and not replace regular funds.

Funds are distributed based on the number of economically disadvantaged students in a district. The students served by the state compensatory program are designated as *at-risk*. The following are all identification criteria listed in TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* for identifying at-risk students. These criteria do not imply that state compensatory education programs are restricted to the exclusive benefit of these students.

Grades 7 through 12

- Was not advanced from one grade level to the next for two or more school years;
- Has mathematics or reading skills that are two or more years below grade level;
- Did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 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 the date the student begins ninth grade;
- Did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument (TAAS); or
- Is pregnant or a parent.

Pre-kindergarten through Grade 6

- Did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or an assessment instrument at the beginning of the school year;
- Did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument (TAAS);
- Is a student of limited English proficiency;
- Is sexually, physically or psychologically abused; or
- Engages in conduct described by Section 51.03, Texas Family Code.

According to the PEIMS Actual Financial Data Report for Veribest, the district spent \$59,296 on compensatory instruction, or accelerated instruction. The superintendent said that compensatory funds are spent on secondary teacher salaries. The superintendent also said that starting in 2001-02, compensatory funds will also be used for other instructional purposes, and these will be documented in the District/Campus Improvement Plan.

FINDING

The DIP does not include sufficient detail to account for compensatory fund expenditures or measurable objectives sufficient for evaluation purposes. In addition, the included needs assessment is primarily statements of actions, rather than direct statements of actual student needs. TEC Section 11.252 states that a district improvement plan must include a needs assessment and a detailed, measurable plan for improvement.

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Section 19 Chapter 109, Subchapter (b), requires districts to follow specific guidelines on reporting procedures and allocation of compensatory education funds. The guidelines state that:

"Each district shall ensure that supplemental direct costs and personnel attributed to compensatory education and accelerated instruction are identified in district and/or campus improvement plans at the summary level for financial units or schools. Each district shall maintain documentation that supports the attribution of supplemental costs and personnel to compensatory education. Districts must also maintain sufficient documentation supporting the appropriate identification of students in at-risk situations, under criteria established in TEC Section 29.091."

A report to the superintendent dated November 2001 and issued by an independent auditor states the following regarding compensatory education programs:

"The district and campus improvement plans did not contain a description of the programs to be funded with state compensatory education funds, did not identify state compensatory education as the funding source for the programs, did not identify each program as being for at-risk students, did not identify the criteria for selecting the at-risk students, and did not contain detailed information on the salaries and other expenditures to be funded by the state compensatory education program. We recommend that the District review its district and campus improvement plans and revise them to include the required information."

A subsequent review by TEA dated February 16, 2001 concurred with the recommended corrective actions. A review of the district and the campus improvement plans show these documents still lack the required detail. Goals and objectives show no differentiation among student groups including special education, Title 1 and all students. In part, this is likely due to the stated needs assessment that contains action plans, rather than specific needs by student group. As included in the district improvement plan, statements under resources are listed as "salary, time, and resource materials." In general, the plans do not contain sufficient detail to determine if resources are supplemental in nature. A review of the budget printout also lacked the detail necessary to determine if supplanting was an issue.

Recommendation 22:

Develop district/campus improvement plans that provide detailed information regarding compensatory funds to comply with state mandates.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and principal develop campus improvement plans that comply with state mandates for compensatory funds.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent works with Region 15 to ensure that the plans meet all requirements.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent convenes a panel of teachers and parents to conduct a needs assessment to be used in future improvement plans.	Fall 2001
4.	The superintendent and principal develop campus and district improvement plans that address the needs assessment.	Spring 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be accomplished with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

C. SAFETY AND SECURITY

One of the most critical issues facing school districts today is the need to provide safe and secure schools. Parents have a right to expect that their children will be free from harm and their schools are secure environments conducive to learning. But in recent years, research indicates that educators, parents and students perceive that crime and violence in schools is increasing. According to a Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) report, *Keeping Texas Children Safe in School*, issued by the Comptroller's office in January 2000, criminal activity in schools is indeed escalating.

In 1995, the Texas Legislature addressed the issue of school violence by revising Chapter 37 of the TEC, requiring that each school adopt a student code of conduct for discipline management and set out consequences for misbehavior. The code also requires that each school district create an alternative education program for misconduct. In addition, the TEA collects and publishes data from each school district that describes occurrences of violent and criminal activity on school grounds. Clearly, the state of Texas places a high value on the rights of children to attend public schools that provide a safe, secure learning environment.

In reviews of more than 30 school districts, TSPR has found that school districts are struggling to enforce state laws and that discipline is not evenly administered. *Keeping Texas Children Safe in School* is a TSPR attempt to cause school officials to think differently about safety and security on their campuses. According to the report, an effective program of safety and security begins with an understanding of three key elements:

- *Prevention*, which is the foundation laid to deter crime and violence (such as published codes of conduct with clearly delineated expectations and punitive measures for violations);
- *Intervention*, which is stepping in before a situation goes to far (such as reminding students of the consequences of misbehavior);
- and
- *Enforcement*, which is what occurs in the aftermath of crime or violence (such as moving a student to an alternative education program).

Exhibit 2-17 summarizes the results of the parent surveys on their opinions of the district's safety and security issues.

Exhibit 2-17
Parent Survey
Safety and Security*

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students feel safe and secure at school.	26.2%	64.6%	4.6%	4.6%	0.0%
School disturbances are infrequent.	21.5%	69.2%	6.2%	3.1%	0.0%
Gangs are not a problem in this district.	36.9%	53.8%	4.6%	3.1%	1.5%
Drugs are not a problem in this district.	26.2%	44.6%	9.2%	18.5%	1.5%
Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	30.8%	49.2%	7.7%	10.8%	1.5%
Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	7.7%	30.8%	55.4%	4.6%	1.5%
Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	9.2%	23.1%	64.6%	1.5%	1.5%
A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	15.4%	56.9%	21.6%	6.2%	0.0%
Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	21.5%	44.6%	21.6%	6.2%	6.2%
Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	9.7%	33.9%	22.6%	21.0%	12.9%

Source: TSPR Surveys.

**Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

Exhibit 2-18 summarizes the results of the teacher's surveys on their opinions of the district's safety and security issues.

Exhibit 2-18
Teacher Survey
Safety and Security*

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School disturbances are infrequent.	27.3%	72.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Gangs are not a problem in this district.	27.3%	63.6%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
Drugs are not a problem in this district.	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	0.0%
Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	9.1%	72.7%	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%
Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%
A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%	9.1%
Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0.0%	45.5%	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%
School disturbances are infrequent.	27.3%	72.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: TSPR Surveys.

**Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

Both parents and teachers appear generally satisfied with safety and security issues, although both groups show some concern over safety hazards existing on school grounds.

FINDING

VISD improved its safety measures by establishing a crisis management plan in August 2000. The management plan provides a methodology for dealing with natural or operational situations that can occur in the district. The plan addresses the following areas: emergency evacuation plans, dealing with tornadoes, hurricanes, inclement weather, bomb threats, fire, gas leaks, deaths, suicide and child abuse. In addition, the plan lists emergency phone numbers for the Police Department, Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services, Poison Control Center, Utility Department, and phone and pager numbers for crisis team personnel

A chain of command list is included in the plan, as well as the personnel designated to communicate with the media.

TSPR parent and teacher surveys indicate that most respondents feel safe at VISD. VISD board members and administrators take an assertive stance toward most crisis related issues. The implementation of the crisis management plan helps make parents and teachers feel the school is safe.

COMMENDATION

VISD effectively prepares for emergency situations by implementing an emergency crisis management plan.

FINDING

VISD students and staff do not routinely practice fire or tornado drills. Although VISD has made great strides in adopting a crisis management plan, it is still lacking in the area of tornado or fire evacuation drill procedures. During teacher focus group discussions and a public forum, teachers and parents in the district expressed concern over the lack of routine drills. Some elementary teachers said that they practiced their own drills.

All schools should practice fire drills, and if a school is located in an area that is prone to tornadoes, such as in west Texas, the schools should also practice routine tornado drills. VISD Policy CKC-Local states that "principals shall conduct fire, tornado, or other emergency drills designed to assure the orderly movement of students and personnel to the safest areas available."

Such drills are necessary to ensure the proper operation of alarm equipment, to ensure that everyone, especially younger children, know which exits are to be used in emergencies and to ensure that everyone knows where to gather upon evacuation. In addition, procedures for communicating with children on playgrounds and in transport on buses are also important.

VISD does not have fire and tornado drill procedures on the district's Web site.

Recommendation 23:

Practice tornado and fire evacuation drills.

Regular fire and tornado drills will help ensure the safety of all students and staff, and VISD should place fire and tornado drill procedures on the district's Web site.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with the principal to develop tornado and fire evacuation drill procedures.	September 2001
2.	The principal meets with teachers to discuss tornado and fire evacuation drill procedures.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent performs tornado and fire evacuation drill.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent directs the technology coordinator to place the fire and tornado drill procedures on the district's Web site.	October 2001
5.	The superintendent performs a drill at least 3 times a year for each type of evacuation.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD's portable buildings do not have fire alarms and, therefore, are not in compliance with state fire-code standards.

VISD added portable buildings to its campus in 1997 when it added a ninth grade. The district now has six portable buildings that are used as

classrooms and one portable building that is used as administrative offices. None of these portable structures have fire alarms installed.

Recommendation 24:

Install fire alarms in all portable buildings.

Installing fire alarms in all portable buildings will help ensure the safety of VISD's students and staff. The district should consult and collaborate with the local Fire Department to ensure that these improvements will bring its portable facilities up to state fire-code standards.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with the local fire department official in the county to properly determine the needs of the portable buildings.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent obtains quotes for the installation of a fire-alarm system for all portable buildings.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent selects a vendor to perform the installation of fire alarms.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

Based on telephone estimates, alarm systems will cost \$125, and pull handles will be \$70, for a total of \$195 each. There are seven buildings, so the total cost will be \$1,365 (7 x \$195) plus \$275 for installation.

In addition, the Texas Engineering Practice Act requires that this type of installation work be inspected. Estimates for this type of inspection ranged from \$200 to \$1,200. To estimate this fiscal impact, the mid-point of these two estimates, \$700, will be used. The total one-time cost estimate for this fiscal impact is \$2,340 (\$1,365 alarms + \$275 installation + \$700 inspection).

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Install fire alarms in all portable buildings.	(\$2,340)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This chapter reviews financial management in the Veribest Independent School District (VISD) and includes the following sections:

- A. Accounting Procedures
- B. Asset and Risk Management
- C. Purchasing

Texas school districts must perform effective financial management in a highly regulated environment, meeting many requirements set by federal and state laws, rules and regulations. Districts must conduct school programs in accordance with the state constitution; the Texas Education Code (TEC) spells out the requirements for doing so. The code also authorizes the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to set standards for all school districts. TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG)* outlines accounting and reporting requirements for Texas school districts.

BACKGROUND

VISD's Board of Trustees sets the district's property tax rate after the district budget has been adopted. The Tom Green County tax appraiser sets property values, certifies tax rolls, collects property taxes, submits tax revenues to the district and pursues delinquent taxes.

Local property taxes provide almost 34 percent of VISD's total revenue for all funds combined. In August 2000, the VISD Board of Education increased its property tax rate by 8.7 percent, from \$1.38 to \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed value for 2000-01. The school board voted for the increase to satisfy requirements for obtaining facilities construction funding through the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) program.

Exhibit 3-1 shows VISD property tax rates for the past seven years. As the exhibit shows, the property tax rate for maintenance and operations (M&O) has increased steadily from \$1.29 per \$100 of assessed value in 1995 to the current \$1.50, while VISD has not levied a tax for debt service for the last seven years.

Exhibit 3-1
VISD Property Tax Rates Per \$100 of Assessed Value
1995 to 2001

Year	M&O	Debt	Total	Percent Increase/
------	-----	------	-------	-------------------

	Rate	Service Rate	Tax Rate	(Decrease) from Prior Year
1995	\$1.29000	\$0.00	\$1.29000	0.0%
1996	\$1.30177	\$0.00	\$1.30177	0.9%
1997	\$1.30177	\$0.00	\$1.30177	0.0%
1998	\$1.38177	\$0.00	\$1.38177	6.1%
1999	\$1.38000	\$0.00	\$1.38000	-0.1%
2000	\$1.38000	\$0.00	\$1.38000	0.0%
2001	\$1.50000	\$0.00	\$1.50000	8.7%

Source: Financial report of VISD, August 31, 2000.

Exhibit 3-2 compares tax rates per \$100 of assessed value and property value per pupil for VISD and its peer districts. As the exhibit shows, VISD is about average compared to its peers in overall tax rate and has the second highest total property value (only Water Valley's property value is higher). VISD's property value per student of \$186,363 is below the state average of \$215,121.

**Exhibit 3-2
Comparison of Tax Rates and Property Values for
Veribest ISD and Peer Districts**

District Name	Total Tax Rate Per \$100 of Assessed Value	Total Property Value	Total Property Value per Pupil
Coolidge	\$1.696	\$19,581,996	\$78,016
Novice	\$1.500	\$23,715,523	\$241,995
Water Valley	\$1.500	\$57,262,240	\$181,785
Veribest	\$1.500	\$50,690,743	\$186,363
Panther Creek	\$1.260	\$44,204,122	\$203,706
State	\$1.474	\$875,849,350,741	\$215,121

Source: Comptroller of Public Accounts, Property Tax Division 2000.

VISD maintains several funds to track its financial operations. Each fund is considered a separate financial reporting entity and is accounted for individually. There are three primary funds: (1) the general fund, used to account for resources that finance fundamental district operations, (2) a

special revenue fund, used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue that is legally restricted to expenditures for specific purposes, and (3) an agency fund, used to account for activities of student groups.

In addition to these funds, the district also uses account groups to reflect activities related to general fixed assets and general long-term debt.

VISD uses a financial management system provided by the Regional Education Service Center XV (Region 15). The software, called Regional Service Center Computer Cooperative (RSCCC), is a networked, Windows-based system for both financial and student management needs. RSCCC handles:

- Budget preparation;
- Budget amendment;
- Financial accounting;
- Purchase order processing;
- Payroll;
- Student registration;
- Grade-reporting;
- Discipline-tracking;
- Attendance;
- Scheduling; and
- Health services.

Exhibit 3-3 shows the balance of accounts in each of the district funds and account groups for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2000. Total assets for the general fund amounted to \$292,960.

**Exhibit 3-3
VISD's Balance Sheet as of
August 31, 2000**

Description	General Fund	Special Revenue Funds	Trust and Agency Funds	General Fixed Assets	General Long-Term Debt	TOTALS
ASSETS						
Cash and Temporary Investments (market)	\$88,137	\$14,977	\$22,555	\$0	\$0	\$125,669
Property Taxes -	38,806	-	-	-	-	\$38,806

Delinquent						
Allowance for Uncollectible Taxes (credit)	(10,609)	-	-	-	-	\$(10,609)
Due from Other Governments	122,955	6,058	-	-	-	\$129,013
Accrued Interest	3,682	-	-	-	-	\$3,682
Due from Other Funds	46,666	33,017	98,808	-	-	\$178,491
Other Receivables	3,323	-	-	-	-	\$3,323
Land	-	-	-	45,817	-	\$45,817
Buildings and Improvements	-	-	-	1,179,794	-	\$1,179,794
Furniture and Equipment	-	-	-	267,818	-	\$267,818
Leased Property under Capital Leases	-	-	-	24,522	-	\$24,522
Amounts to be Provided	-	-	-	-	402,409	\$402,409
Total Assets	\$292,960	\$54,052	\$121,363	\$1,517,951	\$402,409	\$2,388,735
LIABILITIES						
Accounts Payable	\$34,782	\$3,640	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$38,422
Bonds and Loans Payable - Current Year	-	-	-	-	64,859	\$64,859
Capital Leases Payable - Current Year	-	-	-	-	8,050	\$8,050
Accrued	-	-	101,304	-	-	\$101,304

Wages Payable						
Due to Other Funds	126,065	41,711	10,715	-	-	\$178,491
Due to Other Governments	-	8,201	-	-	-	\$8,201
Due to Student Groups	-	-	9,344	-	-	\$9,344
Deferred Revenues	28,197	-	-	-	-	\$28,197
Loans Payable - Long Term	-	-	-	-	320,978	\$320,978
Other Long-Term Debt Payable	-	-	-	-	8,522	\$8,522
Total Liabilities	\$189,044	\$53,552	\$121,363	\$0	\$402,409	\$766,368
FUND EQUITY AND OTHER CREDITS						
Investments in Fixed Assets	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,517,951	\$0	\$1,517,951
Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance	103,916	500	-	-	-	\$104,416
Total Fund Equity and Other Credits	\$103,916	\$500	\$0	\$1,517,951	\$0	\$1,622,367
Total Liabilities, Fund Equity, and Other Credits	\$292,960	\$54,052	\$121,363	\$1,517,951	\$402,409	\$2,388,735

Source: Financial report of VISD, for the year ending August 31, 2000.

Exhibit 3-4 summarizes revenue and expenses for all VISD funds. As the exhibit shows, total revenue from all funds amounted to \$2,012,216 in

fiscal 2000. Total expenditures for all funds exceeded revenues by \$47,214, effectively decreasing the district's fund balance from \$151,630 as of September 1999 to \$104,416 as of August 2000.

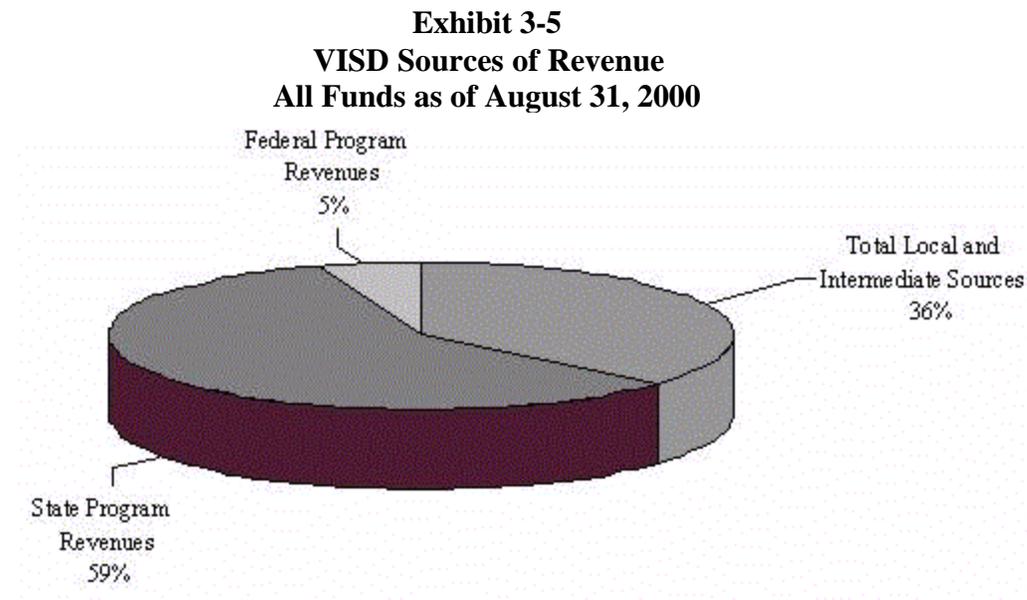
Exhibit 3-4
VISD Total Revenues for all Funds
August 31, 2000

Description	General Fund	Special Revenue Funds	Total
REVENUES			
Local and Intermediate Sources:			
Investment Income	\$9,476		\$9,476
Other Local and Intermediate Sources	694,076	30,146	\$724,222
Total Local and Intermediate Sources	703,552	30,146	\$733,698
State Program Revenues	1,110,249	62,513	\$1,172,762
Federal Program Revenues	5,714	100,042	\$105,756
Total Revenues	\$1,819,515	\$192,701	\$2,012,216
EXPENDITURES			
Instruction and Instructional-Related Services	\$1,041,001	\$120,123	\$1,161,124
Instruction and School Leadership	56,667	-	\$56,667
Support Services - Student	197,281	89,604	\$286,885
Administrative Support Services	136,223	-	\$136,223
Support Services - Nonstudent Based	242,954	3,000	\$245,954
Debt Service	96,654	-	\$96,654
Capital Outlay	5,336	-	\$5,336
Intergovernmental Charges	95,164	-	\$95,164
Total Expenditures	\$1,871,280	\$212,727	\$2,084,007
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	(51,765)	(20,026)	(\$71,791)
Other Resources	24,577	17,526	\$42,103
Other (Uses)	(17,526)	-	(\$17,526)

Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues & Other Resources Over (Under) Expenditures and Other Uses	(44,714)	(2,500)	(\$47,214)
Fund Balance - September 1	\$148,630	\$3,000	\$151,630
Fund Balance - August 31	\$103,916	\$500	\$104,416

Source: Financial report of VISD, for the year ending August 31, 2000.

The majority of VISD's revenue comes from state program revenue, as shown in **Exhibit 3-5**.



Source: Financial report of VISD, for the year ending August 31, 2000.

State revenue makes up 59 percent of VISD's revenue from all funds, while local sources make up 36 percent and federal sources make up 5 percent of all revenue.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

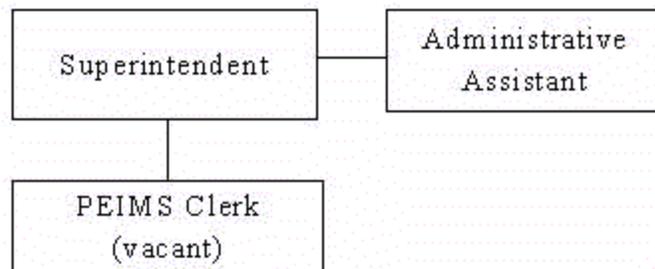
A. ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES

Financial management in school districts involves effective planning, budgeting, managing and an ability to maximize resources. A district's ability to perform these tasks affects its relationships with employees, vendors, funding agencies and the local community.

Financial management is most effective when spending is based on established priorities, internal controls are in place, financial information is provided in a timely and useful manner, staff and technology are allocated for maximum results and-perhaps most importantly-accounting procedures are in place for accomplishing these things.

In VISD, the superintendent serves as the chief financial officer, responsible for preparing and monitoring all budgets, presenting budget and other financial data to the school board and reviewing and approving all expenditures. The superintendent's office (known as the "central office") is staffed with an administrative assistant and a clerk for the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). **Exhibit 3-6** shows the organizational structure of the office.

Exhibit 3-6
VISD's Central Office Organization
2001



Source: VISD superintendent, April 2001.

The administrative assistant has general office responsibilities and prepares payroll transactions and bank reconciliations, enters all financial information to the district's general ledger and assists the superintendent with budget preparation and monitoring functions.

The PEIMS clerk is responsible for collecting, entering, maintaining and submitting information to TEA's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

FINDING

VISD requires that all employees be paid through direct deposit. Each employee can designate an account at any bank in the county where his or her paycheck can be directly deposited each month.

Direct deposit streamlines the payroll process and saves money by eliminating the need to handle and safeguard physical checks. Check stock is more costly than regular paper, and requires special handling and security to avoid irregularities.

Direct deposit is more convenient for district employees because they do not have to go to the bank every payday.

COMMENDATION:

Veribest ISD's use of mandatory direct deposit helps to streamline the payroll process and eliminates some of the costs associated with paying employees.

FINDING

VISD is not transmitting direct deposit payroll data to its depository bank electronically. The administrative assistant in the central office delivers the data on a diskette to the district's bank in San Angelo each month. This process is cumbersome and time-consuming, requiring a special trip to San Angelo.

VISD transmitted payroll data to its bank electronically until January 2001, when there was a personnel change in the administrative assistant position. According to the district's bank, all electronic capabilities are in place for VISD to transmit data electronically, which is a quick and easy process.

Recommendation 25:

Transmit direct deposit payroll data to the bank electronically.

Transmitting payroll data to the bank electronically will streamline the payroll process by eliminating a monthly trip to San Angelo. Electronic transmission is also a more secure means of transferring payroll data to the bank, since diskettes can easily be lost or damaged.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts the district's depository institution to arrange a meeting involving VISD staff and the bank's cash manager.	October 2001
2.	VISD's superintendent and administrative assistant meet with the bank's cash manager to re-establish procedures for transmitting payroll data to the bank electronically each month.	October 2001
3.	The administrative assistant uses the Internet to transmit payroll data to the bank monthly.	November 2001 and monthly thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Some necessary, routine accounting and financial functions are not taking place in a timely manner as they should for the district to make sound financial decisions and protect its assets. These include:

- Monitoring the budget to make sure VISD does not spend more than is legally authorized by the Board of Trustees;
- Reconciling VISD's bank statements monthly to ensure that cash balances in the bank tie to activity on the district's general ledger; and
- Tagging, tracking and accounting for district assets.

The omission of these key routines is making VISD's financial data inaccurate. For instance, last year the general ledger contained several errors and omissions at year-end, including the omission of one month's payroll expenses. These inaccuracies have helped cause VISD to overspend its budget.

Besides being VISD's chief financial officer, the superintendent has other critical functions. The superintendent also serves as the district's safety coordinator, prepares all school board packets and responds to board inquiries, acts as VISD's election officer, oversees VISD's transportation, cafeteria and maintenance functions, and provides direct supervision to the two campus administrators. The superintendent also drives a bus route daily due to staff shortages.

The administrative assistant to the superintendent is responsible for performing all VISD financial functions. Duties that are listed in the job description for this position include preparing financial reports required by the school board, keeping financial records in good order and working with VISD's auditors to see that the district follows state rules and regulations. The job description states that the administrative assistant should keep the superintendent informed about all VISD financial matters. The job description does not specify skills or experience that the administrative assistant should have. The individual in this position has no previous financial or accounting experience.

Maintaining accurate and timely financial data is the key to making sound business decisions. Many districts require that the individual responsible for the district's finances have previous experience in accounting and finance, and that employees in this type of position obtain certification from the Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO). For example, in Water Valley ISD the job description for the business manager requires the person in that position to obtain TASBO certification. TASBO offers several classes and certifications in accounting, management information systems, payroll, personnel, purchasing and risk management.

The bookkeeping function in a small district is critical and has evolved into a profession that is separate and distinct from that of the superintendent or principal. As a result, superintendents and principals in small school districts, who have been involved in school district operations, are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the rapidly changing requirements.

In addition, small school districts are unable to match the salaries of large school districts for highly trained and experienced business office personnel. Thus, these districts have more problems adjusting to changes in school finance and budgeting laws and in maintaining efficient business operations.

There are increasing reports of mistakes made by small district personnel that cause the district extreme hardships. A simple PEIMS reporting mistake can impact a district's funding for a number of years.

All school districts are required to perform an array of business services. How well districts are able to accomplish these complicated tasks depends on the knowledge and expertise of the personnel that districts are having increasing difficulty hiring.

In June 1999, Regional Education Service Center XI (Region 10) in Fort Worth submitted a proposal to TEA for "Improving Texas School District

Financial Management." One component of the proposal was the development of a model business support services cooperative to help smaller school districts and charter schools perform any and all business functions. As part of this effort, Region 10 researched the use of cooperative financial services in and outside of Texas.

After reviewing and analyzing the models from various states, Region 10 found six workable models for providing business services in small school districts and charter schools in Texas, which are summarized below:

Model 1 - Business Services Provided by School Districts or Charter Schools

- School districts or charter schools maintain their own business services departments.
- The Regional Education Service Center (RESC) in the area perform business services as needed using RESC staff, retirees or other contracted groups or individuals.

Model II - Business Services Provided by Each RESC

- School districts or charter schools contract with the RESC to perform all business services.
- Business services provided by the RESC are full time, part time, interim or "as needed."
- RESC staff, qualified retirees or the use of an incubator to directly train school district employees performs business services.

Model III-Business Services Provided on a Multi-Regional Basis

- School districts or charter schools contract with the RESC to perform business services.
- This model assumes that four "Mega-RESC's" will be appropriately staffed to fully perform all business services.
- Each multi-regional RESC will provide services to four other RESCs. These smaller RESCs may also provide some business services or may provide interface services for school districts or charter schools in their regions.
- Business services provided by the RESC are full time, part time, interim or "as needed."
- The RESC staff, qualified retirees or the use of an incubator to directly train school district employees performs business services.
- This model tracks the original Multi-Regional Processing Centers that provided data processing services in the early 70s.

Model IV-Business Services Provided by Shared Personnel

- School districts or charter schools co-op business services between and/or among each other.
- These districts or charter schools approve an inter-local governmental agreement, which specifies the responsibilities of the cooperative and the responsibilities of each of the school districts with the cooperative.
- The RESC can provide technical assistance to the cooperative including development of the agreement, housing and incubator, hosting and assisting with the cooperative board meeting, etc.
- A fiscal agent would be appointed (this could be one of the member school districts or the RESC), and the cooperatives employees would become employees of the fiscal agent.
- The incubator could be provided by the RESC or by the cooperative.

Model V-Business Services Provided by Shared Personnel (Minimum Enrollment Required by the State)

- School districts or charter schools co-op business services between and/or among each other in order to reach the minimum enrollment required by the state.
- The RESC could provide technical assistance, incubator training or perform fiscal agent duties.
- This model is the same as Model IV; however, it requires a certain minimum aggregate enrollment for the participating school districts or charter schools.

Model VI-Privatized Business Services

- School districts or charter schools purchase business services from a private company.
- The RESC could provide technical assistance and/or incubator services in order to train school district employees.

Clearly, the scenarios can be "mixed and matched" in any combination or format desirable to school districts, charter schools and services centers. The use of these models, in conjunction with business services provided by RESCs throughout the state, could be a viable option for school districts and charter schools to procure professional business services in a cost-efficient manner.

Recommendation 26:

Form a committee of superintendents, Region 15 representatives and representatives from the Texas Education Agency to explore the opportunities for shared financial services.

While this recommendation is directed toward districts in Tom Green County, other neighboring districts that could benefit from a shared services arrangement should also be invited to participate. Further, districts may find that they will benefit from some combination of scenarios and may wish to break off to work in smaller groups of two or three districts, rather than in a larger cooperative. All of these options should be thoroughly explored to ensure that the best interests of the districts are fully understood and protected.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts Region 15 to set up a superintendent meeting with any interested districts in the Region, RESC staff and staff from TEA.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent attends the meeting and discusses a plan to fully explore the various options for cooperative financial services within the Region.	October 2001
3.	The committee researches all of the options, with each superintendent regularly providing information and input about their respective district's operations, needs and board concerns.	November 2001 - March 2002
4.	The superintendent shares the various options with the board for final consideration and review.	April 2002
5.	The board reviews the options and determines the best course of action for the district in the coming year, approving any needed budget or staffing adjustments for the coming year.	May - June 2002
6.	The superintendent works with fellow superintendents and regional staff to implement the plan.	Summer 2002
7.	The district implements the new approach and closely monitors the districts participation to ensure the success of the plan.	August 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD's fund balance has declined steadily since 1997, as **Exhibit 3-7** shows. School districts establish fund balances (also called reserve balances) to work similarly to a savings account. They can be a source of funds in case of an emergency, supply cash to pay bills when there are cash flow problems, or be a place to build up savings for large purchases not affordable in a single year, such as a computer system.

Exhibit 3-7
VISD's Fund Balance History
1996 to 2000

Year	Ending Fund Balance	Optimum Fund Balance	Excess/ (Deficit)
1996	\$338,383	N/A	N/A
1997	\$449,478	N/A	N/A
1998	\$114,143	\$265,000	(\$150,857)
1999	\$148,630	\$155,000	(\$6,370)
2000	\$103,916	\$197,700	(\$93,784)

Source: Financial Reports of VISD for the years indicated.

Prudent financial management requires accumulating a balance in the general fund that is large enough to cover cash outflows that leave a negative balance (which occurs in virtually all schools during most of the fiscal year). TEA sets target fund balances for the general fund. The formula calls for the general fund balance to equal the estimated amount needed to cover cash flow deficits in the general fund for the fall period of the following fiscal year plus estimated average monthly cash disbursements from the general fund for the nine months of the following fiscal year. **Exhibit 3-8** shows VISD's calculation of its general fund balance as of August 31, 2000. As the exhibit shows, the general fund balance is almost \$94,000 below what is considered optimum.

Exhibit 3-8
VISD's Optimum Fund Balance Calculation
As of August 31, 2000

Description		
Total General Fund balance as of 8/31/00		\$103,916
Total Reserved Fund balance		
Total Designated Fund balance		

Estimated amount needed to cover fall cash flow deficits in the general fund (net of borrowed funds and funds representing deferred revenues)		
Estimate of one month's average cash disbursements during the regular school session (9/1/00--5/31/01)	197,700	
Optimum Fund Balance and Cash Flow		\$197,700
Excess (Deficit) Undesignated Unreserved General Fund Balance		(\$93,784)

Source: Financial Report of VISD, for the year ending August 31, 2000.

Several factors have contributed to this decline, including the opening of the Roy K. Rob Center in 1998 and adding a new high school beginning in 1996. Further, a review of budgets and financial reports for VISD since 1997 shows that expenditures consistently exceed revenues and planned expenditures. Moreover, VISD's general fund is paying for cafeteria operations. During fiscal 1999-2000, for example, the general fund absorbed a \$17,000 deficit incurred by the cafeteria. Maintaining inadequate reserves puts the district at risk of facing a financial crisis in an emergency. Also, the relative amount of undesignated, unreserved funds is a primary criterion of rating agencies for school bonds. Agencies see undesignated, unreserved fund balances as a reflection of a district's financial strength and show concern when these balances decrease. A declining general fund balance may hinder VISD's plans for a new school. Corpus Christi ISD implemented a plan to increase its general fund balance by mandating a reduction of 5 percent of budgeted expenditures annually. The district required all departments to identify expenditures that could be reduced. By controlling general fund expenditures, the district increased its fund balance.

Recommendation 27:

Develop a target balance for the general fund and manage to it.

The first step in rebuilding the general fund balance should be to develop a realistic budget and control expenditures. The district should require a 5 percent budget cut for all departments for all non-payroll expenditures. By controlling expenditures, the district can increase its fund balance to an optimum level.

The district should develop a written plan that includes short- and long-term goals and how the goals should be prioritized based on the budget cuts needed to increase the fund balance. Also, VISD should place a line item in the budget specifically designated to increase the fund balance by a

minimum of 10 percent per year. The suggested 5 percent budget cut for all non-payroll expenditures would result in a general fund balance of almost \$200,000 after five years.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops a target balance for the general fund and a plan to increase the balance to meet the target.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent presents the plan to the school board for review and approval.	November 2001
3.	The school board reviews and approves the plan.	November 2001
4.	The superintendent requests that all departments cut non-payroll expenditures by 5 percent.	January 2002
5.	All departments prepare their budgets based on a 5 percent reduction of non-payroll expenditures.	April 2002
6.	The school board reviews and approves the new budgets.	August 2002
7.	The superintendent closely monitors the budget to determine whether spending reductions are occurring.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

A review of audited financial statements shows that VISD has overspent its budget since 1998. The district could not verify that the over expenditures had board approval. **Exhibit 3-9** shows the amounts VISD overspent the budget by function and by year. Overspending in 1999-2000 was at \$191,217, while amounts overspent in 1997-98 and 1998-99 were \$368,358 and \$341,434, respectively.

**Exhibit 3-9
VISD's Excess Expenditures Over Appropriations**

		Fiscal Year Ending August 31,		
Function	Description	1998	1999	2000
11	Instruction	\$	\$74,132	\$

12	Instructional Resources and Media Services	3,673	733	-
13	Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development	-	1,074	2,297
21	Instructional Development	1,364	-	-
23	School Administration	2,121	3,311	-
31	Guidance, Counseling, and Evaluation Services	5,170	-	-
33	Health Services	1,557	4,737	-
34	Student Transportation	-	4,333	2,683
36	Co-curricular/Extracurricular Activities	2,990	17,109	49,687
41	General Administration	43,051	14,288	8,326
51	Plant Maintenance and Operations	71,717	78,642	60,885
52	Security and Monitoring Services	47	-	-
53	Data Processing Services	-	-	3,825
71	Debt Service	20,650	87,572	-
81	Facilities Acquisition and Construction	175,204	-	1,836
91	Contracted Instructional Services	-	13,115	-
93	Payments to Fiscal Agent/Member Districts of SSA	251	5,630	17,548
35	Food Services (Special Revenue Funds)	5,203	33,910	26,604
	Other Uses	35,360	2,848	17,526
	Totals	\$368,358	\$341,434	\$191,217

Source: Financial reports of VISD for the years indicated.

Texas Education Code 44.006 and TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG)*, require school boards to make any necessary amendments to the annual budget before August 31 of each year by official board action. TEA's *FASRG*, Section 1.1.1 (GAAP and Legal Compliance) states:

The annual operating budget is one of the most important of all legal documents governing financial transactions. Upon board of trustee approval, the expenditure requests in the budget become binding appropriations that may not legally be exceeded by the school district without an amendment.

The resource guide goes further in Section 1.1.2 (Legal Requirements) stating:

The school district's board minutes should be used to record the adoption of the budget and any amendments to the budget are to be made prior to exceeding a detailed functional expenditure category, and these amendments are to be recorded in the board minutes. Filing of the final amended budget with TEA is satisfied whenever the annual audit report, showing a comparison of budget amounts with actual amounts, is filed.

The district does not monitor its budget at least monthly to identify revenue or expenditure items that require formal budget amendment by the school board.

Both the board president and vice-president said that they believed some of the overspending could be attributed to bookkeeping errors, since they felt that the board had voted on budget amendments for many of these items. TSPR requested that the district provide documentation on their budget amendments. However, the district did not provide the requested documentation, and no analysis was performed.

Recommendation 28:

Monitor the budget closely and prepare budget amendments in a timely manner.

District staff should keep the school board informed of VISD's financial position. The staff should monitor the budget closely (at least monthly) to identify any revenue or expenditure items that will require formal budget amendment by the school board. Alerting the board to these situations before any expenditures are actually made will allow board members to vote on whether to make the expenditures rather than having district staff decide. Monitoring the budget will also help the district to stay within its limits as established by the board adopted budget.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent reviews a monthly variance report and monitors areas that may exceed the budget.	October 2001 and monthly thereafter
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2.	The superintendent reports to the school board any items that may exceed budget.	November 2001 and monthly thereafter
3.	The superintendent prepares a monthly budget amended, if necessary, for school board review and approval.	December 2001 and monthly, if necessary
4.	The school board reviews and votes on all budget amendments.	December 2001 and monthly, if necessary

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not have documented accounting procedures that govern its operations. Also, there is little cross-training between the PEIMS clerk and the administrative assistant.

Documented, written procedures would help the business office conduct timely, routine accounting functions. Recent turnover has left new employees without adequate instruction about which procedures should be performed, when they should be performed and where critical information is to be stored.

The administrative assistant was hired in January 2001. TSPR observed many functions were not performed because the administrative assistant was unaware of them. Staff at the Region 15 Service Center, for example, were training the administrative assistant to prepare bank reconciliations while TSPR was on-site in Veribest ISD.

Also, district staff were unable to locate many documents requested for this review and related to such things as insurance policies, fleet records, fixed asset reports and transportation costs because they did not know where the documents were kept.

Well-written and organized procedures ensure compliance with board policies, protect the institutional knowledge of the school districts so that when experienced employees leave, new employees have the benefit of the others' experience and provide a basis for training. In addition, documented procedures provide a tool by which employees can be evaluated and held accountable.

Recommendation 29:

Develop and document procedures for critical accounting functions.

The district should develop detailed accounting procedures that describe the process steps for each critical accounting function. Examples of functional procedures that should be documented include transaction postings, month-end closings, preparation for cash disbursement, payroll processing, and budget monitoring and amendment. **Exhibit 3-10** outlines these key functions.

Once a comprehensive procedures manual has been prepared, it is equally important to maintain and update it regularly.

Exhibit 3-10
Recommended Content of Documented Procedures

- Transactions
 - Receipt and Disbursement Journal
 - General Ledger
 - Bank Reconciliation
 - Other
- Cash Receipts/Revenue
 - Daily Deposits/Documentation
 - Controls
 - Posting/Reconciliation
- Expenditures/Cash Disbursements
 - Purchasing Requirements
 - Controls
- Payroll
 - Creating a payroll
 - Processing/Time/Paydays/Holidays
 - Deduction Processing/Requirements
 - Controls/Forms
- Other
 - Internal Controls
 - Collections, Disbursements, Assets (investments/fixed)
 - Fixed Assets
 - Control/Policy/Procedures/Form
 - Inventory
 - Tagging/Requirements
 - Purchasing
 - Bidding
 - Purchase Orders
 - Budget
 - Process, Calendar, Amendments,
 - Student Activity Fund

Source: TSPR, May 2001.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The school board directs the superintendent to develop and document the district's administrative accounting procedures.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent prepares a draft of the district's administrative accounting procedures, with assistance from Region 15.	February 2002
3.	The school board reviews and approves the procedures.	March 2002
4.	The superintendent distributes the procedures to business office staff.	April 2002
5.	The superintendent reviews the procedures annually and prepares an update.	May 2002 and annually thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

B. ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Texas school districts have a fiduciary responsibility to protect assets the public provides to educate children. Cash, employees, land, buildings, equipment and borrowing capacity are all school district assets. Asset and risk management aims to protect these assets from financial losses due to unforeseen events.

An effective asset and risk management program controls costs by ensuring that a district pays the lowest possible insurance premiums to protect itself against major losses. The program should identify and measure risks and use techniques to minimize its impact. For example, school districts should invest for a maximum return, but should also safeguard funds and ensure liquidity to meet cash flow demands. Effective tax management includes quick and efficient tax collection to allow the district to meet its cash flow needs and earn the highest possible interest. Fixed asset management, which involves purchasing and accounting for assets and maximizing benefits gained through the disposal of surplus or obsolete equipment, should track district property and safeguard it against theft and obsolescence. Insurance for the district's assets, employees' health and workers' compensation should be sound and cost-effective.

A district must manage its cash and investments actively and review finances daily to make sure they meet instructional goals and objectives. This involves establishing and maintaining beneficial banking relationships, forecasting cash requirements accurately and in a timely manner to make sure funds are available when needed, and depositing assets in appropriate, approved and safe investment vehicles to maximize returns.

Risk Management

The district's insurance programs consist of property, casualty and liability insurance, group health care and employee benefit plans, and workers' compensation insurance. VISD's superintendent has overall responsibility for this insurance.

VISD participates in TASB's Risk Management Fund for workers' compensation coverage, contributing premiums based on gross payroll amounts. The fund maintains a payment schedule for three employee classifications based on relative risks of job functions. **Exhibit 3-11** lists these classifications, VISD's gross payroll for each classification and the

premiums paid by classification from September 1, 1999 to September 1, 2002. VISD receives a 5 percent premium discount for enrolling in the fund for a three-year period.

Exhibit 3-11
VISD's Workers' Compensation
Premiums For Fiscal Year 1999-2000

Estimated Payroll for 1999-2000		Employee Count	Experience-Adjusted Rates	Estimated Annual Contribution
Bus drivers	\$10,800	3	6.56 %	\$708
Professional	1,204,080	40	0.44 %	\$5,298
All other	79,850	9	8.35 %	\$6,667
Total	\$1,294,730	52		\$12,673

Source: TASB Risk Management Fund Workers' Compensation Program, Contribution Summary for Veribest ISD, 1999-2000.

As of May 2001, VISD has one pending workers' compensation claim.

Exhibit 3-12 shows a summary of VISD's casualty and liability insurance coverage, which cost \$6,753 for this coverage for fiscal 2000-01. VISD pays the lowest premium rate available from TASB for the coverage amounts.

Exhibit 3-12
VISD's Summary of Casualty and Liability
Insurance Coverage

Coverage Type	Coverage Amount	Coverage Limits	Deductible
General liability	\$1,000,000	Includes personal injury and per occurrence limit; deductible per occurrence	\$1,000
Property	\$2,677,835	All risk, replacement cost basis; limit on buildings, personal property, and auxiliary structures; deductible per occurrence; includes wind, hurricane and hail coverage with \$5,000 deductible	\$1,000

Audio/visual equipment	\$25,000	All risk; replacement cost limit; deductible per occurrence	\$250
Computers	\$50,000	All risk; replacement cost limit; deductible per occurrence	\$250
Legal liability	\$1,000,000/ \$1,000,000	Per occurrence limit/annual aggregate; deductible per occurrence	\$1,000

Source: TASB Risk Management Fund, Veribest ISD Contribution and Coverage Summary, January 2001.

FINDING

The district also offers medical insurance to its employees through TASB's Risk Management Fund. Various levels of coverage are available. The district contributes \$136.66 monthly, or \$1,640 annually, toward each employee's insurance premium cost. Monthly premium costs that are more than the \$136.66 are paid by the employee through payroll deductions. The district also offers prescription benefits, and dental and life insurance at an extra cost.

The 77th Texas Legislature established a statewide school employee health insurance plan for teachers and other school district employees. Districts with 500 or fewer employees-more than 80 percent of the state's districts-will be required to participate in the new state insurance plan beginning in the fall of 2002. Districts that have at least 501 and 1,000 or fewer employees may join the plan, but they must decide to do so before September 30, 2001. Districts that have more than 1,000 employees may join in 2005, unless the Teacher Retirement System (TRS), which will be administering the plan, determines that earlier opt-in is feasible. Districts that do not join the state insurance plan will still receive state support to continue their locally determined insurance programs. All employees will be covered under the state's basic plan for catastrophic coverage, and all districts, whether or not they participate in the state insurance plan, will receive \$75 a month from the state per covered employee and \$1,000 a year pass-through for each employee.

The plan has special provisions that deal with risk pools and self-insurance programs. If a risk pool was in existence on January 1, 2001, districts in that pool that have 500 or fewer employees may choose not to participate in the state pool. Self-insured districts with fewer than 501 employees that were individually self-insured on or before January 1, 2001, and have continued a self-insured program since then, may elect not to participate in the state pool.

Also, districts that are parties to a health insurance contract in effect on September 1, 2002 are not required to participate until the expiration of the contract period.

All full-time employees and part-time employees who are members of TRS are automatically covered by the basic state plan, which is considered catastrophic coverage. Receiving higher levels of coverage will require additional district and employee contributions. To help with these costs, the state will send each district \$75 per month, per covered employee and will give each employee an additional \$1,000 annually (\$83 a month) to pay for additional employee coverage, dependent coverage, compensation or any combination of the above. Part-time employees who are not TRS members may participate if the employee or the district pays the full cost.

Districts are required to make a minimum contribution of \$150 per employee per month. If they are not contributing this amount now, over the next six years the state will help them pay that share. However, the state will phase out this "hold harmless" aid over the next six years. Districts that reach the M&O property tax cap of \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed value will also be held harmless for any tax effort more than \$1.50 that is required to reach their minimum contribution of \$150 a month.

A district that contributes more than \$150 a month per employee may use its extra contribution to provide additional insurance coverage or other employee compensation.

All details of the plan will be subject to contract negotiations with health insurance providers, actuarial estimates, and rules and guidelines set by TRS. TRS will have more details before July 31, 2001, so that districts that have at least 501 employees and 1,000 or fewer employees can decide whether to participate before the September 30, 2001 deadline. Consequently, in the next year more than 80 percent of Texas school districts will be examining options for providing insurance to their employees.

Because the Legislature was concerned about the effect that the termination or bidding of insurance contracts during this final year of coverage would have on a district's ability to obtain competitive bids for health insurance, the state has exempted smaller school districts from competitive bid requirements for health insurance coverage for the coming year.

Recommendation 30:

Establish a committee of staff and administrators to assess the state employee health insurance plan and help determine the district's course of action.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent establishes a committee of representative teachers and other employees to research options and prepare recommendations for how the district will approach employee health coverage in the coming year.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent begins to gather information from TRS, Region 15 and the state on the state's new insurance program.	September 2001
3.	The committee examines the information and prepares a plan of action to be presented to the board.	October through December 2001
4.	The superintendent presents the plan to the board for review and approval.	January 2002
5.	Upon approval, the committee informs all members of the staff about the plan.	February 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Cash Management

Exhibit 3-13 shows VISD's bank balances at the end of the school year for the past three years. VISD has a depository contract with Crockett National Bank in San Angelo.

**Exhibit 3-13
VISD's Cash Balances on August 31 for the
Years Ending 1998, 1999 and 2000**

Description	8/31/98	8/31/99	8/31/2000
Amount insured by FDIC	\$106,548	\$41,849	\$100,544
Amount collateralized	\$117,838	0	\$24,640
Total	\$224,386	\$41,849	\$125,184

Source: VISD's audited financial statements for the years presented.

In addition to the cash balances shown above, the district's investments as of August 31, 2000 consisted of certificates of deposit in the amount of \$426.

The superintendent is responsible for the issuance of bonds, debt obligations and refinancing. As of August 31, 2000, the district had \$482,345 in general long-term debt. As shown in **Exhibit 3-14**, this amount included \$353,444 for a Public Property Finance Contract, Series 1997K issued in 1997 for the purchase of furniture and equipment for the district's agricultural program; \$111,240 in interest-bearing time warrants issued in 1998 for the construction, acquisition, repair and renovation of school buildings in the district and \$17,661 for a capital lease to acquire a pickup truck.

Exhibit 3-14
Long-Term Debt as of
August 31, 2000

Year Ending August 31	Public Property Finance Contract	Interest- Bearing Time Warrants	Capital Leases	Total
2001	\$50,492	\$37,080	\$8,831	\$96,403
2002	50,492	37,080	8,830	96,402
2003	50,492	37,080	-	87,572
2004	50,492	-	-	50,492
2005	50,492	-	-	50,492
2006 and 2007	100,984	-	-	100,984
Totals	\$353,444	\$111,240	\$17,661	\$482,345

Source: VISD financial report, August 31, 2000.

In September 1999, voters approved \$3 million in bonds to be issued for construction, renovation and equipment for school buildings and to buy land for a new school. Issuance of the bonds was dependent on approval of the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) through TEA. In January 2000, the school board voted to withdraw from the IFA since funding was denied. As a result, the bonds are no longer available for issuance.

FINDING

VISD does not prepare bank reconciliations in a timely manner. In April 2001, TSPR found that the district's bank accounts were last reconciled for

December 2000. The district was working to reconcile October through December 2000 at that time. The district told TSPR in June that bank statements had been reconciled through April 2001. However, the district provided incomplete documentation, showing that one bank account had been reconciled through April 2001. Also, there is no evidence that the superintendent reviews and approves completed bank reconciliations.

Bank reconciliations that are eventually prepared by district staff contain errors and do not tie to the general ledger. The district's external auditor found that because of the lack of timeliness and accuracy in the preparation of bank reconciliations, the district's general ledger does not accurately reflect the district's finances and that internal control over cash is not effective.

A review of prior-year audit reports shows that the lack of timely and accurate bank reconciliations has been an ongoing problem. In the August 31, 1998 audit report, for example, the external auditor stated that because of problems in reconciling the accounts, one month's payroll was not recorded in the district's general ledger, which distorted certain financial records. In the same audit report, certificates of deposit in the amount of \$122,990 were not recorded in the district's general ledger.

The external auditor has repeatedly recommended that VISD prepare bank reconciliations in a timely manner and review the general ledger for accuracy. In the August 31, 2000 audit report, VISD's response to the external auditor's comments was that VISD will complete all bank reconciliations in a timely manner and will review the general ledger accounts. As of June 2001, VISD was not performing this function.

Bank reconciliation-the process of systematically comparing the cash balance reported by the bank with the cash balance appearing in VISD's records and explaining any differences-is a vital tool for detecting errors and irregularities. Good practices require that all bank accounts be reconciled within five days of receiving the account statements from the bank and all reconciliation reports to be reviewed and approved by management.

Recommendation 31:

Strengthen controls for the reconciliation of bank statements.

By conducting timely bank reconciliations and general ledger reviews, the district will be able to identify errors and irregularities in a timely manner. The administrative assistant should prepare all bank reconciliation reports within five business days of receiving the account statements from the bank, and the superintendent should review and approve the reconciliation

reports within seven days of receipt of the bank statements. The superintendent should ensure that any differences not reconciled are investigated and resolved immediately.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The school board directs the superintendent to oversee the regular monthly bank reconciliation and general ledger review process.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent ensures that all bank reconciliations and general ledger accounts are reviewed and approved within five days after receiving bank statements from the bank.	October 2001 and monthly thereafter
3.	The superintendent submits all bank statements to the school board at regular monthly meetings.	November 2001 and monthly thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD does not secure its loose cash in a locked safe. The business office receives cash from cafeteria receipts and student activity fund receipts and stores it in a locking file cabinet until it is taken to the bank for deposit. The district's bank is in San Angelo, so sometimes cash is stored in district offices for several days before being deposited at the bank.

Storing cash in an unsecured place puts the district at risk of loss.

Recommendation 32:

Store cash receipts in a fireproof safe that is locked at all times.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent purchases a fireproof, locking safe.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent has the safe installed in a discrete location within the district's central office.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent directs the administrative assistant to secure all cash and other valuables in the safe and keep it locked until funds	Ongoing

are deposited in the bank.	
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FISCAL IMPACT

VISD can purchase a fireproof, locking safe for \$300 or less.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Store cash receipts in a fireproof safe that is locked at all times.	(\$300)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Fixed Asset Management

VISD's general fixed assets amounted to almost \$1.5 million as of August 31, 2000. The superintendent has overall responsibility for fixed assets. TEA defines fixed assets as purchased or donated items that are tangible in nature, have a useful life longer than one year, have a unit value of \$5,000 or more and may be reasonably identified and controlled through a physical inventory system.

Exhibit 3-15 shows the district's fixed assets as of August 31, 2000 by major category.

**Exhibit 3-15
VISD's General Fixed Assets Account Group
As of August 31, 2000**

Description	Beginning Balance	Additions	Ending Balance
Land	\$45,817		\$45,817
Buildings and improvements	\$1,179,794	-	\$1,179,794
Furniture and equipment	\$243,018	\$24,800	\$267,818
Property under capital leases	-	\$24,522	\$24,522
Totals	\$1,468,629	\$49,322	\$1,517,951

Source: VISD financial report, August 31, 2000.

TEA's *FASRG* requires assets costing \$5,000 or more to be recorded in the fixed asset group of accounts. Items costing less than \$5,000 should be 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 for equipment costing less than \$5,000. For example, computer and audiovisual equipment costing less

than \$5,000 does not have to be accounted for in the fixed-asset group of accounts. However, some districts maintain lists of such assets for control and accountability.

FINDING

VISD does not regularly tag, track or account for its fixed assets. A review of accounting records shows the last complete inventory that was tied to a fixed asset inventory listing was prepared in 1993. VISD records indicate the district has attempted to conduct fixed asset inventories, but these records are incomplete and there is no evidence that physical inventories are tied to a fixed asset ledger.

Exhibit 3-16 shows a preprinted form, "VISD Fixed Asset Inventory Sheet," that is distributed to all teachers. VISD's practice is to have all teachers fill out this form, listing all the equipment in their classrooms. However, there is no process to tie these lists back to the district's general ledger. A review of the inventory forms showed that of those returned to the business office, many were incomplete. Examples of deficiencies include missing local identification numbers and serial numbers. Also, the forms had notations indicating some items were missing from the forms altogether.

Exhibit 3-16
VISD Fixed Asset Inventory Sheet

Teacher: _____	Date: _____	Location/Room #: _____		
Description (add color/brand/ anything to help describe object)	Serial # (if applicable)	Local ID #	# of Units	Unit Cost
Teacher - desk				
Teacher - chair				
Student - desk				
Student - chair				
Student - table				
Bookshelf				
TV				
VCR				
Tape player/boom box				
Ceiling fan				
Filing cabinets				
Computer tables				
Overhead				
Overhead table				

Source: VISD Business Office, April 2001.

The absence of a reliable fixed asset accounting process can affect the district's insurance coverage because VISD has no comprehensive

inventory of items to be insured. Also, an effective fixed asset management process will become even more important when new accounting rules for state and local governments take effect. State and local governments, including school systems, have not been required to depreciate their assets. (Depreciation is an amount of expense recognized to account for the cost of equipment, furniture or facilities over an asset's estimated useful life.) Government Accounting Standards Board Statement 34 (GASB) changes this situation.

GASB issues accounting and financial reporting rules for state and local governments throughout the United States. GASB Statement 34, issued June 1999, requires capital assets to be reported in the financial statements after depreciation. Texas school districts must comply with the provisions of GASB Statement 34 beginning September 1, 2001. To ensure compliance, VISD must maintain accurate information on asset age and useful life so it can report depreciation accurately in financial statements.

Exhibit 3-17 lists best practices developed by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts to help local governments set up effective and efficient fixed asset management systems. These practices provide a comprehensive solution to deficient fixed assets management systems.

Exhibit 3-17
Best Practices for Effective
Fixed Asset Management Systems

Preliminary Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify individuals in the school district who will have key fixed asset responsibilities and establish the nature of such responsibilities. • Devise policies and procedures governing capitalization thresholds, inventory, accounting, employee accountability, transfers, disposals, surplus and obsolescence and asset sale and disposition. • Determine district fixed asset information needs and constraints. • Determine the hardware and software needed to manage the system effectively.
Creating the Fixed Asset Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a proposal setting up the fixed asset system, including adoption of formal policies and procedures. • Create positions and job descriptions for those with fixed asset responsibilities. • Determine the design of the fixed asset inventory

	<p>database and develop standard forms to match the format of computerized records.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training as needed. • Identify specific assets below the capitalization threshold that should be tracked for information purposes and safeguarding. • Budget the amount necessary to operate the fixed asset management system adequately.
Implementing the Fixed Asset Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform all departments of the requirements, policies, and procedures of the fixed assets system. • Ensure that assets to be tracked on the system have been identified and tagged. • Enter information into the fixed assets database. Assign appropriate values to the assets in the database. • Establish location codes and custodial responsibility for fixed assets.
Maintaining the Fixed Asset Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter all inventory information into the automated fixed asset system as fixed assets are received. • Assign tag numbers, location codes and responsibility of assets as they are received. • Monitor the movement of all fixed assets using appropriate forms approved by designated district personnel. • Conduct periodic inventories and determine the condition of all assets. • Generate appropriate reports noting any change in status of assets including changes in condition, location, and deletions. • Reconcile the physical inventory to the accounting records, account for discrepancies, and adjust inventory records. • Use information from the system to support insurance coverage, budget requests, and asset replacements and upgrades.

Source: "Getting a Fix on Fixed Assets," City and County Financial Management, May 1999 Vol. 15 Issue 2.

Also, because of the numerous items not being tagged, tracked, or set up in the fixed asset system, the district's property insurance coverage may be under- or overstated. The district risks underinsuring its assets or losing an asset for which no records exist, and therefore making insurance recovery impossible.

Recommendation 33:

Develop a system to tag, track and account for district fixed assets.

VISD's fixed asset system should be managed more effectively to ensure accountability for assets purchased with local and federal resources. Moreover, the system must value assets accurately for internal and external reporting. Finally, assets must be protected against theft, deterioration or other loss.

Developing and maintaining an effective fixed asset management system will become even more important when GASB 34 takes effect. To ensure full compliance with GASB 34 by September 1, 2001, VISD must maintain age and useful life information for its depreciable assets, and its fixed asset management system must be capable of calculating and tracking depreciation. To strengthen the accountability for fixed assets, VISD must do several things:

- Develop policies and procedures that assign responsibilities to specific employees;
- Provide quarterly reports to the board of education on the results of annual audits;
- Conduct more frequent independent audits in addition to regular annual audits;
- Require that business office staff take a more active role in safeguarding fixed assets;
- Investigate missing or unaccounted for assets; and
- Report all missing assets to the appropriate policing authorities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board of trustees directs the superintendent to develop internal procedures for fixed asset management.	December 2001
2.	The superintendent drafts fixed asset procedures.	February 2002
3.	The board of trustees reviews and approves the procedures.	March 2002
4.	The superintendent implements the fixed asset	April 2002

	procedures.	
5.	The business office staff conducts a thorough inventory of fixed assets and investigates all discrepancies.	May 2002
6.	The superintendent adjusts VISD's accounting records to reflect counts in the actual physical inventory.	June 2002
7.	The business office staff conducts regular fixed asset inventories.	May 2003 and annually thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

C. PURCHASING

Processes should be in place to ensure that supplies, equipment and services vital to the school system's education mission are purchased from the right source, in the right quantity, at the lowest price and properly stored and delivered in a timely manner to the appropriate location. These criteria should be met for each purchase without sacrificing quality or timeliness.

In 1995, the TEC was revised to expand school district purchasing options by addition three new methods of competitive procurement: design-build contract, competitive sealed proposal and request for proposals for personal property and construction contracts. In 1997, the legislature included two additional methods: job order contracts and contracts using construction managers. In 2001, the legislature added yet another method of competitive procurement: reverse auction procedure. With these additions, school districts can select among nine methods for competitively purchasing goods valued at \$25,000 or more (or multiple like items with a cumulative value of more than \$25,000 in a twelve-month period). These nine methods are listed below:

- **Competitive bidding:** Vendors submit written bids; negotiation of prices of goods and services after bids are opened by the district is not allowed.
- **Competitive sealed proposals:** Vendors submit a written bid, and all submitted bids are opened publicly to ensure fairness in the bidding process. Changes in the nature of a proposal and prices after proposal opening are allowed.
- **Requests for proposals:** Vendors submit a written bid, and all bids submitted are opened as they come in.
- **Catalog purchase:** Vendors that have completed competitive bid requirements at the state level can sell products directly to districts.
- **Inter-local contract:** With this method, school board-approved agreements with a local entity allow a district to purchase specific items from that entity's bid.
- **Design/build contract:** A vendor is selected for a competitive bid to complete an entire project. It is the vendor's responsibility to obtain merchandise for the project.
- **Job order contract:** Provides for the use of a particular type of contract for jobs 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:** A bidding process that involves the submission of bids by multiple suppliers, unknown to each other, in a manner that allows the suppliers to bid against each other.

In 1999, the Office of the Attorney General issued an opinion (Op. JC-37) stating that school district procurement through an inter-local agreement or a cooperative purchasing arrangement satisfies competitive bidding requirements.

School districts must advertise for bids worth more than \$25,000 at least once a week for two weeks in any newspaper published in the county where the district is located. Those bids between \$10,000 and \$25,000 must be advertised in two successive issues of any newspaper in the district's county. TEC requires advertisements to specify the categories of property to be purchased and to solicit vendors that are interested in supplying them.

Exceptions to competitive bidding requirements include contracts for professional services including architect fees, attorney fees, and fees for fiscal agents. TEC also allows a district to purchase items that are available from only one source ("sole-source" purchases) 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 that provides electricity, gas or water; or
- A captive replacement part or component for equipment (specific to a particular piece of equipment and not available from more than one vendor).

TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG)* outlines purchasing and reporting requirements for Texas schools.

A purchasing department's responsibilities should include the major function of purchasing all materials, supplies, equipment and services for a school district. The purchasing department should also be responsible for upholding the integrity of the district's competitive bidding process. VISD's purchasing responsibility is under direction of the superintendent.

FINDING

VISD does not seek competitive bids in accordance with TEA guidelines or board policy. VISD's superintendent said that the district has not

obtained formal bids on items in several years. A review of financial data shows that items costing \$25,000 or more, either individually or in the aggregate, were purchased without formal bids.

A review of vendor purchases for September 2000 through March 2001 shows the following items were purchased without formal bids or quotes:

- District vehicle;
- Food items for cafeteria operations;
- Computers and equipment;
- Furniture; and
- Instructional materials.

The external auditor has noted the district's deficiency in soliciting bids and quotes for purchases. In the August 31, 2000 audit report, the auditor states:

Criteria:

Section 44.033 of the Texas Education Code states that a vendor's list should be created from which quotes for purchases between \$10,000 and \$25,000 can be obtained.

Condition:

Advertising for and creation of a vendor's list was not done.

Auditor's Recommendation:

The district should become knowledgeable about the state purchasing laws and comply with them.

Administration's Response:

The district will become knowledgeable about the state purchasing laws and comply with them.

However, the district still has not complied with state purchasing laws.

The goal of a purchasing function is to obtain the best goods available for educational needs at the best prices. By obtaining bids and quotes for purchased goods and services, the district will ensure that its purchasing practices are fair, that they meet the purchasing requirements set out by state law and that the district obtains items at reasonable prices.

Two options available to districts are cooperative purchasing agreements and catalog purchasing. TEA's *FASRG* describes trends in cooperative purchasing, including purchases through the Texas

General Services Commission (GSC), education service centers, cities, counties and colleges. The *FASRG* suggests school districts use the following criteria to decide whether to participate in cooperative purchasing:

- Variety of products and services offered;
- Cost of these products and services compared with other cooperatives or the school district's individual ability to buy these products or services;
- Timing and method of delivery;
- Participation charges, including administrative and operating costs;
- Reputation for overall service delivery, including problem resolution; and
- Administrative requirements placed on member districts, including paperwork or related issues.

Port Arthur ISD (PAISD) uses the GSC to purchase special items that would be difficult to purchase locally such as buses, tires and refrigerants. Also, PAISD participates in an inter-local cooperative purchasing agreement with the Regional Education Service Center (RESC). The district uses the RESC's catalogue of supplies, furniture and equipment when the competitive purchasing procedures would be difficult and time-consuming for district staff.

It is convenient to purchase from vendor catalogs, since they include a picture and description of items for sale. School personnel said they like the convenience of making routine and small purchases from catalogs. Also, a school can take advantage of seasonal sales offered by catalog vendors that are even lower than their discounted rates.

Although PAISD is a larger district, smaller ones like VISD can also benefit from these types of purchasing agreements.

Recommendation 34:

Establish procedures to comply with state purchasing laws.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	During budget planning stages, the superintendent determines items for which the district may need to obtain bids or quotes and researches cooperative purchasing possibilities through the GSC and RESC.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent monitors district purchases to determine when items need to be bid.	Ongoing

3.	The superintendent issues formal bids or obtains quotes for pricing information in accordance with state law.	Ongoing
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FISCAL IMPACT

VISD can implement this recommendation with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

This chapter reviews the Veribest Independent School District's (VISD) operations functions and includes the following sections:

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

Efficient, effective school operations and quality pupil services are essential to the success of a school district's educational mission. For children to learn, facilities must be adequately planned to accommodate student enrollment, effectively managed to create an environment conducive to learning and appropriately maintained 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 4

OPERATIONS

A. FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

The objective of an effective facilities management program is to provide and maintain physical space efficiently that enhances student learning in a safe and clean environment. Facilities management functions include facilities planning, construction management, maintenance, custodial services and energy management. An effective facilities management program supports each campus and department by:

- Performing facilities planning to ensure that facilities data is gathered and used to develop effective education programs;
- Analyzing facilities use to ensure their efficient and effective use based on student enrollment, educational program requirements, and school board and state-mandated regulations;
- Providing plant maintenance to ensure that facilities are safe and in working order to provide an effective learning environment for students;
- Administering custodial services to ensure the general cleanliness and upkeep of the facilities; and
- Developing an energy management program to ensure the efficient use of utilities through energy conservation and monitoring.

VISD has one school and a central office located on the same premises. The central office is housed in a portable building next to the school. The superintendent and two support staff occupy this building. The high school consists of six portable buildings. The Roy K. Rob (RKR) Post Adjudication Center is located within the district, and VISD provides educational services to the center's residents. An outside contractor maintains the physical facility; VISD has no responsibility for the RKR facilities management functions. A maintenance supervisor and three maintenance/custodial staff provide maintenance and cleaning services at the school. Each of the support staff is cross-trained to perform both services.

The district spent \$207,429 on plant operations and maintenance in 1999-2000, more than doubling the 1996-97 expenditures of \$99,042, and the district budgeted \$282,464 in plant operations and maintenance costs for 2000-01. The poor condition of facilities continues to drain the district's resources. Increases in staffing and contracted services are helping the district keep an old facility functional.

On a per student basis, VISD has the second highest cost per student on plant maintenance and operations compared to its peer districts. (**Exhibit 4-1**).

Exhibit 4-1
Peer Comparison of Plant Operations
and Maintenance Cost per Student
2000-01

District	Expenditures per Student
Water Valley	\$691
Coolidge	\$870
Panther Creek	\$933
Veribest	\$1,038
Novice	\$1,479

Source: TEA Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) budgeted financial data, 2000-01, function 51-plant maintenance and operations.

VISD applied for funding through a new federal financing program to improve their facilities. The federal government issues Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) to provide interest-free debt to school districts, saving them up to 50 percent of the total cost of construction projects. This federal program is available to school districts in which at least 35 percent of the student population qualifies as economically disadvantaged. Participating districts must also have a corporate sponsor who contributes cash or in-kind services to the district. QZABs provide tax credits to lenders in lieu of interest payments. Districts can use the bonds for renovation and repair projects, but not for new construction.

Under this program, the district must receive donations from private entities worth at least 10 percent of the value of the money borrowed. These donations can include cash, services and internships, or field trips that provide educational opportunities to students. VISD's sponsor is Concho Valley Electric Cooperative, which contributed \$47,500 of in-kind services to the district.

FINDING

One of VISD's most critical issues is aging facilities in need of significant repairs; however, the district does not have a facilities master plan. In April 2001, the district contracted with Fromberg Associates, Inc. AIA to prepare plans for the district's high school facility.

In September 1999 VISD voters approved a \$3 million bond that was to be coupled with a state grant to fund a \$4 million new building. The district applied for state funding through the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA), which pays a portion of debt service for school districts that have passed bonds. The IFA ranks each school district by property wealth and economically disadvantaged percentages. VISD was ranked 168 on the IFA list in 2000 and was not selected for the state grant. As a result, the district was unable to complete the project. The district has again applied for a state grant for a project that, in addition to bond money, would allow them to build a new school for grades 7 through 12 that would consist of eight classrooms, a gymnasium, a library and a cafeteria.

The high school project would provide the first permanent facilities for high school students. For the past four years, VISD high school students have attended classes in portable buildings behind the elementary school. The high school and elementary students share a cafeteria, gymnasium, library and other common areas.

In planning the new facility, the district organized five subcommittees to address specific areas. These subcommittees include:

- Site;
- Classrooms/Labs - two groups;
- Technology/Library - two groups;
- Gymnasium; and
- Cafeteria.

Community members, district staff, and an architectural and engineering firm participate on these subcommittees. Each subcommittee made an informal presentation at the April regular board meeting. Ideas included: purchasing a 25-acre site directly behind the school; filling computer labs with 27 computers based on TEA specifications; meeting UIL standards for the gymnasium; adjoining science labs to maximize use of space; and adding a snack bar to the cafeteria to provide more choices for students. The architectural and engineering firm provided the district with school design criteria, including minimum space needs by functional area, and a proposed project schedule. The subcommittees provided the board with written recommendations in May and are continuing to meet with staff and the architect.

An outside firm assisted the district in projecting enrollment for the district. These estimates ranged from 254 students to 280 students within four years. Enrollment for the 2000-01 school year is 272. One board member is concerned that projected funding sources will build only 70 percent of a school that is needed, leaving critical requirements unmet.

Other than the high school project, the district has no formal plans to address other facilities needs, which are significant. The district's elementary school has significant deferred maintenance needs including outdated lighting fixtures, floor and ceiling tiles that are in need of replacement, and walls that need painting. The district received an estimate from an outside firm to develop a facility master plan, but they have not initiated a contract with the firm.

Exhibits 4-2 and 4-3 present parent and teacher survey responses to questions regarding facilities planning. Both parents and teachers feel that proper individuals are involved in facilities planning.

**Exhibit 4-2
TSPR Parent Surveys
Facilities Use and Management**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff, and the board provide input into facility planning.	12.3%	46.2%	9.2%	16.9%	15.4%

Source: TSPR survey of VISD parents, April 2001.

In **Exhibit 4-3**, no teachers agreed with the statement that the district plans facilities far enough into the future.

**Exhibit 4-3
TSPR Teacher Surveys
Facilities Use and Management**

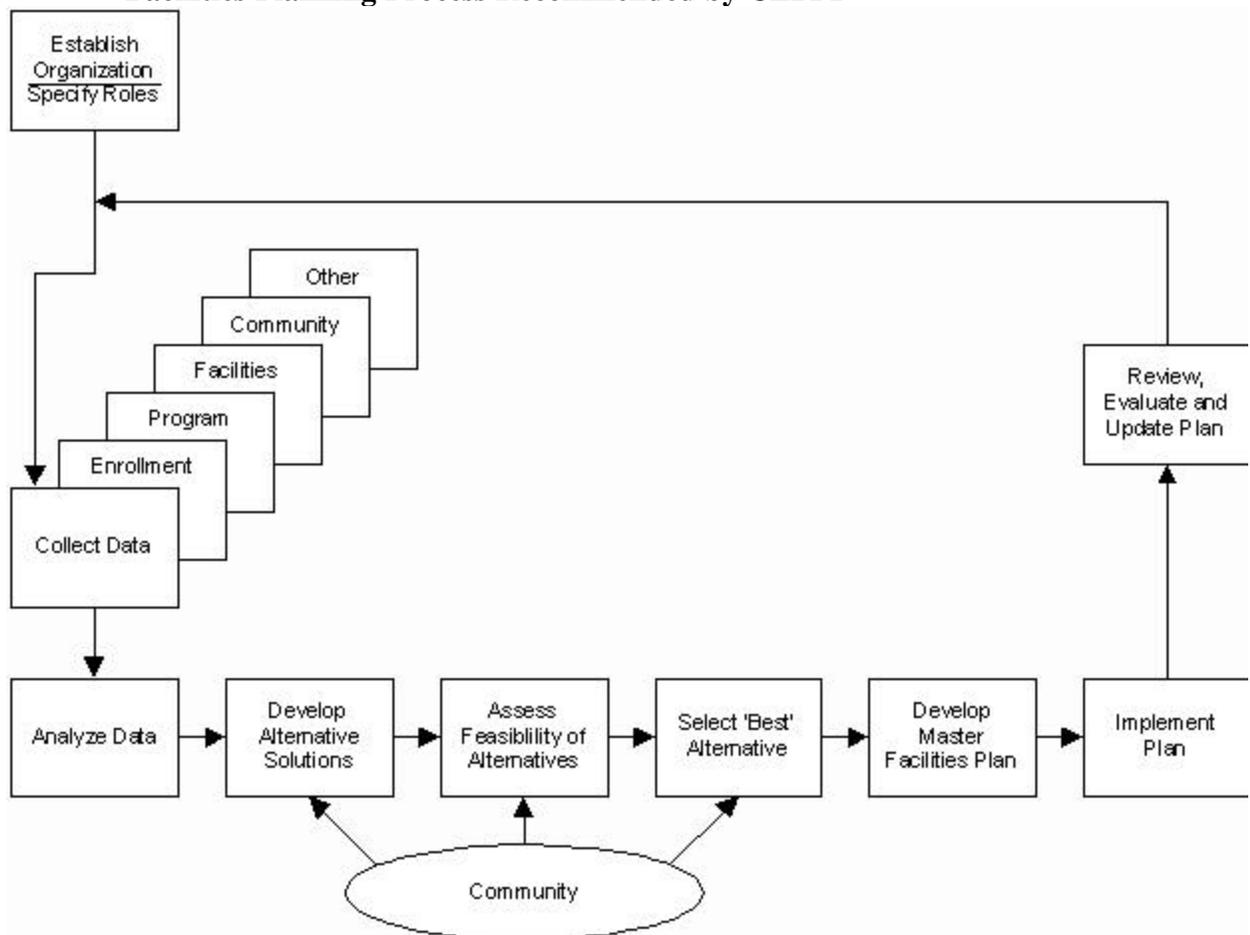
Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The district plans facilities far enough in the future to support enrollment growth.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	63.6%	27.3%

Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%
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Source: TSPR survey of VISD teachers, April 2001.

Exhibit 4-4 shows the facilities planning process recommended by the Council of Educational Facility Planners, International (CEFPI). This model provides a guide for facility consultants and school districts.

Exhibit 4-4
Facilities Planning Process Recommended by CEFPI



Source: Council of Educational Facility Planners International, *Guide for Planning Educational Facilities*, 1991.

Another district in Tom Green County, Water Valley ISD, hired an outside firm in 1999 to assist in developing strategic options for facilities. This study included enrollment projections under three scenarios, assessments

of existing facilities using a standardized rating method, and descriptions and cost estimates of alternative long-range plans.

Recommendation 35:

Develop a facilities master plan that addresses all facility needs over the next five to seven years.

The district should seek outside assistance to identify all facility needs and develop a long-range master plan for facilities rather than just focusing on the high school facility. The committee structure is in place to support this effort. The use of an outside firm will help this committee focus on longer-term issues and develop a sound master plan for the district. This plan will ensure that all long-term facilities needs are met.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent solicits bids for a facilities planning study and recommends a selected vendor to the committee and board for approval.	November 2001
2.	The facilities planning committee oversees the planning study and incorporates the results into a long-term facilities master plan.	March 2002
3.	The facilities planning committee updates the master plan annually.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of a facilities planning study by an outside firm is approximately \$6,000, based on estimates provided by architectural and engineering firms. Water Valley ISD spent \$4,000 on its study in 1999. The cost is expected to be higher because of inflation factors and due to the fact that VISD has a slightly larger district.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Develop facilities master plan that addresses all facility needs over the next five to seven years.	(\$6,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

FINDING

VISD does not maintain an inventory of its space, limiting its ability to plan and measure efficiency. A facilities inventory has several important benefits. Documenting the space a district has is the first step in facilities planning. Classroom capacity and use is important for scheduling and determining additional space needs. Square footage data is important to measure overall space utilization. This data also can be compared to maintenance, custodial and energy costs over time to evaluate cost efficiency in these areas.

Most school districts maintain an inventory of facilities. This is a common and necessary practice for effective facilities management.

A facilities inventory should track the following items:

- Facility name;
- Date of initial construction;
- Site size in acres;
- Gross square feet - permanent space;
- Gross square feet - portable buildings;
- Total gross square feet;
- Student capacity - permanent space;
- Student capacity - with portable buildings;
- Current enrollment;
- Capacity variance - permanent space; and
- Capacity variance - total space

This information will help the district monitor the use of its facilities and provide a starting point for its facilities planning efforts.

Recommendation 36:

Develop and maintain a facilities inventory.

Using existing financial data and a facilities inventory, the district should develop and report statistics on maintenance cost per square foot, utilities cost per square foot, custodial cost per square foot, and number of square feet of coverage per full-time-equivalent custodian. The district should analyze these statistics over time to evaluate efficiency in these areas.

The district also should maintain a similar schedule of land that it owns. This schedule should include the lot description, date purchased, cost and number of acres.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and Maintenance supervisor gather or	September
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	measure square foot data for each district facility.	2001
2.	The Maintenance supervisor develops the facilities inventory and submits it to the superintendent and board for review.	October 2001
3.	The Maintenance supervisor updates the facilities inventory at the beginning of each school year and after any changes to the facilities.	Ongoing
4.	The superintendent and board monitor facility use and cost performance measures using square footage data.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

District maintenance staff are working on maintenance projects that they are not qualified to perform, increasing the risk and long-term cost to the district

The district added maintenance staff in 1998-99 to address maintenance concerns and reduce the need for outside contracting. In 1997-98, contracted services reached \$86,477. The district added a maintenance supervisor position, and maintenance services have improved in recent years. The additional position contributed to a decline in contracted services costs to \$7,291 in 1999-2000, but overall maintenance operating costs remained the same. The superintendent said that the larger maintenance staff performs more services than the previous staff.

In a survey conducted by TSPR, parents agreed with positive statements about the cleanliness and upkeep of school facilities by a ratio of two to one. Most teachers are pleased with custodial services but somewhat divided on their opinions regarding maintenance. **Exhibit 4-5** presents the results of the teacher survey regarding facilities management.

**Exhibit 4-5
TSPR Teacher Surveys
Facilities Use and Management**

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Schools are clean.	0.0%	63.6%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%
Buildings are properly	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%

maintained in a timely manner.					
Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%
Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%

Source: TSPR survey of VISD teachers, April 2001.

District employees are completing maintenance work that outside professionals should be performing. For example, the maintenance staff repaired the septic tank, even though none of them had experience in septic systems. This situation was hazardous because the sewage back-up was near the school entrance. In another instance, the maintenance staff repaired a gas leak. District employees still smelled gas after the district staff worked on the leak. Ultimately, the district had to hire contractors to perform the repairs. State regulations require all septic and gas line work to be performed by individuals holding state licenses.

The maintenance supervisor and his staff are able to handle many maintenance jobs effectively, but the district's decision to avoid using outside experts in potentially hazardous situations is too risky for the district, and could result in additional contracted expenditures needed to fix a larger problem. Most school districts contract professional services for maintenance and repairs regarding potentially hazardous situations if district staff are not professionally trained.

Recommendation 37:

Contract maintenance and repair for hazardous situations to outside professionals.

The district should inventory the professional skills of its maintenance staff and identify areas where outside assistance is needed. The district should place more attention on potentially hazardous areas. This approach will be safer for the school district and will reduce the long-term cost of facilities maintenance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and Maintenance employees inventory skills and any professional certifications held by Maintenance personnel.	September 2001
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2.	The superintendent and Maintenance supervisor identify areas where outside assistance is needed.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent identifies potential contractors to fill specific maintenance needs.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent hires outside professionals as needed for maintenance.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation assumes that \$2,000 will be earmarked annually to cover hazardous repairs.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Contract maintenance and repair for hazardous situations to outside professionals.	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)

FINDING

VISD has not taken advantage of energy management programs that could save the district approximately \$7,000 annually in energy costs. The district's utilities costs have doubled over the past four years. The district has added six portable buildings since 1996-97 for the high school students, and these buildings are extremely inefficient from an energy management standpoint. **Exhibit 4-6** presents utilities costs at VISD for the past four years. District staff said the reason for the increase of utility costs is due to the addition of the high school.

**Exhibit 4-6
Utilities Costs for All Funds
1996-97 through 1999-2000**

Year	Total Utilities Cost	Percent Increase from Prior Year (Total)	Enrollment	Utilities Cost per Student	Percent Increase from Prior Year (Per Student)
1996-97	\$31,328	N/A	176	\$178	N/A
1997-98	\$38,118	21.7%	203	\$188	5.54%
1998-99	\$46,728	22.6%	208	\$225	19.6%
1999-	\$63,158	35.2%	231	\$273	21.7%

2000					
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Source: TEA PEIMS 1996-97 through 1999-2000 and AEIS 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

In August 1998, the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) conducted a utility analysis for VISD as part of the "Energy Efficient School Partnership Service." This program provides on-site technical assistance to schools at no charge. SECO's study estimated that the district could save \$7,500 per year if it spent \$48,000 on retrofits and other energy conservation measures, providing a simple payback on its investment of 6.5 years.

The district has not implemented the recommendations in the SECO report, and the district needs energy savings now even more than in 1998 due to rapidly escalating costs. The district has not pursued the guaranteed loan program referred to as the Lone Star program through SECO. This program provides loans for energy conservation measures that are paid back by energy savings.

Recommendation 38:

Participate in the Lone Star program administered by the State Energy Conservation Office to reduce energy costs.

The district should pursue the Lone Star program through SECO to determine whether it can implement any cost-savings measures.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts SECO to update the district energy management audit.	October 2001
2.	SECO updates the audit and makes revised recommendations and estimated savings for energy efficiency.	November 2001
3.	The superintendent requests approval from the board to issue debt to finance the energy conservation measures.	December 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

To implement this recommendation, the district will need to invest in the energy conservation measures as recommended by SECO, and utility cost savings will help pay for these investments. The district should realize a net savings after this initial five- to six-year period of the loan.

FINDING

SECO has a school-based program called Watt Watchers or Watt Team. The program teaches students ways to save energy and provides them with the tools to teach others. SECO provides free materials, training and site support to students in grades 1 through 12. Students gain self-esteem, learn about energy resources and take an active role in teaching others the importance of energy efficiency - all while having fun participating in the program. This program will not only save money at the schools, but students will learn how to develop a habit of saving energy in their homes as well. The Watt Watchers program also involves starting an Energy Patrol at individual schools. The Energy Patrol consists of teachers, students, parents and community volunteers who work together to implement energy conservation practices, such as:

- Planting trees around the building to provide shade and improve the environment;
- Checking door and window weather stripping for cracks;
- Checking outside air dampers, heating, ventilation and air conditioning filters;
- Developing maintenance schedules for monitoring energy conservation; and
- Turning off fluorescent bulbs in soda machines.

SECO's Texas Energy Education Development (TEED) project also offers a program designed specifically for high school students. Students conduct school-year long energy projects that promote energy conservation awareness. The projects can range from designing posters containing energy-saving reminders, to mentoring elementary and middle school students on energy-saving projects to weatherizing low-income homes in the community.

Recommendation 39:

Involve schools in energy conservation.

VISD should implement SECO's "Watt Watchers" program. In addition, to reinforce energy conservation practices, the principal should monitor monthly reports of energy use and compare to the same month of the previous year to see if there are any differences.

SECO provides program support for Watt Watchers by phone at 1-800-531-5441, extension 3-1931, e-mail, fax and on the Comptroller's Web site at: <http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us>.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	VISD's principal contacts SECO for assistance with developing and implementing a Watt Watchers program.	September 2001
2.	VISD's principal and student volunteers implement the Watt Watchers program.	September 2001
3.	VISD's principal monitors the monthly energy report to determine if energy use decreases.	Monthly beginning in October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

B. COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

In 1987 the Legislature recognized the importance of technology in education and directed the State Board of Education to develop a 1988-2000 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 created the Technology Allotment, which now provides approximately \$30 per student per year in state funding for technology. House Bill 2128 of the 74th Legislature created the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF). This fund obtains revenues from the Telecommunications Utilities Account and the Commercial Mobile Service Providers Account to provide \$150 million in grant funds each year for ten years to public education, higher education and telemedicine centers for computer infrastructure, distance learning and training.

Another grant fund 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 even the smallest of school districts to develop state-of-the-art computer networks and computer labs.

The development of improved technology in school districts requires districts to better manage a more complicated investment in technology. A well-managed administrative technology and information services program must provide direction for the district on ways to use technology effectively, as well as provide adequate support for the maintenance, upkeep and replacement of equipment. Technology management is now a key factor in virtually every school district decision.

VISD has a full-time technology coordinator responsible for all district technology functions including technology planning, help desk administration, technical support and training. In 1999-2000, the district incurred \$38,254 in technology expenditures based on financial data reported to the state. However, the district spreads some of the technology area costs to other functions. The amount charged to function 53 - data processing - does not include the technology coordinator's salary. Peer district data is not comparable because of similar classification issues.

FINDING

VISD has a thorough technology plan that guides a very strong technology program. The district developed an initial three-year technology plan in 1998 and updated it for 2000-02. The district technology committee consists of the technology coordinator, the superintendent, two teachers, the librarian, a parent and representatives from the Site-Based Decision-Making Committee.

The plan articulates the mission of technology for students and staff, and identifies goals and underlying objectives. **Exhibit 4-7** presents the technology goals and objectives for VISD.

Exhibit 4-7 **VISD Technology Plan Goals and Objectives**

Goals	Objectives
Goal I: All students will have access to technological equipment, software and training to enhance their educational opportunities.	Students will have the opportunity to use computers and the Internet to research information. Students will have the opportunity to present their ideas in a creative way. Students will have the opportunity to have curriculum materials presented to them in a manner which compliments their best learning style.
Goal II: Teachers and support staff will have the knowledge, skills, and opportunity to use advanced technology and the Internet to enhance curriculum for all students.	Teachers and support staff will be trained to use the district's LAN. Teachers and support staff will be able to use productivity tools and share data when appropriate. School employees will be able to access the Internet in order to gather needed information. Teachers will be able to select appropriate software and technology based activities to compliment their existing curriculum, TAAS, and the TEKS.
Goal III: Staff and administration will have access to shared technology to improve efficiency in instruction, classroom management, and administrative duties.	All school employees will have access to workstations on the district's LAN. School employees will be able to use email to communicate with other staff members and other professional educators across Texas, the U.S., and the world. School employees will be able to access the Internet in order to gather needed information. Administration, teachers, and staff will be able to share information and resources across the LAN, WAN, and Internet. Administration, teachers, and staff will have

	access to telephones, fax machines, VCR/TVs and copy machines.
Goal IV: Parents and community members will have the opportunity to use technological equipment and access information for the district's website.	Parents and community members will have the opportunity to use the Internet. Parents and community members will be able to view current information about school activities, policies and schedules on-line.

Source: VISD Technology Plan 2000-02.

The plan contains specific strategies to achieve each objective. Each strategy has a person assigned to it, a timeline, a cost estimate, and an evaluation component that includes references to source documents supporting the conclusion. For example, to show support for teachers attending an orientation of the district's NT LAN and IBM Token Ring Network, the technology coordinator maintains files containing sign-in sheets with teachers' names and the training handout.

The district has made significant progress on this plan, and users are satisfied with the results. **Exhibit 4-8** presents the results of the TSPR teacher survey regarding computers and technology.

Exhibit 4-8
VISD Teacher Survey
Computers and Technology *

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students regularly use computers.	45.5%	36.4%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%
Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	27.3%	54.5%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	54.5%	45.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
The district meets students'	18.2%	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%

needs in classes in computer fundamentals.					
The district meets students' needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	54.5%	45.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	5.9%	45.5%	13.9%	22.8%	11.9%

Source: TSPR survey of teachers, April 2001.

** Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

All questions received highly favorable responses. The only two areas where teachers showed any concerns are computer fundamentals for students and Internet access for teachers and students.

COMMENDATION

VISD effectively uses and updates its district technology plan to guide a successful technology program.

FINDING

VISD effectively uses grant funds to support its investments in technology. In each of the past two years, the district has used TIF funds to purchase 30 new computers. The district also is using TIE money to upgrade its T-STAR satellite to digital, and is planning to upgrade its cable to the high school temporary buildings to support distance learning in those classrooms.

The district also has used academic grants to purchase additional computers for instructional purposes. In 1999-2000, the district obtained a Student Success Initiative Grant for \$15,000 for the Accelerated Reading Program for kindergarten. The district purchased three multimedia computers, a scanner, and a printer with a portion of these funds. In May 2001, the district received a grant award of \$50,000 that it will use to purchase additional computer equipment and equip the distance learning lab.

These grant programs allow the district to avoid using local funds for computer equipment.

COMMENDATION

The district has used grant funds effectively to purchase and integrate new computers for student learning.

FINDING

VISD does not have a disaster recovery plan for technology, exposing the district to unacceptable risks in the event of a catastrophe. The district prepares daily tape back-ups of its data centrally, and the technology coordinator takes these back-up tapes home each day. These daily back-up procedures are adequate. However, if the district's hardware were destroyed by fire, tornado or other catastrophic event, the district does not have an alternate site from which to operate its computer systems until the hardware is replaced.

Exhibit 4-9 lists some of the key elements of an effective disaster recovery plan.

**Exhibit 4-9
Key Elements of a Disaster Recovery Plan**

Step	Details
Build the disaster recovery team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a disaster recovery team that includes key policy makers, building management, end-users, key outside contractors and technical staff.
Obtain and/or approximate key information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an exhaustive list of critical activities performed within the district. • Develop an estimate of the minimum space and equipment necessary for restoring essential operations. • Develop a timeframe for starting initial operations after a security incident. • Develop a list of key personnel and their responsibilities.
Perform and/or delegate key duties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an inventory of all MIS technology assets, including data, software, hardware, documentation and supplies. • Set up a reciprocal agreement with comparable organizations to share each other's equipment or lease backup equipment to allow the district to operate critical functions in the event of a disaster. • Make plans to procure hardware, software and other equipment as necessary to ensure that critical

	<p>operations are resumed as soon as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish procedures for obtaining off-site backup records. • Locate support resources that might be needed, such as equipment repair, trucking and cleaning companies. • Arrange with vendors to provide priority delivery for emergency orders. • Identify data recovery specialists and establish emergency agreements.
Specify details within the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify individual roles and responsibilities by name and job title so that everyone knows exactly what needs to be done. • Define actions to be taken in advance of an occurrence or undesirable event. • Define actions at the onset of an undesirable event to limit damage, loss and compromised data integrity. • Identify actions necessary to restore critical functions. • Define actions to re-establish normal operations.
Test the plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test the plan frequently and completely. • Analyze the results to improve the plan and identify further needs.
Deal with damage appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a disaster actually occurs, document all costs and videotape the damage. • Be prepared to overcome downtime on your own; insurance settlements can take time to resolve.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Safeguarding Your Technology." (Modified by TSPR).

Many school districts execute a reciprocal agreement with a neighboring district or area business to use its equipment until the district's hardware is replaced. TEA's Regional Service Center XV (Region 15) does not offer this service.

Recommendation 40:

Develop a disaster recovery plan for technology.

Due to its size, VISD may not need to develop as comprehensive a disaster recovery plan, but it should draw on these best practices to identify the essential elements needed for a 300-student district. The most important items are the reciprocal agreement with a neighboring school district and documentation of action plans in the event of an emergency.

A disaster recovery plan will provide adequate protection for the district's growing investment in technology.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The technology coordinator develops a disaster recovery plan with assistance from Region 15 and attempts to find a neighboring district to secure a reciprocal agreement.	January 2002
2.	The technology coordinator tests the disaster recovery plan, documents recovery procedures, and implements the agreement.	March 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not have minimum performance standards for computer equipment and continues to use outdated equipment. Although the district only uses old equipment as spares, these machines often require excessive maintenance.

The technology coordinator maintains an inventory of computer equipment by class. The inventory includes the location, equipment type, brand, serial number and district identification number. The bottom half of the inventory listing for each class has space for software, but the district does not list software on the inventory.

In addition, the district does not include information regarding the processor, memory or storage capacity on the inventory list. This information is critical for upgrading software and monitoring computer performance.

Many districts have minimum performance standards for personal computers and track their computer inventory separately from fixed assets. VISD's Regional Service Center Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) system

does not enable the district to track all the needed information described above.

Recommendation 41:

Develop minimum performance standards for personal computers and track vital statistics to ensure that obsolete equipment is retired.

A computer inventory with additional performance information will enable the technology coordinator to allocate new computers and manage existing ones more efficiently. Minimum performance standards will help the district determine when it is no longer beneficial to keep an obsolete computer on the network.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The technology coordinator expands the current inventory to include additional performance information.	September 2001
2.	The technology coordinator and each classroom teacher verify the equipment in each room.	October 2001
3.	The technology coordinator develops minimum performance standards for computers on the network.	November 2001
4.	The technology coordinator allocates and retires computer equipment based on periodic updates to and analysis of the district's computer inventory.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

C. TRANSPORTATION

The Texas Education Code (TEC) states that a school district is eligible to receive state funding for transporting regular and special program students between home and school, and career and technology students to and from vocational training locations. The Legislature sets funding rules, and TEA administers the program. Local funds must pay for transportation costs that the state does not cover.

The TEC authorizes but does not require each Texas school district to provide transportation for students between home and school, from school to career and technology training locations, for co-curricular activities, and for 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 students in the general population, or if students with disabilities require transportation to receive special education services.

State funding for regular education transportation is limited to transportation for students living two or more miles from the school they attend. For the regular program, TEA reimburses a local district for qualifying students with disabilities if the district provides transportation for the general student transportation expenses according to a prescribed formula. This funding formula is based on linear density, which is the ratio of the average number of regular program students transported daily to the number of miles operated daily for those students. TEA uses this ratio to assign each school district to one of seven groups, with each group receiving a different per-mile reimbursement. TEA re-evaluates group assignments every year. In 1999-2000 VISD was in the fifth highest linear density group, which entitled the district to a reimbursement of \$1.11 per mile for regular education route miles. The district's actual cost was \$0.49 per mile in 1999-2000.

Districts can receive state reimbursement for all transportation to and from school for special programs except certain field trips. The Legislature set a maximum rate of \$1.08 a mile for reimbursement for special program transportation. This reimbursement rate is higher than VISD's actual cost of \$.47 a mile for special program transportation in 1999-2000.

The TEA School Transportation Operations Reports for 1995-96 through 1999-2000 provide a five-year history of the transportation service's cost and mileage. These reports track all costs and mileage related to

transportation, including services the state does not fund. **Exhibit 4-10** presents transportation operations costs from 1995-96 through 1999-2000.

Exhibit 4-10
VISD Regular and Special Program Transportation Operation Costs
1995-96 through 1999-2000

Item	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change*
Total Operating Costs						
Regular Program	\$57,329	\$49,520	\$38,101	\$53,743	\$37,437	(34.7%)
Special Program	-	-	-	\$1,860	\$6,090	N/A
Total	\$57,329	\$49,520	\$38,101	\$55,603	\$43,527	(24.1%)
Annual Miles						
Regular Program	73,502	78,378	79,766	53,281	76,414	4.0%
Special Program	-	-	2,894	15,600	12,870	N/A
Total Miles	73,502	78,378	82,660	68,881	89,284	21.5%

*Source: VISD School Transportation Operation Reports, 1995-2000. * Percentages are rounded off.*

As the above chart shows, total costs decreased 24.1 percent and total miles increased 21.5 percent between the 1995-96 and 1999-2000 school years. For the regular program, costs decreased 34.7 percent and miles increased 4 percent. Since no special program existed during the 1995-1996 school year, a five-year percentage increase cannot be calculated for the special program.

Exhibit 4-11 presents the total budgeted transportation costs for 2000-01 by expenditure type.

Exhibit 4-11
VISD Budgeted Transportation Costs by Type of Expenditure
2000-01

Object	Total Budgeted Expenditure
Salaries and Benefits	\$22,390

Purchased and Contracted Services	\$6,500
Supplies and Materials	\$14,500
Other Operating Expenses	\$3,500
Total Operating Expenditures	\$46,890
Capital Outlay	\$50,000
Total Expenditures	\$96,890

Source: VISD 2000-01 Budget.

VISD's transportation cost per student is second lowest among its peers, as reflected in **Exhibit 4-12**. VISD's per student data is adjusted to exclude RKR students. One part-time driver, the superintendent, the maintenance supervisor and the maintenance assistant drove buses during the 2000-01 school year. The part-time driver handled two routes.

Exhibit 4-12
Peer District Comparison of Transportation
Operating Costs
2000-01

District	Operating Expenditures	Expenditures per Student
Water Valley	\$97,999	\$311
Panther Creek	\$109,403	\$504
Novice	\$75,101	\$766
Veribest	\$46,890	\$172
Coolidge	\$26,315	\$105

Source: TEA, PEIMS budget data, 2000-01.

VISD has five buses in service. The district uses four of the buses daily and one bus as a spare. **Exhibit 4-13** provides the details of the district's bus fleet.

Exhibit 4-13
VISD Bus Fleet
2000-01

Number of	Model	Age
-----------	-------	-----

Passengers	Year	of Vehicle
29	1983	18 years
64	1988	13 years
59	1990	11 years
71	1995	6 years
71	1995	6 years

Source: VISD Superintendent, April 2001.

The district also owns a tractor-mower, two pick-up trucks and a 15-passenger van. The district uses the pick-up trucks for maintenance and the agricultural program, and it uses the van to transport students to extracurricular activities.

FINDING

In the spring of 1999, VISD removed the diesel tanks located on district property for fueling buses and set up an account for each bus at a local gas card station. The district assigned a card to each bus, and drivers swipe the cards at the station each time they fuel the bus. The gas card station provides the district with fuel use report for each vehicle. The superintendent said removing the tanks reduced the district insurance costs, and the rates that the gas card station charges are competitive with the market. The superintendent said the district uses the fuel use reports to identify problems with buses. He said the district recently used the reports to identify a maintenance problem on a bus that was getting poor fuel mileage. He said since the problem did not create any unusual noises or vehicle handling difficulties, it could have gone undiagnosed without the mileage report.

COMMENDATION

VISD has found an inexpensive way to track bus fuel use.

FINDING

VISD does not have a regular bus replacement schedule. Of the five buses in the school bus fleet, one is 18 years old and another is 13 years old. The average age of the fleet is 10.4 years. District administration officials said they would like to purchase a new bus every two years, and attempt to do so by reserving \$25,000 aside each year toward the cost of new buses. The board has not adopted an ongoing replacement plan, so funds each year are not guaranteed.

The industry-accepted life of a school bus is 200,000 miles of service. If a school district operates each school bus on average 20,000 miles per year, the typical service life is 10 years. Outside of age and mileage, the district should consider other factors such as the cost of maintenance when deciding to replace a bus.

The district uses four buses for regular routes. Not all buses travel the same number of miles each year. Routes with many stops and many daily student riders may cause more wear on a bus than routes with fewer stops or passengers. In 1999-2000, VISD buses operated a total of 89,284 odometer miles. The regular fleet of four buses averaged over 22,000 miles per bus, as shown in **Exhibit 4-14**.

Exhibit 4-14
VISD Route Mileage and Average Miles per Bus
1999-2000

	Regular	Special	Total
Route Mileage	54,360	12,870	67,230
Extra/Cocurricular	21,654	0	21,654
Other	400	0	400
Total Annual Mileage	76,414	12,870	89,284
Buses in Fleet 1999-2000			4
Average Miles per Bus			22,321

Source: VISD School Transportation Operation Reports, 1999-2000.

Each school district is responsible for the capital cost of purchasing school buses. Districts may purchase school buses through the Texas General Services Commission under a state contract. Districts may also choose a lease-purchase method to obtain buses.

The board and the superintendent recognized the need to purchase a new bus and budgeted \$50,000 for this purpose in 2000-01. The superintendent said that the district will not buy a bus in 2000-01. Instead, it will hold this money and allow the incoming superintendent to assess the district's ability to purchase a bus in 2001-02.

Recommendation 42:

Purchase refurbished buses and develop a bus replacement plan.

The district should purchase one refurbished bus to provide an adequate spare ratio, and it should purchase one additional refurbished bus to replace the 18-year old bus in the fleet. This approach will minimize the district's capital outlay while reducing the average age of VISD's bus fleet. The 18-year old bus should be sold.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent identifies refurbished buses and hires a contractor to conduct inspections of each one considered for purchase.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent obtains price quotes for two refurbished buses and recommends the purchase to the board for approval.	October 2001
3.	The board approves the purchase of two refurbished buses and the sale of the 18-year old bus.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent purchases the refurbished buses and places them into service, using one as a spare bus.	November 2001
5.	The superintendent and Transportation supervisor develop a bus replacement plan for board approval that incorporates the purchase of high-quality refurbished buses.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

It is assumed that the unspent \$50,000 capital outlay budgeted for 2000-01 will roll forward to the 2001-02 fiscal year. This recommendation would reduce this projected capital outlay by \$45,000. The district could purchase two high-quality refurbished buses less than five years old for \$5,000 each, and the district could sell the old bus for \$1,000. The net savings is \$50,000 less \$10,000 plus \$1,000, or \$41,000. Bus inspections prior to purchase are expected to cost \$500, reducing net savings to \$40,500.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Purchase two refurbished buses and develop a bus replacement plan.	\$40,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

FINDING

VISD provides its bus drivers with a minimum level of training. The district trains drivers to get their commercial drivers license (CDL) and sends them to a state-required 20-hour training course provided by Region

15. The certification course includes instruction in each of the ten units of the Course Guide for School Bus Driver Training in Texas developed by the Southwest Texas Quality Institute (SWTQI). The Texas Administrative Code recommends the following hourly allocations for each unit:

- Introduction- 1 hour;
- Student Management-2.0 hours;
- Know Your Bus-2.0 hours;
- Traffic Regulations-1.5 hours;
- Responsible Driving-4.0 hours;
- Emergency Evacuation-2.0 hours;
- First Aid-1.5 hours;
- Procedures for Loading and Unloading Students-2.5 hours;
- Special Needs Transportation-1.5 hours;
- Awareness of the Effects of Alcohol and Other Drugs-1.5 hours;
- and
- Summary and Written Test-1.0 hours

VISD's level of driver training is similar to that other small districts in Tom Green County. Providing additional training or annual retraining in small districts is difficult due to limited resources. Grape Creek ISD recently contracted with a San Angelo company to provide eight hours of additional driver safety training.

In the transit industry, training is one of the simplest ways to coordinate agency resources. The Gulf Coordinating Council in Galveston and Brazoria counties developed a safety committee dedicated to promoting safety regulations for operating passenger and cargo vehicles in the community. The committee developed driver safety standards and coordinates training efforts among agencies to use their resources efficiently. Examples of coordinated training include computer training for member agency administrative staff; passenger assistance (PASS) training and driver safety training for 14 drivers of member agencies, and transit bus emergency evacuation training for 32 drivers, operators, and supervisors of member agencies.

Recommendation 43:

Coordinate an expanded driver training program with other districts in Tom Green County.

The superintendents of the districts of Tom Green County, including San Angelo ISD, should meet to discuss options for coordinating driver training and retraining. The districts should work together to identify safety standards for drivers and use the standards to develop an

appropriate expanded training curriculum. A sponsor district could offer the expanded training classes once or twice a year, and the other districts could pay for their drivers to attend the classes.

San Angelo ISD would be the most likely candidate to provide the training and may be amenable to the idea since the district has a training staff and already has provided some training to Grape Creek ISD drivers through a contract.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and the Transportation supervisor meet with other Tom Green County school districts to identify consolidated training opportunities for bus drivers.	November 2001
2.	Bus drivers attend 8 hours of required training or retraining each year.	Ongoing beginning January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact is based on the actual cost of similar training incurred by another Tom Green County school district. It is assumed that an eight-hour training course will be provided to VISD at a cost of \$15 per hour, or a total of \$120.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Coordinate an expanded driver training program with other districts in Tom Green County.	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$120)	(\$120)

FINDING

VISD does not have an adequate vehicle preventive maintenance program. The superintendent told TSPR that preventive maintenance at the district consists of oil changes performed by district staff every 3,000 miles. This lack of routine maintenance increases the chance that district personnel will fail to notice minor problems that the district will have to pay for more major repairs

At present, VISD has one maintenance person who performs building maintenance and minor bus repairs. Buses are sent to local repair shops for more complicated repairs. During fiscal year 2000-01, VISD spent \$1,265 on bus repairs performed by private shops.

Many districts conduct 30-day inspections on all vehicles as part of a formal preventive maintenance program. Preventive maintenance helps avert major vehicle problems and can extend the life of buses.

Recommendation 44:

Adopt a program to perform regular preventive maintenance inspections on each school bus in the fleet.

VISD should develop a preventive maintenance checklist to extend the life of its buses and prevent breakdowns. The checklist should include wheel and tire inspection, oil and filter change, general inspection under and around the vehicle, lubrication and fluid check, air cleaner service, battery inspection, and other general maintenance checks.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and Transportation supervisor develop a preventative maintenance plan including a record keeping system.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent and Transportation supervisor prepare a record card for each bus to include the following minimum information: date, mileage, description of the repair, parts used and cost, and number of hours expended on the repair.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent and Transportation supervisor prioritize the buses with the highest priority for those buses identified as needing immediate service.	September 2001
4.	The Transportation supervisor has the buses serviced based on the prioritization identified in the previous step until all buses have been serviced.	September 2001
5.	The Transportation supervisor performs the maintenance inspection for each bus every 30 days.	Ongoing
6.	The Transportation supervisor updates the maintenance records to identify when buses are due for the 30-day preventive maintenance and sets up an appropriate preventive maintenance schedule.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be accomplished with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

D. FOOD SERVICES (PART 1)

Public schools should provide students with appealing and nutritional breakfasts and lunches as economically as possible. Nutritional food choices are critical to the success of any school district's nutrition services program because research has linked good dietary habits to high academic performance.

Nutrition services is a field undergoing constant change due to evolving federal, state and local regulatory processes; advances in technology; demographic changes; societal and community expectations; new food product availability; participation in federal food commodities programs; strategies to maintain or increase the number of students engaged in educational processes; competition from vending and other food venues on school premises; "open" or "closed" lunch periods in high schools; and the changing needs and tastes of students as both food consumers and customers.

The U.S. Congress authorized the National School Lunch Program in 1946 to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's school children and to encourage the domestic consumption of agricultural products. The food service program is funded through a combination of federal subsidies for students from low-income families and the personal contribution of students who are able to pay. The federal government also provides schools with surplus food products through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

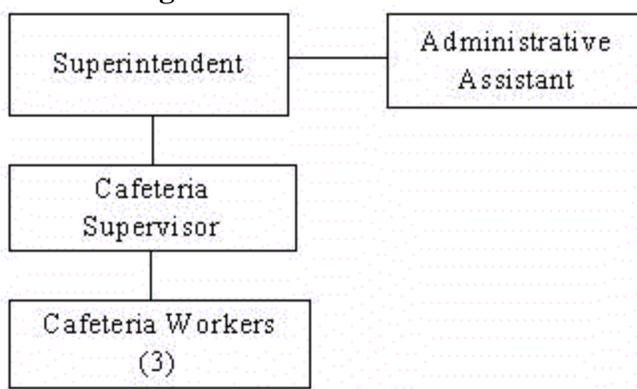
The Texas School Food Service Association (TSFSA) has identified 10 standards of excellence for evaluating TSFSA programs. TSFSA states that effective programs should:

- Identify and meet current and future needs through organization, planning, direction and control;
- Maintain financial accountability through established procedures;
- Meet the nutritional needs of students and promote the development of sound nutritional practices;
- Ensure that procurement practices meet established standards;
- Provide appetizing, nutritious meals through effective, efficient systems management;
- Maintain a safe and sanitary environment;
- Encourage student participation in food service programs;

- Provide an environment that enhances employee productivity, growth, development and morale;
- Promote a positive image to the public; and
- Measure success in fulfilling regulatory requirements.

VISD has one cafeteria that serves both elementary and high school students. A cafeteria supervisor manages the cafeteria with the help of three cafeteria workers. **Exhibit 4-15** shows the organizational structure of VISD's cafeteria operations.

Exhibit 4-15
VISD's Food Services
Organizational Structure 2000



Source: VISD business office, April 2001.

The cafeteria supervisor is responsible for planning all of the menus, placing food orders and collecting meal payments from students and staff each day. The supervisor also oversees the daily preparation and serving of meals and prepares daily food sales reports. Every month the district is required to transmit a basic claim report to TEA. The cafeteria supervisor prepares and submits this report with assistance from the superintendent's administrative assistant.

The cafeteria serves food during ten periods each day beginning at 10:50 a.m. for pre-kindergarten children and ending with the high school students at 12:35 p.m. The cafeteria serves a variety of breakfast and lunch items and alternates convenience items such as frozen pizza, chicken fried steak and cheeseburgers with items prepared from scratch such as fajitas, barbeque chicken and chili. **Exhibit 4-16** shows the breakdown of meal prices for breakfast and lunch.

Exhibit 4-16
VISD Meal Prices for 2000-2001

	Regular Priced Meals	Reduced-Price Meals
<i>Break fast</i>		
K-6	\$0.90	\$0.30
7-12	\$0.90	\$0.30
Adult	\$1.00	N/A
Lunch		
K-6	\$1.00	\$0.40
7-12	\$1.25	\$.40
Adult	\$2.00	N/A

Source: VISD cafeteria supervisor, April 2001.

VISD participates in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs. **Exhibit 4-17** shows the free and reduced-price percentages for Veribest ISD and its peer districts. As this exhibit shows, VISD, at a rate of 30.5 percent, has the lowest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals among its peer districts. VISD's percentage is also below the state average of 49.2 percent. The federal government reimburses the district based on student participation rates.

Exhibit 4-17
Comparison of VISD Free and Reduced-Price
Percentages to Peer Districts

District	Percent Free and Reduced-Price
Veribest ISD	30.5%
Panther Creek ISD	37.8%
Coolidge ISD	72.1%
Novice ISD	75.5%
State Average	49.2%

Source: TEA, Child Nutrition Programs.

Exhibit 4-18 shows the reimbursement rate per meal from the federal free and reduced-price program

Exhibit 4-18
Free and Reduced-Price Program
Reimbursement Rates
2000-01

Meal Type	Reimbursement Rate
Reimbursable Lunch	Full Price: \$0.19 Reduced Price: \$1.62 Free: \$2.02
Reimbursable Breakfast	Full Price: \$0.21 Reduced-Price: \$0.82 Free: \$1.12
Reduced-Price Meals Maximum Available	Lunch: \$0.40 Breakfast \$0.30

Source: TEA.

Exhibit 4-19 shows VISD's average daily participation rate for breakfast and lunch for the last three years. Participation rate is the average number of daily student meals served expressed as a percentage of average daily attendance.

Exhibit 4-19
Average Daily Participation Rates
for VISD Cafeteria Operations
1999-2001

1998-1999		1999-2000		2000-2001*	
Breakfast	Lunch	Breakfast	Lunch	Breakfast	Lunch
31.1%	83.1%	25.4%	77.2%	28.5%	79.4%
*Includes the months of September through March					

Source: TEA, Child Nutrition Programs.

Exhibit 4-20 compares VISD cafeteria staffing to that of its peer districts. VISD has the second lowest staff-to-student ratio.

Exhibit 4-20
Cafeteria to Student Staffing Ratio
for VISD and Peer Districts

District	Number of Students	Number of Full-time Employees	Number of Part-time Employees	Total Number of Employees	Ratio of Students to Employees
Coolidge ISD	265	3	1	3.5	75.7:1
Novice ISD	101	2	0	2	50.0:1
Panther Creek ISD	213	3	0	3	71.0:1
Veribest ISD	231*	4	0	4	57.8:1
Water Valley ISD	347	4	0	4	86.8:1

Source: Telephone survey of peer districts, May, 2001. * Does not include RKR students.

Exhibit 4-21 shows the results of VISD's cafeteria operations for the years ending August 31, 1998, 1999 and 2000. As this exhibit shows, the cafeteria has had deficits of \$23,154, \$2,848, and \$16,986 for the years ending 1998, 1999 and 2000, respectively. In each of these years the district had to make transfers from the general fund to cover the operating shortfalls. This exhibit also shows that personnel expenses for the year ending August 31, 2000 were over \$26,000 over budget.

Exhibit 4-21
VISD's Cafeteria Statement of Revenue and Expenditures
1998 through 2000

	For Year Ending August 31, 2000				For Years Ending August 31, 1998, 1999		
	Budget	Actual	Variance Favorable (Unfavorable)	Amount Change 1999-2000	Amount Change 1998-1999	1999 Actual	1998 Actual
REVENUES							
Local and Intermediate	-	-	-	\$-	(\$17,700)	-	\$17,700

Sources								
Other Local and Intermediate Sources	22,000	30,146	8,146	4,392	25,754	25,754	-	
Total Local and Intermediate Sources	22,000	30,146	8,146	4,392	8,054	25,754	17,700	
State Program Revenues	-	1,069	1,069	125	40	944	904	
Federal Program Revenues	41,000	41,403	403	(1,667)	6,401	43,070	36,669	
Total Revenues	\$63,000	\$72,618	\$9,618	\$2,850	\$14,495	\$69,768	\$55,273	
EXPENDITURES								
Support Services	63,000	89,604	(26,604)	16,988	(5,811)	72,616	78,427	
Total Expenditures	\$63,000	\$89,604	(\$26,604)	\$16,988	(\$5,811)	\$72,616	\$78,427	
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	-	(16,986)	(16,986)	(14,138)	20,306	(2,848)	(23,154)	
Other Resources	-	16,986	16,986	14,138	(20,306)	2,848	23,154	
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues & Other Resources Over (Under) Expenditures and Other Uses								
Fund Balance - September 1 (Beginning)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Fund Balance - August 31 (Ending)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Source: Financial report of VISD for the years indicated.

The district shows no fund balance because the amount shown in other resources is the amount of the deficit each year that must be covered by the district's general fund. As a part of this review, TSPR conducted confidential surveys of parents, students and teachers. Exhibits 4-22 through 4-24 contain excerpts from the TSPR survey responses regarding VISD's cafeteria operations.

Exhibit 4-22 shows parents' responses to the survey. Of the parents responding, over 78 percent said their child or children regularly eat in the cafeteria. Parents rated the cafeteria operations favorably in some areas, responding that in general children have enough time to eat, that they eat lunch at the appropriate time of day, and that the district maintains discipline and order in the cafeteria. However, over 58 percent of parents said that they disagreed with the statement that cafeteria food looks and tastes good.

**Exhibit 4-22
Parent Survey Responses for
VISD's Cafeteria Operations***

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child regularly purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.	29.2%	49.2%	4.6%	7.7%	9.2%
The school breakfast program is available to all children.	29.2%	60.0%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%
The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	6.2%	21.5%	13.8%	26.2%	32.3%
Food is served warm.	6.2%	38.5%	9.2%	24.6%	21.5%
Students have enough time to eat.	7.7%	35.4%	7.7%	27.7%	21.5%
Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	9.2%	50.8%	12.3%	26.2%	1.5%
Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	9.2%	47.7%	16.9%	16.9%	9.2%
Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	16.9%	70.8%	4.6%	7.7%	0.0%

*Source: TSPR Survey responses for VISD, April 2001. * Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

Survey responses from students and teachers differed slightly from the responses from parents. **Exhibit 4-23** shows that 100 percent of students disagreed with the statement about the cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.

Exhibit 4-23
Student Survey Responses for
VISD's Cafeteria Operations

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The school breakfast program is available to all children.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%
Food is served warm.	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Students have enough time to eat.	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%
Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%
Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%
Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%

Source: TSPR Survey responses for VISD, April 2001.

Exhibit 4-24 shows that almost 64 percent of teachers surveyed disagreed with the statement that the cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.

Exhibit 4-24
Teacher Survey Responses for
VISD's Cafeteria Operations*

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%
Food is served warm.	0.0%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%
Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	9.1%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%
Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes	0.0%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%
Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	18.2%	54.5%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%
Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	0.0%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%
Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	0.0%	72.7%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%

*Source: TSPR Survey responses for VISD, April 2001. * Rounded off percentages may not add to 100 percent.*

Fifty percent of students responding stated that they thought students did not have enough time to eat, and 36 percent of teacher surveys disagreed with the statement that the food is served warm.

FINDING

VISD does not use any performance measures or other assessment tools to evaluate its cafeteria operations. As the table in **Exhibit 4-21** shows, VISD's cafeteria is not a self-supporting operation, with the August 31, 2000 deficit amounting to almost \$17,000. Without performance measures the district will not be able to address the deficit problems with the cafeteria's operations.

School cafeterias can use several measures to evaluate their effectiveness and to identify ways to provide better services and reduce costs. Some of

these measures include meals per labor hour (MPLH), percentage of food spoilage or waste, and inventory turnover rates.

Meals Per Labor Hour (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 served in a given period of time divided by the total hours worked during that period. TEA does not set standards for meal equivalents for school districts, allowing schools to set their own meal equivalent rates. **Exhibit 4-25** shows a chart of MPLH guidelines as established by Josephine Martin and Martha T. Conklin in their book *Managing Food Services Programs: Leadership for Excellence*.

Exhibit 4-25
Recommended Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH)

Number of Meal Equivalents	Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH)	
	Conventional System	Convenience System
	Low/High	Low/High
Up to 100	8/10	10/12
101-150	9/11	11/13
151-200	10-11/12	12/14
251-300	13/15	15/16
301-400	14/16	16/18
401-500	14/17	18/19
501-600	15/17	18/19
601-700	16/18	19/20
701-800	17/19	20/22
801-900	18/20	21/23
901+	19/21	22/23

Source: Managing Food Services Programs: Leadership for Excellence by Josephine Martin and Martha T. Conklin, 1999.

Exhibit 4-25 shows standard MPLH guidelines for both convenience and conventional kitchens. Convenience kitchens are those that primarily use pre-prepared and frozen food items. Conventional kitchens are those that primarily prepare their menu items from scratch. In reality, most kitchens

use a combination of the two systems. An analysis of VISD's menus for the month of March 2001 showed that cafeteria staff prepared 75 percent of lunch menu items and 87.5 percent of breakfast menu items through convenience methods.

Monitoring food spoilage, waste factors and inventory turnover rates help food service operations reduce food costs. Cafeterias can reduce or eliminate spoilage and waste by carefully monitoring the amounts of food needed and changing ordering patterns to adjust to changes in cafeteria operations such as student preference and the occurrence of special events. By monitoring inventory turnover rates, the cafeteria manager can further detect food waste or theft.

The district is not a member of a food service organization nor is the cafeteria supervisor attending training classes and conferences. The Texas School Food Service Association (TSFSA) provides training opportunities throughout the year in various cities across the state.

Recommendation 45:

Establish evaluation measures and track data to analyze cafeteria operations.

Tracking data so that it can determine measures such as meals per labor hour will help the cafeteria to become more productive and self sufficient.

Resources available to the district include the texts *School Food Service Management* by Dorothy Pannell and *Managing Child Nutrition Programs: Leadership for Excellence* by Josephine Martin and Martha T. Conklin. Other resources include the Texas School Food Service Association(TSFSA), the American School Food Service Association and the National Food Service Management Institute. These organizations can provide the district with information and instruction on how to manage and evaluate its food service operations.

The district should join a food service organization and send the cafeteria supervisor to training classes and conferences. TSFSA holds classes throughout the year in various cities across the state.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent obtains membership for the cafeteria supervisor in one of the school food service organizations.	October 2001
2.	The sunerintendent develons a set of measurement	October 2001

	criteria to be used to evaluate food services operations.	
3.	The superintendent and the cafeteria manager collect and analyze data to evaluate cafeteria operations.	November 2001 and monthly thereafter
4.	The superintendent and the cafeteria manager make changes in the cafeteria program based on the results of the data analysis.	As necessary
5.	The superintendent reviews the TSFSA schedule and selects classes in the San Angelo area.	As necessary
6.	The cafeteria supervisor attends conferences and classes.	As necessary

FISCAL IMPACT

Annual membership in the TSFSA costs \$30, and class prices range from \$20 to \$50 for members. The costs of food service texts range from \$20 to \$40.

For purposes of this estimate, \$60 is set aside for one-time purchasing of texts, and \$80 is budgeted for TSFSA membership and training annually.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Purchase food service texts	(\$60)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Annual TSFSA membership and classes	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)
Net (Cost)/Savings	(\$140)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)	(\$80)

Chapter 4 OPERATIONS

D. FOOD SERVICES (PART 2)

FINDING

VISD's cafeteria is overstaffed. Based on data for the month of March 2001, TSPR calculated an MPLH for VISD. This calculation shows that the cafeteria's MPLH are almost 50 percent below recommended industry standards.

To calculate this estimate, TSPR used data from school menus, TEA reimbursement reports and VISD cafeteria staffing information. **Exhibit 4-26** shows the results of VISD's estimated MPLH.

**Exhibit 4-26
Estimate of MPLH for VISD
March 2001**

Number of serving days for March 2001	16		
Number of student breakfasts served	1,159		
Number of student lunches served	3,405		
Total student meals served		4,564	
Number of other breakfasts served	61		
Number of other lunches served	179		
Total other meals served		240	
Total meal equivalents served		4,804	
Number of cafeteria staff	4		
Number of hours worked per day	8		
Total hours worked per day		32	
Number of day in month		16	

Total hours worked in month		512	
Total meal equivalents			4,804
Total hours worked			512
Total MPLH			9.4

Source: TEA Basic Claim report for March 2001, VISD cafeteria menu for March 2001 and staffing data for March 2001.

VISD should be achieving a MPLH of over 15 meals instead of the estimated MPLH of less than 10 meals.

Recommendation 46:

Implement a staffing productivity measure and reduce cafeteria staffing accordingly.

VISD will be able to address the cafeteria's operating deficit by adjusting cafeteria staffing. Reducing cafeteria staff hours will increase cafeteria productivity, and thereby increase the number of MPLH. VISD should reduce weekly cafeteria staff hours from 160 to 100, which would, in the example in Exhibit 4-26, increase MPLH to a more appropriate 15.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the cafeteria manager to develop guidelines for measuring and monitoring MPLH.	October 2001
2.	The cafeteria manager measures and monitors MPLH on an ongoing basis.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent/cafeteria manager reduces cafeteria staff hours from 160 to 100 per week.	December 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

The savings to the district by reducing cafeteria staff hours from 160 to 100 per week is the equivalent of eliminating one and one-half cafeteria worker positions, or \$18,851 annually. This calculation is based on the average salaries for all cafeteria workers of \$9,724, a variable benefits rate of 18 percent and an annual fixed benefits rate of \$1,640. The first year of implementation will only have \$10,473 of savings because the

recommendation will not be in place for the entire fiscal year ([$\$18,851/9$]*5). The estimated annual savings is calculated below:

Average cafeteria worker salary	\$9,724
Multiplied by 1.5	<u>1.5</u>
Average salary for 1.5 FTEs	14,586
Variable benefits	<u>1.18</u>
	\$17,211
Fixed benefits*	<u>\$1,640</u>
Total salary and benefits	<u>\$18,851</u>

**Assumes that remaining cafeteria workers will continue to receive full medical benefits, even though hours could be reduced. Therefore, this calculation only accounts for medical insurance savings for one employee.*

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Implement a staffing productivity measure and reduce cafeteria staffing accordingly.	\$10,473	\$18,851	\$18,851	\$18,851	\$18,851

FINDING

VISD's record keeping for cafeteria receipts and National School Lunch and Breakfast program is a manual and cumbersome process. Cafeteria staff track all data such as number of meals served, type of meals served (full-priced, free or reduced-price) and amount of money collected on manual sheets daily. To prepare and submit the Basic Claim report to the TEA monthly, all the daily data is manually transferred onto a monthly claim form. The monthly claim form is then used to input the data into the electronic TEA report.

Manual systems have problems other than being labor-intensive. It is easy to make errors in manual systems, especially when staff records the same data multiple times. In addition, it is more difficult to find errors in a manual system than in an automated one.

It is impossible to use the current manual system to ensure that the district is collecting money appropriately. It is also difficult to determine whether or not students are paying for the food they eat. In addition, the system makes it very difficult for the district to keep proper records of participation rates.

School food service operations of all sizes are automating their cash and reporting functions. A point-of-sale (POS) computer system typically has terminals located in serving lines where students can swipe a bar-coded card or enter a student identification number into a keypad. Students who pay for meals are encouraged to pre-pay for a week or month at a time, so that very little money changes hands at the time meals are served. These systems can be as sophisticated or as simple as a district needs. Some districts have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to wire the cafeterias so that district cafeterias are linked to a central point-of-sale system that can produce districtwide reports from a database. Others have purchased stand-alone systems for each cafeteria, and use modems to forward daily transactions to a central server.

A point-of-sale (POS) system is desirable because the number of employees and students who know which students receive free or reduced-price meals. Protecting the anonymity of students who participate in the federal programs becomes increasingly important as the students become older. For example, many elementary students are relatively unconcerned about who gets a free meal and who does not. By middle school, however, peer pressure increases, and students eligible for free and reduced-price meals may avoid the lunch line when other students they know are around. By high school, many parents will not even complete the application forms because the students refuse to be labeled as "poor." If all eligible students are to benefit from the federal free and reduced-price meal program, no stigma can be associated with participation, or students simply will not participate.

Because schools maintain eligibility information in a computer under a POS system, and students enter codes or swipe an identification card, schools can produce more accurate participation reports than they can produce using a manual system. In addition, many of these systems come with additional modules that can track costs, revenues, and inventory, and prepare management reports on employee productivity, menu planning, and a wide array of other food service functions.

Water Valley ISD has recently implemented a POS system in its food services department. This system:

- Accepts convenient pre-payment options;
- Maintains confidentiality for students who receive free and reduced-price meals;
- Provides a clear audit trail;
- Reduces processing time to less than two seconds to sell a meal;
- Reduces labor hours with automated reports; and
- Reduces possibility for multiple counting.

The software automates sales activity, meal and eligibility counts, and state claim form preparation. It processes cafeteria sales quickly, tracks all meals and items sold and generates a variety of reports. It is a Windows-based software that can meet the district's needs for a reasonable cost.

Water Valley ISD has reported significant improvements in maintaining its cash receipts on a POS system. The system has eliminated instances of missing money, and its student-specific tracking capabilities have eliminated the practice of students not paying the proper amount for their food. The Water Valley food services manager told the review team that the system likely has eliminated about two labor hours a day with its reporting feature.

Recommendation 47:

Purchase a point-of-sale system for food services.

Implementation of a POS system in VISD's cafeteria will not only help to protect the identity of students receiving free and reduced-price meals, but it also will help to increase the efficiency of cafeteria operations by eliminating excessive manual paperwork.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent submits a request to purchase a POS system for the cafeteria to the board for approval.	September 2001
2.	The board reviews and approves the funding to purchase the system.	September 2001
3.	The district purchases the system and the hardware required to support the system.	October 2001
4.	The technology coordinator assists with the installation and set up of the new system.	October 2001
5.	The food services staff learns the new system and begins to use it.	November - December 2001
6.	The system is fully implemented.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of implementing this recommendation will be \$2,400 as calculated below:

Software cost	\$900
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Pentium III processor	650
Touch screen monitor	550
Printer	150
Video camera	100
Numeric keypad	<u>50</u>
Total cost	\$2,400

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Purchase a point-of-sale system for food services.	(\$2,400)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

FINDING

VISD's meal prices do not recover the cost of meals in the cafeteria. For 1999-2000, VISD spent \$89,604 for the food service operation and served approximately 6,250 meals per month for nine months, or about 56,250 meals. Using these figures, meals cost the district around \$1.60 per meal to prepare.

Exhibit 4-16 shows that regular lunch prices for grades kindergarten through 6, grades 7 through 12, and for adults are \$1.00, \$1.25 and \$2.00 respectively. The district has not adjusted these rates in several years.

Recommendation 48:

Annually assess meal rates to ensure that costs are recovered for full price meals.

Although many in the district will not favor increasing meal prices, the district must do so to help the food services department recover its costs. The following price increases are recommended:

Elementary: from \$1.00 to \$1.25
 Secondary: from \$1.25 to \$1.50
 Adult: from \$2.00 to \$3.00

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent requests that the board raise its school lunch prices.	September 2001
2.	The board approves the new pricing.	September

		2001
3.	The superintendent notifies all parents and teachers of the new prices.	September 2001
4.	The cafeteria supervisor begins charging the new lunch prices.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

On average 22,826 student lunches are served annually. Raising meal prices for students by \$.25 will result in \$5,707 in additional revenues. Raising adult meal prices will result in \$1,778 in additional revenues based on a total of 1,778 adult meals served annually.

Because this recommendation will not be implemented until 30 days of the school year have passed (October), the fiscal impact for 2001-02 will be \$6,237 ($[\$7,485/180 \text{ days}] * 150 \text{ days}$).

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Annually assess meal rates to ensure that costs are recovered for full price meals.	\$6,237	\$7,485	\$7,485	\$7,485	\$7,485

FINDING

Competitive food sales from vending machines in the VISD school cafeteria provide poor food choices for students. VISD has two vending machines located in or near the cafeteria. A drink machine is located just inside the door of the cafeteria, and a snack machine is located just outside the cafeteria in the hallway. Competitive food sales are addressed in the TEA Reference Manual, Section 16.1:

School districts must establish rules or regulations as are necessary to control the sale of foods in competition with foods served under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs. Such rules or regulations shall prohibit the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value in the food service area during the breakfast and lunch periods. The restricted foods may be sold, at the discretion of local school officials, in other areas of the school throughout the school day.

The vending machines are readily accessible to all students and provide items that are high in fat, sodium, simple carbohydrates and low in

protein. Many students eat these items instead of a nutritious lunch. These machines are left on during the lunch hour, in violation of food service guidelines.

Recommendation 49:

Turn off the vending machines 30 minutes before the first cafeteria serving time until 30 minutes after the last cafeteria serving time.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the principal to turn off the vending machines during the hours of 10:20 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. daily.	October 2001
2.	The principal monitors the use of the vending machines to insure compliance.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Interviews with junior and senior high school students reveal that cafeteria servings are sometimes not large enough to provide an adequate meal for the older children in the school. In addition, observations of cafeteria operations revealed that the cafeteria sometimes runs out of certain items and must substitute items for the older children who eat later in the day.

Recommendation 50:

Use daily attendance information by grade to determine the amount of food to prepare for daily lunch menus.

By coordinating a student count with the teachers every morning, the cafeteria could judge the quantities of food to prepare more effectively. In addition, after all students have been served for the day, the older students should be allowed to receive a second serving if they choose to pay for it.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	Teachers count all students that will require a lunch each day.	October 2001 and Ongoing
2.	The school secretary compiles the estimated number of meal counts each day by grade and submits the count to the	October 2001 and Ongoing

	cafeteria supervisor.	
3.	The cafeteria supervisor prepares the appropriate quantity of food.	October 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The TSPR survey of parents, teachers and students indicates an unusually high degree of dissatisfaction with cafeteria food. Almost 59 percent of parents, 100 percent of students and 64 percent of teachers responded negatively about the look and taste of the cafeteria food.

During interviews with students and staff, they reported that the cafeteria personnel do not consider input about food items. In fact, the high school student council administered a survey to all students to find out what types of food items would be more appealing to them, but cafeteria personnel did not consider the survey results.

Other school district cafeterias experiment with recipes to find out what types of food students prefer. Fort Worth ISD and Grand Prairie ISD have ongoing programs to assess which foods students are more likely to eat. Grand Prairie ISD has an annual taste test where students and teachers try new recipes and then rate how well they like each item. The cafeteria personnel consider this information when preparing the regular menus.

Recommendation 51:

Annually conduct a survey of VISD students to find out what food items they would like to be served for lunch.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the cafeteria supervisor to develop a survey for students and staff.	October 2001 and Annually thereafter
2.	The cafeteria manager develops a survey.	November 2001
3.	The superintendent administers the survey to all staff and a random selection of students from grades 6 through 12.	December 2001
4.	The superintendent compiles the results of the survey and distributes them to the cafeteria supervisor.	January 2002

5.	The cafeteria supervisor uses the survey results when planning and preparing meals.	Beginning February 2002
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FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

VISD may not be maximizing the amount of state funding available to the district for its economically disadvantaged students. The district's economically disadvantaged student percentage dropped from 40.7 percent in 1999-2000 to 30.5 percent in 2000-01. Because Veribest's local economy is largely farm- and dairy-based, the district has a large population of migrant students. It appears that the district could be serving a larger economically disadvantaged population than what it is reporting.

Compensatory and Title I funding flows to school districts based on their numbers of economically disadvantaged students. Economically disadvantaged students are those identified as eligible for free or reduced-price meals. These funds are funneled to districts so that they can provide additional services to students at risk of dropping out of school. While not all economically disadvantaged students are considered at risk, the number of economically disadvantaged students is closely aligned with the number of at-risk students. The federal government, therefore, uses this figure as its criteria.

Most Texas school districts receive between \$500 and \$800 per child per year in compensatory funds for every child identified as eligible for free and reduced-price meals. The funding provides an additional 20 percent of the state allotment for these students. At VISD, the 2000-01 compensatory educational allotment per student is estimated to be \$703. The more children identified as eligible for free and reduced-priced meals, the more funding the district can receive from the state.

In VISD, the school cafeteria manager distributes application forms to all students. The students have their parents complete the form and return them to the cafeteria manager. The district is not aggressive in ensuring that all children eligible for free or reduced-price meals have completed an application. Some parents are reluctant to fill out the necessary forms. With some parents it is a matter of pride; with others it is a matter of literacy. Some students are hesitant to participate in the program, especially at the secondary levels, because they do not want to be identified as poor. In addition, school staff is often overloaded with paperwork, making it difficult to attend to these forms.

Some schools have started aggressive campaigns to identify students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Some schools have even implemented award programs, providing all families who complete an application form the chance to win prizes such as televisions and compact disc players.

Recommendation 52:

Aggressively seek to identify and qualify all eligible students for free or reduced priced meals.

VISD could maximize the amount of compensatory funding received from the state by aggressively tracking the students who fail to turn in an application. Because of the relatively small size of VISD's student population, the district could require all students to return an application, and then track and follow-up with those students who fail to turn one in.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the principal to implement a process to monitor and track free and reduced-price meal applications.	October 2001
2.	The principal establishes a process and distributes forms to all families in the district.	October 2001
3.	The principal follows up with any families that fail to return an application.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

If VISD identified an additional 25 students eligible for free or reduced-price meals, an estimated 9 percent increase in its identified economically disadvantaged students, the district could collect an additional \$17,575 annually in state funding (25 x \$703).

Because compensatory education enrollment is based on the prior-year six-month average of eligible students, new eligible students would not entitle the district to additional compensatory funds on those students until 2002-03.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Aggressively seek to identify and qualify all eligible students for free or reduced priced meals.	\$0	\$17,575	\$17,575	\$17,575	\$17,575

FINDING

Many small districts in Tom Green County, including VISD, find it difficult to obtain competitive food prices because they are unable to make bulk purchases. During interviews with the San Angelo ISD director of Food Services, the review team learned that San Angelo ISD pays a substantially lower unit food price than the smaller districts in Tom Green County. For example, San Angelo ISD purchases green beans at 30 cents, while the other smaller districts pay 37 cents, a 23.3 percent difference. The San Angelo ISD director of Food Services said that the district would be interested in entering into and managing a cooperative purchasing agreement with the smaller districts in the county if some arrangement could be made to increase the storage facilities in the San Angelo district.

Recommendation 53:

Enter into a countywide food-purchasing cooperative.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Food Services managers of all Tom Green County school districts meet to discuss forming a purchasing cooperative.	October 2001
2.	A committee is formed to set goals and objectives for the cooperative.	November 2001
3.	The committee develops recommendations.	January 2002
4.	District superintendents present the committee's recommendations to their respective boards.	January 2002
5.	The boards approve the formation of the cooperative.	January 2002
6.	The county enters into an inter-local food purchase agreement	February 2002
7.	The committee obtains food bids.	March 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

If the district can save 10 percent in its total net food costs, it would save \$4,242. This is calculated based on the amount VISD spent on food purchases for fiscal year 1999-2000 of \$42,416 ($\$42,416 \times .10$).

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
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Enter into a countywide food-purchasing cooperative.	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$4,242	\$4,242
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Appendix A

PUBLIC FORUM AND FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

As part of the review process, the review team held a public forum and teacher focus group to obtain input. During the public forum, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members participated by writing personal comments about the major topics of review; and in some cases, talking in person to review team members. Teachers also participated in a small focus group where the topics under review were discussed.

The comments below illustrate community perceptions of VISD and do not reflect the findings and opinions of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts or the review team. The following contains comments received by focus area.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

- Our board seems to lack the knowledge and/or experience to ask the right questions. They lack the ability to lead this school beyond where it is today. They often seem detached and uninvolved. They go through the motions and do not follow through on anything. (five more agreed)
- The superintendent has proven time and time again that he is not able to handle financial matters responsibly. Anytime parent requests budget information, it cannot be provided. (three more agreed)
- Do we have job descriptions for a principal, superintendent, counselor, teacher, etc?
- Site-based committee is formed, but is not being used effectively. The state requirements regarding how this committee should function are not followed. (four more agreed)
- Strategic planning has been done, but the board never takes it past the planning stage. No plans are ever enacted. (five more agreed)
- The school board does not follow proper procedures for conducting a school board meeting. (three more agreed) (comment - executive sessions are very illegal - things discussed that should not be discussed.)
- The school board does not do their own research and investigation into all matters which affect this school. They often take the word of the superintendent who has proven more than once that he does not know what he is doing in regards to finances, rules and regulations. (three more agreed)
- We need a TEA monitor. (one more agreed)

- Turnover in administration (3 principals in 4 years, 3 superintendents in 4 years)
- Good principal run-off.
- Decisions made in admin but not communicated to campus staff.
- Admin micro-manages.
- Conflict between superintendent and principal.
- Excellent, dedicated teaching staff.
- No policies and procedures in place.
- No follow-through on vision/broken promises. (i.e., high school)

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- The curriculum lacks alignment. There is no GT program. There is no dyslexia program. TAAS scores look ok, but there are weaknesses in math, writing and reading. There are big weaknesses in middle school. (three more agreed) (comment - When students cannot read, we have a problem.)
- Where is our counselor? We have high school students who have no clue about scholarship opportunities or how to get into college.
- Our children that are not doing well in class have nothing extra to help them - tutoring, title 1 programs, etc. (two more agreed) (comment - We have regular education classes or special ed.) (comment - Curriculum resources that are available aren't being utilized.) (comment - Can we get tutoring? Teachers aren't teaching, so we need someone to help.)
- What curriculum? It was briefly discussed when we began our high school, but my son does not have an acceptable four year plan. The classes that were discussed have not been offered. We've had to wait on textbooks several weeks into the school term. The classes are not coordinated properly. We have teachers who are not certified or properly trained for the subjects they are teaching. (one more agreed)
- High school curriculum and presentation as a whole is terrible. (One more agreed)
- How old is the curriculum? How is it that curriculum does not meet the needs of multilevel classrooms?
- Reading program in elementary does not meet the needs of students. (one more agreed)
- When schools (teachers) can't meet needs, they suggest you change the schools.
- If we could keep an administrator for more than one and a half years, maybe our curriculum would be more in line and some of the programs would possibly be more structured.
- I would like to see AP courses added. (two more agreed)
- ESL program is exceptional. ESL teacher is great. (one more agreed)

- Teachers are too busy going to workshops to teach. Substitutes teach more classes than teachers. Report cards go out and teachers disappear. If there is a problem, it can be 2 weeks before you find out what it is so you can try to help our student. Workshops should be in the summer, not during school.
- Do we have a counselor? I have a 504 student and have never been contacted.
- No GT program.
- Low student/teacher ratio.
- Class size is growing.
- Good teachers.
- No scope and sequence in K through 12.
- Some teach by TEKS.
- Each teacher chooses own curriculum guide.
- Trying to address curriculum. Issues through SBDM.
- Began addressing current issues and getting GT programs but then there was a change in administration.
- No dyslexic program.
- No music program.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- We need our community newsletter back. It helps inform taxpayers. (two more agreed)
- We used to be a very close community. I feel the major part of the school board and our administrators keep us divided.
- Parents need to be informed and their input requested when uncertified persons are teaching their children. When teachers quit in the middle of the year and are given a leave of absence, we weren't notified until the day of this change. (one more agreed)
- Teachers need to also be informed when there are personnel changes. (one more agreed)
- Parental involvement has steadily declined and I think much of the reason is an ineffective school board and administration. They do not follow through on promises, information, communication or research. Parents are tired of hearing about what things and opportunities our children are going to have and then never seeing it happen. (two more agree)
- Internal communication is practically nonexistent. (two more agree).
- Communication with parents and the community has broken down in the last couple of years. Administration doesn't seem to want parents to know what is / is not happening at school, either good or bad. (two more agree)
- Parents are not made to feel like they have a right to ask questions about what goes on at this school. They are made to feel as if they

are intruding and are treated as troublemakers if they dare say anything negative or ask questions. (two more agreed)

- I would like to see a community newsletter and possibly pay someone to publish it. (one more agreed).
- Parents are not kept very well informed. (two more agreed)

HUMAN RESOURCES

- We need an employee handbook, which should be updated yearly.
- We need certified teachers. It seems we hire the first person that walks in the door. (one more agreed) (comment - Some of our certified teachers in elementary are too busy with everyone else to teach their classes.)
- We need classes covered by subs when the teacher is out of school. I am not sure we advertise that we are in need of subs.
- We should be able to hire superior, qualified teachers. We never send a representative to the ASU job fair. ASU is a great resource and we don't use it.
- We continue to hire unqualified teachers. Why don't qualified teachers want to come to Veribest?
- Staff development is hit and miss. Mandatory is only mandatory in certain instances. Certain people are never seen in staff development or mandatory faculty meetings.
- Our faculty is not being utilized very effectively in MS/ HS. Some faculty members do not have full schedules yet receive full pay. And give singing finals?
- Uncertified teacher working as a long-term sub receives teacher pay. This is wrong. (two more agreed)
- Teachers are not being utilized in the classes they are qualified to teach. Some teachers are too busy trying to be someone's pal than teaching our children the courses they are enrolled in.
- We need a TEA monitor. (one more agreed)
- Our teachers, administrator and the faculty are great.
- Teachers are not certified.
- Openings are not posted.
- Inappropriate firings.
- Ks not yet renewed (3/29/01).
- There are 3 boys' coaches and only 1 girls' coach.
- Told salary would increase, but it didn't.
- Girl's coach spread too thin.
- PDAs not followed (5 school days).
- No written summary of evaluation.
- Principal doesn't evaluate for 45 minutes.
- PE teacher and K teacher received same walk-thru comments - questionable whether walk through occurred.

- Need more teachers - science, tech, business, elementary reading, and dyslexia.

FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

- The gym is too small to hold the entire school during pep rallies. Check the fire code. (one more agreed)
- Rooms should be cleaned after school, not during school. (comment - our custodians are the best, they do the best with what they have.) (comment - classes should be cleaned daily)
- We are out growing our school.
- Gym needs repairing.
- Classes need to be split, Kids first. (one more agreed)
- Custodians should clean after school. (one more agreed).
- If we need room for a class, get rid of the daycare. (one more agreed) (comment - Need more than 1 room, try 6-8 rooms for MS/HS classes.)
- We are short of classroom space, yet we allow a daycare to use one of our buildings.
- Classrooms are too small for the large classes and amount of computers. These rooms were not designed for 6 to 7 computers and 22 students.
- Gym needs renovating - ceiling leaks. (one more agreed)
- Elementary wing needs to be painted and cleaned. Ceilings in elementary wing leak also. Walls need to be repaired.
- Custodians should come to work at 1 pm, and then stay until 8/9 pm. Cleaning during classes is a waste and an interruption of class instruction.
- Our class sizes are such that we are not really a "small school" anymore.
- Classes need to be assessed for size. Facility needs to be used to better capacity. If we are not going to get a new school we need to take care to build needed areas - the gym, cafeteria, and library science.
- The cafeteria cannot meet the needs of this school. Children have to eat too early in the morning so that all children can get through by mid-afternoon. It is crowded.
- We have been trying to get a safe elementary playground for ten years - hasn't happened yet.
- Money budgeted for cafeteria maintenance should be used.
- Our custodial people do a good job. (one more agreed)
- No space for PC lab.
- Portables don't have bells (fire drill, tornado drill).
- Building of a high school - been talking about it since 1979.
- Few restrooms (1 for ladies with only 1 toilet, no men's room).
- Inadequate lockers and locker rooms.

- No hot water in all portables.
- Too many kids in science labs - fire hazard.
- Need to offer 13 classes for Middle and High School but only 8 CRs.
- Using CR for day care operation.
- No place for kids before school.
- Inadequate sewage system - raw sewage in the parking lot.

ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- Need better health insurance. Need to let community know what is going on in these areas - only time we know is when we ask specifically or as a problem arises.
- Our teachers and our kids are our assets. We need good teachers and good compensation to be educating our number one asset, our kids.
- Our health insurance is very over-priced - too expensive.
- Teacher retirement is a good thing.
- Poor health coverage - catastrophic only
- \$136 toward premium, \$200 total cost
- No prescription cards unless you have a high premium.
- Plan degraded from last year.
- BCBS not given same info as TASB for insurance bid.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- I requested cafeteria budget and the superintendent didn't have one and could not answer my questions. I don't feel the lunch money is being used properly. I also requested a homework policy and the superintendent did not have the policy book. I still don't have my request and it has been over a week.
- The school board did not even look at the campus improvement plan when the budget was written. (one more agreed with this comment)
- The superintendent seems to make decisions and then brings what he has done to the school board to get it paid for. The school board lets him have free reign and when they ask questions, the answers from the superintendent are vague. (Six more agreed with this comment)
- Some budget items do not make any sense. (two more agreed with this comment)
- Teachers need more input on budget.
- Money is a convenient excuse for a lazy school board and administration not to initiate the proper programs and course of study for our children. (three more agreed)
- We raised taxes; let's build a school.

- Get rid of RKR, or be self-sufficient.
- Need a school for MS/HS - We need to offer 14 classes next year and only eight classrooms in the portables.
- Not enough \$\$ for classrooms.
- Part of this year's budget spent to pay for last year's items.
- Funding inequities (e.g., girls' sports and Football)
- Teachers have no control over their budgets.
- Teachers are not reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.
- Don't know budgets.
- Don't have input into budget process.

PURCHASING

- Textbooks are not ordered correctly. Therefore, classes start without books. (one more agreed)
- Why is there always money for sports, especially football, but not any money for supplies, books, etc?
- We have had to purchase our own scotch tape and staples.
- Items need to be checked out and accounted for - not just taken off the shelf.
- Football, basketball, tennis, track, volleyball and golf have all been positives - they bring the community together.
- If we are going to offer alternative sports, then we need to do it full scale, proper equipment and participation. If we can't do it right, we don't need to offer it. (two more agreed)
- Teachers need money for supplies.
- Lengthy purchasing process.
- Cumbersome purchasing process.
- "Black Hole" in purchasing process.
- Regular classroom supplies provided.
- Teachers order CR supplies, but they go to central storage.
- No supplies to start school.
- Can only order supplies at the first of the year.
- Textbook problems - still don't have some.
- Teachers have voice in the textbook selection.
- 6 months without solutions manual.

COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Outstanding technology - PCs in every classroom.
- Technology kept up to date.
- New PCs, 8-9 PCs in the 2nd grade, 7 PCs in Kindergarten.
- Staff and kids share resources.
- Only one tech coordinator.
- No intercom system.
- Have t-star, but it's not used.

- Need more equipment to use t-star.
- Need more staff to use t-star.
- Moving toward distance learning.
- Looking into partnerships with Howard College.
- Need more calculators for High School math.
- Attendance needs to be automated.
- Grade speed not fully utilized.
- Computers - We are making progress, however, as discussed at a previous board meeting, aides should not teach these programs. Even though we have the equipment for T-star and satellite teaching, nothing is being utilized. (one more agreed)
- We need to add more tech classes in our high school. We need a separate computer lab for high school and elementary. (one more agreed)
- Children should be taught proper key boarding skills when they are using the computers. (one more agreed) (comment - however, it should not be an actual grade.)
- Is the current equipment being used to the best of its capabilities?
- Satellite is never used to watch educational programs. Only for OJ Simpson trial and to watch weather channel during storms. I think children would enjoy these educational programs.

TRANSPORTATION

- No bus monitors.
- Inappropriate/ unruly behavior.
- Food and drink allowed on bus.
- Buses arrive too early - because of breakfast.
- Tire blowout on way to a track meet - couldn't reach anyone.
- Need another van.
- Need another bus.
- All bus drivers should have children sit on the bus and not allow food or drinks on board.
- Bus drivers do not make the kids sit down and behave. My children do not ride the bus because they have been abused, hear vulgar words and talk about how the older children are mean to the younger children. When I see the bus pass my house, I see kids standing up, climbing over seats, etc., and yelling out the windows. (one more agreed)
- Maintenance is poor. No money is spent on the upkeep, like new tires or even new buses. We need another van. Overall, people do the best with the money they can spend.
- Kids should be seated and show respect to the bus driver.
- There are safety concerns because children do not follow the bus rules. (one more agreed)

- Kids fear the superintendent when he is on the bus because he'll stop the bus whenever kids are out of their seats. This is a real safety concern.
- Buses for out of town trips never arrive to pick up the children on time. (one more agreed)
- Would like to have an activity bus.
- Teachers need to be monitors on the bus. (comment - or parents could volunteer.)
- Not on time.
- High turnover.
- Negative attitudes from staff.

FOOD SERVICES

- The food quality and quantity is insufficient. Beans and wieners repeatedly lack nutrition, nor does it do much for the appetite. High school boys are expected to be satisfied with 5 nacho chips. Even my 3rd grade daughter comes home starving because they eat so early in the day. (one more agreed)
- Nutritional value is severely lacking. Chips and a ham sandwich is not a balanced meal. French fries do not qualify as a vegetable. Chopped lettuce is not a salad. Teachers/Adults receive the same amount of food as students and pay twice as much.
- Food needs to be served hot. Also needs to give students enough to fill them up. I constantly hear my children and others say they are still hungry after lunch. (three more agreed)
- Leftovers are very old.
- Students should not have to wait to eat. I've been here many times and watched my children wait up to 10 minutes to eat. My kindergarten son sits everyday and waits for the cooks to get ready. If lunch time is at 10:50, he should not eat at 11:05.
- Food is not very tasty. Too many weiner products are served. What child eats sweet potatoes? Better quality food is needed. Where is this money being spent? (one more agreed)
- If none of the teachers eat in the lunchroom that should tell you something.
- Food portions are not large enough for high school students.
- Lately, lunches have been getting better. (comment - must have brought their own.)
- Poor food appearance and presentation.
- MS strike - no utensils.
- Not open to training.
- No homemade food.
- Provided bread after student council survey.
- Little variety (e.g., ham).
- Ordered sack lunches one week in advance, but didn't get them.

- Uncooperative staff.
- Not coordinating menus with events (e.g., chili).
- Portions are too small.
- Snack machines emptied by kids during lunch.
- Adult prices are more for the same portion size.
- Overstaffed (?)

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- I feel our school is very safe, but fear that it could become unsafe quickly (shooting, violent parent on campus, etc.). We lack the facilities to have a lock-down. The portable buildings pose a very big safety issue. Not having a bell system is a problem. (one more agreed)
- Student discipline is neither impartial nor consistent. The student handbook is seldom followed. (four more agree) (two more do not agree) (comment - discipline should match the crime.)
- (A principal) is doing a good job. (one more agreed)
- There must be an intercom system with the ability to notify everyone on campus. (two more agree)
- We have only had one fire drill and no tornado drills this year.
- I feel discipline is better this year than any other previous year. The superintendent follows the student handbook - only 3 people in ISS this year. The portables are a safety concern. No intercom or sufficient bell system, no communication. Local law enforcement is fine but has never been tested for response time. (one more agreed)
- School nurses are great. (three more agree)
- The principal does not follow student handbook. Consequences are not consistent. (one more agreed)
- Discipline seems to be fair. Handbook does not seem to be followed, especially dress code. Teachers have been helped to watch.
- Corporal punishment should be removed from this school. The discipline has been good, and it can still be good without corporal punishment.
- Often, they leave the school unlocked with the lights on in the evenings. Administration does nothing to ensure that this is not happening. In fact, when there are after school functions, the administrators are the first to leave.
- Portables are unsafe.
- There is no PA system.
- One-way PA system from admin to CRs.
- No bell in portables.
- No tornado drills for any school.
- K-2 classes did own drill.

- No phones in portables.

Appendix B

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data

Number of Respondents = 65

1.	Gender (Optional)		Male	Female	No Response		
			35.4%	63.1%	1.5%		
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response
		86.2%	0.0%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%
3.	How long have you lived in Veribest ISD		No Response	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11 Years or More	
			0.0%	43.1%	21.5%	35.4%	
4.	What grade level(s) does your child(ren) attend?						
	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third		
	3.1%	15.4%	12.3%	20.0%	15.4%		
	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth		
	15.4%	12.3%	18.5%	18.5%	4.6%		
	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth			
	23.1%	6.2%	12.3%	3.1%			

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. District Organization and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	7.7%	47.7%	9.2%	21.5%	13.8%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	10.8%	36.9%	13.8%	20.0%	18.5%

3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	7.7%	20.0%	7.7%	24.6%	40.0%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	7.7%	20.0%	12.3%	26.2%	33.8%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	The district provides a high quality of services.	7.7%	47.7%	6.2%	27.7%	10.8%
6.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	7.7%	63.1%	15.4%	12.3%	1.5%
7.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	4.6%	24.6%	26.2%	26.2%	18.5%
8.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	6.2%	32.3%	33.8%	12.3%	15.4%
9.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	21.5%	52.3%	1.5%	13.8%	10.8%
	b. Writing	13.8%	52.3%	7.7%	18.5%	7.7%
	c. Mathematics	13.8%	66.2%	3.1%	15.4%	1.5%
	d. Science	12.3%	58.5%	10.8%	13.8%	3.1%
	e. English or Language Arts	13.8%	58.5%	10.8%	12.3%	3.1%
	f. Computer Instruction	23.1%	58.5%	6.2%	9.2%	3.1%
	g. Social Studies (history or geography)	13.8%	64.6%	9.2%	12.3%	0.0%
	h. Fine Arts	9.2%	21.5%	10.8%	41.5%	16.9%

	i. Physical Education	20.0%	58.5%	3.1%	7.7%	10.8%
	j. Business Education	4.6%	23.1%	35.3%	26.2%	10.8%
	k. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	12.3%	33.8%	24.6%	23.1%	6.2%
	l. Foreign Language	6.2%	36.9%	16.9%	30.8%	9.2%
10.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	12.3%	43.1%	6.2%	30.8%	7.7%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	4.6%	15.4%	18.5%	41.5%	20.0%
	c. Special Education	9.2%	49.2%	21.5%	10.8%	9.2%
	d. Head Start and Even Start programs	4.6%	36.9%	41.5%	9.2%	7.7%
	e. Dyslexia program	6.2%	12.3%	44.6%	13.8%	23.1%
	f. Student mentoring program	12.3%	26.2%	26.2%	26.2%	9.2%
	g. Advanced placement program	4.6%	13.8%	43.0%	24.6%	13.8%
	h. Literacy program	10.8%	26.2%	33.8%	21.5%	7.7%
	i. Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	4.6%	18.5%	46.2%	24.6%	6.2%
	j. Summer school programs	7.7%	12.3%	49.2%	21.5%	9.2%
	k. Alternative education programs	4.6%	27.7%	41.5%	18.5%	7.7%
	l. "English as a second language" program	15.4%	41.5%	36.9%	6.2%	0.0%
	m. Career counseling program	4.6%	38.5%	27.7%	18.5%	9.2%
	n. College counseling program	4.6%	26.2%	35.4%	23.1%	10.8%
	o. Counseling the	6.2%	29.2%	24.6%	30.8%	9.2%

	parents of students					
	p. Drop out prevention program	6.2%	18.5%	50.7%	20.0%	3.1%
11.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	9.2%	33.8%	32.3%	13.8%	10.8%
12.	Teacher turnover is low.	21.5%	43.1%	12.3%	23.1%	0.0%
13.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	18.5%	29.2%	9.2%	29.2%	13.8%
14.	A substitute teacher rarely teaches my child.	12.3%	38.5%	10.8%	24.6%	13.8%
15.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	13.8%	40.0%	10.8%	32.3%	3.1%
16.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	13.8%	44.6%	9.2%	26.2%	6.2%
17.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	40.0%	56.9%	1.5%	1.5%	0.0%
18.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	4.6%	47.7%	13.8%	26.2%	7.7%
19.	The district provides a high quality education.	18.5%	33.8%	9.2%	29.2%	9.2%
20.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	16.9%	35.4%	13.8%	24.6%	9.2%

C. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	7.7%	33.8%	6.2%	43.1%	9.2%

22.	District facilities are open for community use.	12.3%	56.9%	18.5%	7.7%	4.6%
23.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help students and school programs.	13.8%	44.6%	15.4%	18.5%	7.7%

D. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff, and the board provide input into facility planning.	12.3%	46.2%	9.2%	16.9%	15.4%
25.	Schools are clean.	16.9%	53.8%	4.6%	13.8%	10.8%
26.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	10.8%	49.2%	7.7%	20.0%	12.3%
27.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	10.8%	40.0%	18.4%	16.9%	12.3%
28.	The district uses very few portable buildings.	6.2%	13.8%	15.4%	40.0%	24.6%
29.	Emergency maintenance is handled expeditiously.	10.8%	46.2%	23.1%	7.7%	12.3%

E. Asset and Risk Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
30.	My property tax bill is reasonable for the educational services delivered.	7.7%	50.8%	13.8%	18.5%	9.2%
31.	Board members and administrators do a good job explaining the	6.2%	23.1%	24.6%	24.6%	21.5%

	use of tax dollars.					
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F. Financial Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	9.2%	24.6%	26.2%	12.3%	27.7%
33.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	7.7%	29.2%	26.2%	23.1%	13.8%
34.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	7.7%	16.9%	36.9%	10.8%	27.7%
35.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	12.3%	29.2%	36.9%	13.8%	7.7%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	10.8%	46.2%	6.2%	23.1%	13.8%
37.	Textbooks are in good shape.	9.2%	83.1%	1.5%	4.6%	1.5%
38.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	18.5%	38.5%	1.5%	23.1%	18.5%

H. Food Services

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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		Agree		Opinion		Disagree
39.	My child regularly purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.	29.2%	49.2%	4.6%	7.7%	9.2%
40.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	29.2%	60.0%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%
41.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	6.2%	21.5%	13.8%	26.2%	32.3%
42.	Food is served warm.	6.2%	38.5%	9.2%	24.6%	21.5%
43.	Students have enough time to eat.	7.7%	35.4%	7.7%	27.7%	21.5%
44.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	9.2%	50.8%	12.3%	26.2%	1.5%
45.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	9.2%	47.7%	16.9%	16.9%	9.2%
46.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	16.9%	70.8%	4.6%	7.7%	0.0%
47.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	10.8%	41.5%	3.1%	35.4%	9.2%
48.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	13.8%	55.4%	7.7%	16.9%	6.2%

I. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	My child regularly rides the bus.	26.2%	21.5%	18.4%	16.9%	16.9%
50.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	10.8%	33.8%	30.7%	13.8%	10.8%
51.	The length of the student's bus ride is	10.8%	60.0%	24.6%	3.1%	1.5%

	reasonable.					
52.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	20.0%	53.8%	20.0%	6.2%	0.0%
53.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	20.0%	50.8%	27.7%	1.5%	0.0%
54.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	24.6%	38.5%	27.7%	6.2%	3.1%
55.	Buses arrive and depart on time.	16.9%	47.7%	29.2%	4.6%	1.5%
56.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	23.1%	49.2%	26.1%	1.5%	0.0%
57.	Buses seldom break down.	15.4%	49.2%	33.8%	1.5%	0.0%
58.	Buses are clean.	20.0%	36.9%	38.5%	4.6%	0.0%
59.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	16.9%	36.9%	29.2%	7.7%	7.7%
60.	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	9.2%	47.7%	41.5%	1.5%	0.0%

J. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
61.	Students feel safe and secure at school.	26.2%	64.6%	4.6%	4.6%	0.0%
62.	School disturbances are infrequent.	21.5%	69.2%	6.2%	3.1%	0.0%
63.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	36.9%	53.8%	4.6%	3.1%	1.5%
64.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	26.2%	44.6%	9.2%	18.5%	1.5%
65.	Vandalism is not a	30.8%	49.2%	7.7%	10.8%	1.5%

	problem in this district.					
66.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	7.7%	30.8%	55.4%	4.6%	1.5%
67.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	9.2%	23.1%	64.6%	1.5%	1.5%
68.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	15.4%	56.9%	21.6%	6.2%	0.0%
69.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	21.5%	44.6%	21.6%	6.2%	6.2%
70.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	9.2%	33.8%	24.6%	18.5%	12.3%

K. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
71.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	15.4%	52.3%	23.0%	4.6%	4.6%
72.	Computers are new enough to be useful to teach students.	27.7%	67.7%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%
73.	The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	18.5%	58.5%	9.2%	9.2%	4.6%
74.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	13.8%	46.2%	13.8%	18.5%	6.2%
75.	Students have easy access to the internet.	20.0%	58.5%	15.3%	6.2%	0.0%

Appendix B

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

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

- A new gym with air conditioner.
- A new bigger room for the computers.
- A new tennis court and a new playground.
- Administration does not cooperate among themselves; therefore, the faculty and staff receive no support.
- Non-certified teachers are hired or certified teacher are hired in areas where they have no certification. Please look into 7-12 math, elementary PE, elementary Spanish, MS/HS Science; HS Health.
- Our taxes sit at \$1.50 and yet our district cannot afford to pay for substitutes. Classes are left unattended very frequently. Children are unsupervised an inordinate amount of time.
- There is no dyslexia or GT program.
- Children receive a very good education at Veribest. They could do an even better job if they could build a new school and have plenty of room for all the children. The building is old and there are many portable buildings. I have nothing but great things to say about the school board, administration and teachers. They deserve a new school!
- Disagreements regarding computer use are relevant to the elementary schools.
- I am not happy with superintendent. Instead of trying to fix problems he said, "New Principal will handle." Principal so far seems to be turning things in right direction. There are a lot of problems at this school. The teachers seem to be having a hard time dealing with the expansion and the new children. There is a lot of unfairness and favoritism. There are a lot of kids not given a chance or shown how to do things the correct way because their families are not involved in the extra curricular activities of the school. They seem to forget these parents are full-time workers and do not have extra time other than for their children.
- I am on the site-based committee at our school. There is a very big problem of respect to administration by teachers and other members of this community. There are teachers that refuse to cooperate with administration. There are groups of teachers. Each group sides with different administrators or other personnel that have been disciplined by administration. Administrators against administrators - many problems exist at Veribest ISD.

- I believe Veribest has a great deal to offer children and do a great job with what they have, although I believe they should be able to offer a music program and other optional classes. The cafeteria food is almost unacceptable, my children complain daily and come home hungry, I think if the children were given a choice they would eat better! I have also had school lunches and would agree with the children!
- I feel the superintendent uses his power too much over the board and parents. He undermines the progress made by the principal. Teachers that have been there for a long time tend to run the school instead of the principal. They are allowed to undermine his authority and can be very negative influences in the community. Instead of the students being a priority, certain sports and agendas have taken over. The board needs to listen to the voters.
- I feel Veribest does not have enough high school qualified teachers! This is only the second year of seniors and a lot of the teachers teaching high school only taught up to eighth grade. The kids are complaining a lot that they will not be able to compete with other seniors when they go to college.
- I feel Veribest is a good school, just a few things that need work. The library needs new books and the lunches need improvement.
- I have brothers who are in High School so some of my questions that I might have not known about from the elementary point of view were answered because I am aware of their problems too.
- My major concerns are the AR program being used incorrectly, cafeteria food and wait time to eat lunch, superintendent not doing his job. We had a propane leak and he wanted his janitors to fix the problem. They could not fix it and I called the gas manager. Then the problems were fixed properly. We have teachers who are not certified to teach the subjects they teach. The Board and principal allowed my daughters teacher (4th) to take a leave of absence in November and she decides when to return. My daughter has had difficulties since this occurred. The students were not the first priority in this decision. Maintaining the buildings is not top priority.
- I say only is good for me and my child and think she is a very good student and the teachers are teaching very well.
- I strongly suggest you check into the board and superintendent practice or executives session.
- I think the educational performance at VISD is a good program honestly, I think its one of the best schools around because its small and there is no gang related problems like there are in bigger schools.
- I would like to see a music program for both elementary and secondary implemented.

- My biggest concerns at this time are the teachers teaching without being certified. Our district has hired teachers without teaching certification and have teachers teaching in areas they are not certified to teach. We also have not received the letters from the school telling us that they are not certified to teach these subjects. I am also concerned about not having a dyslexia program or GT program. I feel like administrators tell you what you want to hear and nothing more is done about your concerns. I think Veribest has one of the best technology plans in the area.
- My child always complains about food served cold and not enough food on tray for a teenager. When he asks for more he is declined. If he owes 3-5 lunches, no food is served even if they should be on a peanut butter sandwich law.
- No school district is going to be perfect, but I am very pleased with VISD. Not only because of the involvement of all school staff and teachers to help all students to do their best, but also because of the way staff and teachers have helped to resolve some minor "issues" over the past 6-7 years. I feel my son is getting the best education possible. Also, the school sports teams are directed by coaches that are patient, fair and encourage good sportsmanship by their words and their actions. I also commend the school board for making good decisions when a staff members, teachers and coach needs to be removed and replaced based on what they feel is best for their students.
- Not enough food is served to students and those willing to pay are not allowed seconds and come home starving.
- Someone needs to look into the reading program. AR is being used solely as reading grade but only by some teachers; others use it as a 1/3 or 1/4 of grade. Should be regulated.
- Not enough is being done when kids have a problem with certain teachers. I do not know if it is the principal or the superintendent, but things get overlooked when they should be acted on. Seems like there is not enough respect between teachers and superintendent. If none of the teachers eat in the lunch room, that should tell you something.
- One of my sons is in special education, but he does not seem to be doing much better. His grades are still low. He plays more in that class, when he should be learning and getting the help he needs. I would like to see more in the special ed class that will help the children instead of computer games and cleaning up from a pizza party.
- Our current administration is very poor. Decisions are not made on a professional level. They are not in the best interest of the student needs. Buildings are inadequate for students needs. Buildings are not purchased or built to be long-term. Instead of building we purchase portables. They do not offer a variety of classes for

student interest, just those required. Teachers need financial support for extras bought for the classroom.

- Our main problem at Veribest is the school board allowing the superintendent to have complete and total control in decision making, and the board's disregard for the public's input. Too much of what the board does is behind closed doors. The public put those people on that board and we have every right to know what goes on at "our" school.
- People on board need to get off and let others do the job. They are to caught up in their personal agendas and not in what is best for the school and the majority of students and teachers do not want to change and will suggest students be taken to another district instead of trying to change or adjust. Substitutes are used too often!
- Students are left unattended in classes, and no substitutes are assigned to class for more than an hour and a half sometimes. The district has 5 teachers outside of their fields, and I have yet to be notified of them formally in a written letter or verbally by school officials. When problems are brought before the school board, they are not dealt with and continue with the meeting.
- The children do not get a good size of food. They need more food at lunch and what is wrong with seconds on food?
- The principal does a wonderful job when he is given a chance. The superintendent does not let him do his job as he is always undermining him.
- The school board needs to be more aggressive and willing to upgrade the facilities and programs to expand the opportunities for the students. Some of the board members do not want any "changes". Everything is fine as it is! And the students are being taught and expected to perform sport activities in inadequate and outdated facilities. Some programs also need to be expanded.
- The smaller grades have excellent teachers. I am not impressed with the teachers above the sixth grade. Seems to be a lot of disrespect with kids towards teachers. You have to set a good example for the kids also. If kids complain about teachers we should listen. Give the kids the opportunity to thrive if they so desire.
- I am very concerned about the lack of a GT program.
- Parent volunteers are not encouraged at VISD.
- This survey was difficult in some categories because I agree in part and disagree in part. For the most part, we have a good set of teachers, but some of their skills are wasted or misused in areas they are less qualified for. Our superintendent places them in positions that they should not be in. I have personally witnessed our superintendent be rude to parents and teachers. We need more qualified teachers that have their certificates to teach more advanced courses.

- Veribest is a small school with a challenge to be a good fiscal friend to the taxpayer. Because of this and our recent growth into a four year high school, Veribest currently has several portable buildings for high school and an undersized gym and cafeteria. The district has applied for state funding to build a new permanent high school, gym and cafeteria.
- Veribest is working hard to implement the high school curriculum in its new high school program. We have had lots of growing pains but the school board, administration and teachers have worked hard to deliver the best education. Parents are very supportive and involved. We have had to learn to prioritize and show patience in the implementation of the things we want for our children. We are willing to work for what we want while maintaining our "small school" atmosphere and values.
- Veribest ISD does a good job educating students with the facilities it has available.
- Veribest needs a new playground and a new gym with air conditioners in it. Also, they need a new and bigger computer lab.
- We do not have security personnel, but in my opinion, they are not necessary at this time.
- In the past, there was a problem with a certain teacher, suggesting my child was ADD or ADHD. I do not feel that teachers have the medical knowledge to make this judgment. After extensive testing and cost to us, our child was found to not even be close to it by the doctor. I am also aware that our child was not the only one this was done too.
- We love our school and want to see it continue to grow and improve with each new year. We feel we have the 'very best' school around.

Appendix C

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 11

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response			
		18.2%	72.7%	9.1%			
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response
		72.7%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%
3.	How long have you been employed by Veribest ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
		81.8%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
4.	What grade(s) do you teach this year (circle all that apply)?						
	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third		
	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%		
	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth		
	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%		
	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth			
	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%	18.2%			

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. District Organization and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%

3.	School board members work well with the superintendent.	0.0%	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%	0.0%
4.	The school board has a good image in the community.	9.1%	45.5%	18.2%	27.3%	0.0%
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	0.0%	18.2%	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%
6.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	0.0%	18.2%	36.4%	27.3%	18.2%
7.	Central administration is efficient.	0.0%	36.4%	18.2%	27.3%	18.2%
8.	Central administration supports the educational process.	9.1%	36.4%	18.2%	36.4%	0.0%
9.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	0.0%	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%	45.5%	0.0%
11.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	9.1%	72.7%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
12.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	0.0%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%	18.2%
13.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0.0%	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%

14.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	0.0%	36.4%	9.1%	18.2%	36.4%
15.	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	0.0%	36.4%	18.2%	18.2%	27.3%
16.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	0.0%	18.2%	27.3%	18.2%	36.4%
17.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	18.2%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%	0.0%
	b. Writing	9.1%	27.3%	9.1%	54.5%	0.0%
	c. Mathematics	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
	d. Science	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
	e. English or Language Arts	18.2%	63.6%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
	f. Computer Instruction	36.4%	45.5%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
	g. Social Studies (history or geography)	9.1%	72.7%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
	h. Fine Arts	0.0%	27.3%	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%
	i. Physical Education	0.0%	72.7%	0.0%	27.3%	0.0%
	j. Business Education	0.0%	18.2%	45.5%	27.3%	9.1%
	k. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0.0%	18.2%	45.5%	27.3%	9.1%
	l. Foreign Language	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%	45.5%	9.1%
18.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	18.2%	45.5%	9.1%	27.3%	0.0%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	63.6%	27.3%

	c. Special Education	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%	54.5%	0.0%
	d. Head Start and Even Start programs	9.1%	36.4%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%
	e. Dyslexia program	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	27.3%	54.5%
	f. Student mentoring program	18.2%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	9.1%
	g. Advanced placement program	0.0%	27.3%	27.3%	36.4%	9.1%
	h. Literacy program	0.0%	9.1%	54.5%	27.3%	9.1%
	i. Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0.0%	0.0%	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%
	j. Summer school programs	0.0%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%
	k. Alternative education programs	0.0%	9.1%	45.5%	36.4%	9.1%
	l. "English as a Second Language" program	45.5%	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
	m. Career counseling program	0.0%	27.3%	54.5%	18.2%	0.0%
	n. College counseling program	0.0%	27.3%	54.5%	18.2%	0.0%
	o. Counseling the parents of students	0.0%	27.3%	45.5%	27.3%	0.0%
	p. Drop out prevention program	0.0%	9.1%	36.4%	54.5%	0.0%
19.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	0.0%	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%	9.1%
20.	Teacher turnover is low.	0.0%	81.8%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%
21.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0.0%	36.4%	9.1%	36.4%	18.2%
22.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	9.1%	72.7%	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%
23.	Teachers are rewarded	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%

	for superior performance.					
24.	Teachers are counseled about less-than-satisfactory performance.	0.0%	18.2%	63.6%	0.0%	18.2%
25.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	0.0%	63.6%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%
26.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	9.1%	36.4%	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%
27.	The students-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	9.1%	72.7%	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%
28.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%

C. Personnel Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
29.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0.0%	27.3%	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%
30.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0.0%	9.1%	27.3%	45.5%	18.2%
31.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0.0%	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%	9.1%
32.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	36.4%	45.5%
33.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0.0%	0.0%	45.5%	27.3%	27.3%

34.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0.0%	18.2%	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%
35.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	0.0%	90.9%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
36.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	54.5%	18.2%
37.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0.0%	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	0.0%
38.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0.0%	18.2%	72.7%	9.1%	0.0%
39.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0.0%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	45.5%

D. Community Involvement

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	0.0%	54.5%	9.1%	36.4%	0.0%
41.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0.0%	27.3%	0.0%	27.3%	45.5%
42.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0.0%	36.4%	9.1%	45.5%	9.1%

43.	District facilities are open for community use.	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%	0.0%	9.1%
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E. Facilities Use And Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
44.	The district plans facilities far enough in the future to support enrollment growth.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	63.6%	27.3%
45.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%
46.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0.0%	36.4%	36.4%	18.2%	9.1%
47.	The quality of new construction is excellent.	0.0%	0.0%	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%
48.	Schools are clean.	0.0%	63.6%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%
49.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%
50.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%
51.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%	9.1%

F. Financial Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
52.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to	0.0%	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%	27.3%

	extend the involvement of principals and teachers.					
53.	Campus administrators are well-trained in fiscal management techniques.	0.0%	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%
54.	Financial reports are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	0.0%	27.3%	18.2%	27.3%	27.3%

G. Purchasing And Warehousing

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
55.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	0.0%	18.2%	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%
56.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0.0%	9.1%	45.5%	45.5%	0.0%
57.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0.0%	45.5%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%
58.	Vendors are selected competitively.	0.0%	9.1%	54.5%	27.3%	9.1%
59.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0.0%	45.5%	9.1%	18.2%	27.3%
60.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	9.1%	54.5%	0.0%	18.2%	18.2%
61.	Textbooks are in good shape.	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
62.	The school library meets students' needs for books and other	9.1%	36.4%	18.2%	9.1%	27.3%

resources.					
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H. Food Services

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	9.1%	27.3%	36.4%	27.3%
64.	Food is served warm.	0.0%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%
65.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	9.1%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%
66.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	0.0%	54.5%	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%
67.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	18.2%	54.5%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%
68.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	0.0%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%
69.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	0.0%	72.7%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%

I. Safety And Security

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
70.	School disturbances are infrequent.	27.3%	72.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
71.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	27.3%	63.6%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
72.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	0.0%
73.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	9.1%	72.7%	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%
74.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%

	principals and teachers.					
75.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%	0.0%	0.0%
76.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%
77.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	9.1%	54.5%	18.2%	9.1%	9.1%
78.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0.0%	45.5%	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%

J. Computers And Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
79.	Students regularly use computers.	45.5%	36.4%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%
80.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	27.3%	54.5%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%
81.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	54.5%	45.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
82.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	45.5%	45.5%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%
83.	The district meets students' needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	18.2%	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%	0.0%
84.	The district meets students' needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	54.5%	45.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

85.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	5.9%	45.5%	13.9%	22.8%	11.9%
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Appendix C

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

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

- As a parent and a teacher, I am very concerned about my own children being able to get a good education at this school. We have so many programs and teachers that are teaching outside of the fields they are certified in and many teachers that are not certified at all teaching classes at Veribest. We also have a special education program that is not serving the needs of our students because of the lack of training the special education teacher has, and the lack of programs available.
- I have strong concerns about the lack of organization and lack of communication in the administration offices (both the superintendent and the principals). The teachers have asked for communication and have been told no! I do not feel the teachers are listened to when it comes to curriculum or other needs of the students. It took until February to get my classroom. I feel the teachers put education first, however I feel the administration is more concerned with advancing their own career.
- Our educational performance could be better if our administration could work together. We have high hopes for our new superintendent. We need timely building upgrades instead, but we remain the same and put band aids on broken problems. Things in our school are not always done in the student's best interest.
- The previous opinions are primarily aimed at high school level (i.e. library). The school currently shares the computer lab, gymnasium, library from K-12. We have a high school program without adequate funding for academic and fine arts programs (speech and theatre arts particularly) with too much seemingly spent in the ag department.
- This is a very good school with good students and some great teachers. We just do not have a lot to offer or room enough to offer other things. We need more money to give teachers for their classroom.
- Veribest is the school I graduated from and now where I teach. I have felt for the last two years that what has made Veribest a gem in education has been destroyed. We no longer have leadership that is (1) qualified and (2) focused on education. There has been so much fighting among administrators that no decisions have been made in regard to effective planning or instructional areas. The

teachers in the elementary grades are frustrated and tapped out as far as trying to cover areas that are short staffed and/or staffed with uncertified teachers.

- No long-term planning has been done in regard to elementary curriculum in the last 4 years I have worked here. Decisions regarding staffing needs and staff development are non-existent. Several teachers are unhappy in their grade level and have all but begged to be reassigned. There are no policies or rule enforcements with regard to attendance, transfer students, discipline procedures, etc. They may exist but we cannot follow through as teachers because there is no support from the administration.
- We have out grown our school's facilities. We need more classrooms, storage, and meetings rooms. We need to repair and clean what we have. Our parking area needs more lights and needs to be repaved.
- More important than our campus is our academic goals. I feel we are not always focusing on our academic needs but our electives. We need to spend more money on academics than athletics and FFA.

Appendix D

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 4

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Answer			
		75.0%	0.0%	25.0%			
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Answer
		25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
3.	What is your classification?	Junior	Senior	No Answer			
		0.0%	100%	0.0%			

SURVEY QUESTIONS

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.	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%
2.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%
3.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	b. Writing	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	c. Mathematics	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	d. Science	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	e. English or Language Arts	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

	f. Computer Instruction	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%
	g. Social Studies (history or geography)	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	h. Fine Arts	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
	i. Physical Education	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%
	j. Business Education	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%
	k. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%
	l. Foreign Language	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%
4.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	c. Special Education	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	d. Student mentoring program	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%
	e. Advanced placement program	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	f. Career counseling program	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	g. College counseling program	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%
5.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
7.	The district provides a high quality education.	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%
8.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%

B. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9.	Schools are clean.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
10.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%
11.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
12.	Emergency maintenance is handled in a timely manner.	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

C. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13.	There are enough textbooks in all my classes.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
14.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
15.	Textbooks are in good shape.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
16.	The school library meets students needs for books and other resources.	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%

D. Food Services

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

18.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%
19.	Food is served warm.	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%
20.	Students have enough time to eat.	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%
21.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
22.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%
23.	Discipline and order are maintained in the schools cafeteria.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
24.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%
25.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%

E. Transportation

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26.	I regularly ride the bus.	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%
27.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
28.	The length of the bus ride is reasonable.	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
29.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
30.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
31.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%

32.	Buses arrive and depart on time.	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
33.	Buses arrive early enough to eat breakfast at school.	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
34.	Buses seldom break down.	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
35.	Buses are clean.	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
36.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%

F. Safety and Security

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
37.	I feel safe and secure at school.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
38.	School disturbances are infrequent.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
39.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
40.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
41.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
42.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
43.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
44.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

45.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
46.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

G. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
46.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
47.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
48.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
49.	The district offers enough classes in computer fundamentals.	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%
50.	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%
51.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	25.0%	75.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

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

- I wish that my schedule was arranged in a different manner to fit my job schedule. I wish I could go to work at 1:30 and get out earlier so that I could work on my studies before midnight.

- I wish that my schedule would fit with my job so I could meet my financial needs. (let out at 12:00)
- Sometimes the showers, toilets in the girls bathroom are not clean enough.