

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

June 24, 2003

The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor
The Honorable David Dewhurst, Lieutenant Governor
The Honorable Thomas R. Craddick, Speaker of the House
Commissioner Felipe T. Alanis, Ph.D.

Fellow Texans:

I am pleased to present this report on the progress of the Veribest Independent School District (VISD) in implementing my Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) recommendations.

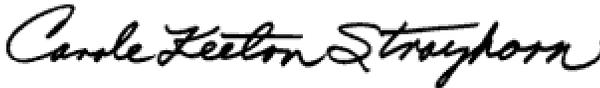
In August 2001, I released the results of my review of the district's operations. This review offered 53 recommendations that collectively could save VISD taxpayers a net of \$769,238 by 2005-06. The review also noted a number of VISD's exemplary programs and model services provided by district administrators, teachers, and staff.

In February 2003, we returned to check on how well the district's leadership put these proposals into practice. Over the last year, VISD has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, 45 of the proposals, or 85 percent. The district has saved a net of \$212,633 to date, and expects those savings to grow to \$733,801 over 5 years.

This report is available on my Web site at www.window.state.tx.us/tspr/veribestpr/.

Thanks for all that you do for Texas.

Sincerely,



Carole Keeton Strayhorn,
Texas Comptroller

c: Senate Committee on Education
House Committee on Public Education
The Honorable Scott Campbell, State Representative, District 72
The Honorable Robert Duncan, State Senator, District 28

Progress Report

Veribest Independent School District

June 2003

In March 2001, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn 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. In August 2001, a final report was issued detailing 53 recommendations that could result in net savings of \$769,238 by 2005-06. During February 2003, TSPR staff returned to assess the district's progress in implementing the recommendations.

Since 1991, TSPR has recommended more than 7,000 ways to save taxpayers more than \$700 million over a five-year period in more than 85 public school districts throughout Texas. TSPR also conducts follow-up reviews of districts that have had at least one year to implement its recommendations. These 60 subsequent reviews show that more than 90 percent of TSPR's combined proposals have been acted upon, saving taxpayers nearly \$125 million, with the full savings estimated to grow in the future.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review

Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, who took office in January 1999, consulted school district officials, parents and teachers from across Texas and carefully examined past reviews and progress reports in an effort to make the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) more valuable, even vital, to the state's more than 1,000 school districts. With the perspective of having served as a teacher, and later a school board president, the Comptroller has vowed to steer TSPR toward being more accountable to local school districts and the communities they represent.

Comptroller Strayhorn began by establishing new criteria for selecting school districts for future reviews. Priority is now given to districts judged poor performing academically or financially, and to hands-on reviews that benefit the greatest number of students. To ensure this process also serves small districts, reviews of numerous school districts in close proximity, regardless of academic or financial status are also completed to achieve

some economy of scale, as was the case with the smaller districts reviewed in Tom Green County.

Recognizing that only about 51 cents of every education dollar is spent on instruction, Comptroller Strayhorn's goal is to drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom. In addition, no longer are school districts' best practices and exemplary models left buried inside individual TSPR reports. Instead, Comptroller Strayhorn has ordered best practices and exemplary programs to be shared quickly and systematically among all the state's school districts and with anyone who requests such information. There is simply no reason for a district that has solved a problem well to keep the solution to itself. Comptroller Strayhorn has directed TSPR to serve as an active clearinghouse of the best and brightest ideas in Texas public education. Best practices identified in the original review will be included in the Comptroller's best practices database, *A+ Ideas for Managing Schools (AIMS)*, which is accessible on the Web at www.aimsdatabase.org.

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

- ensure students and teachers receive the support and resources necessary to succeed;
- identify innovative options to address core management challenges;
- ensure administrative activities are performed efficiently, without duplication and in a manner that spurs education;
- develop strategies to ensure the districts' processes and programs are continuously assessed and improved;
- understand the links among the districts' functional areas and determine ways to provide a seamless system of services;
- 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 there is a business in the Yellow Pages that can do that job better and at a lower cost.

Finally, Comptroller Strayhorn has opened her door to Texans who share her optimism about TSPR's potential. Suggestions to improve school reviews are welcome at any time. The Comptroller is a staunch believer in public education and public accountability.

Detailed information can be obtained from TSPR by calling 1-800-531-5441 extension 5-3676, or by visiting the Comptroller's Web site at www.window.state.tx.us.

TSPR in the Veribest ISD

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. The Comptroller's office also received letters and phone calls from parents, teachers and community members.

TSPR sent surveys to teachers, parents and students in an effort to grant stakeholders an opportunity to give input. Eighty respondents—11 teachers, 65 parents and four students—completed written surveys.

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 data comparisons. These selections were based on district similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The districts chosen were Coolidge, Novice, Water Valley and Panther Creek.

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.

Veribest ISD in Profile

Veribest ISD 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, but when the Post Office discovered another Texas town with the same name, a contest was held to determine a new one. A resident selected Veribest, in the end, after spotting a bread package by that name in a local store.

VISD includes a high school, middle school and elementary school and serves a second school 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 Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Regional Education Service Center XV (Region 15) in San Angelo serves the district.

In 2002-03, VISD served a population of 293 students, with 56.3 percent Anglo, 41.6 percent Hispanic and 2 percent African American, Native American or Asian/Pacific Islander. Nearly 51.9 percent of the student body of the district is considered economically disadvantaged.

In 2002, VISD's elementary campus received an *Acceptable* rating from TEA. The high school received an *Exemplary* rating for the third consecutive year. The district received an overall *Academically Acceptable* rating.

In 2001-02, 96.3 percent of all students passed the reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS); 93.7 passed the math portion; 86 percent passed the writing portion; and 87.6 percent of students passed all tests taken.

In 2001-02, the district employed a staff of 40 employees, with teachers accounting for 24, or 60 percent, of VISD staffing. The district's budgeted expenditures were near

\$2 million in 2001-02, with 34.1 percent of VISD's budgeted revenues generated through local taxes; 1.9 percent from other local and intermediate sources; and 61.5 percent from the state, while 2.6 percent came from the federal government.

In 2002-03, VISD budgeted 50.2 cents of every tax dollar on classroom instruction, compared to the state average of 51 cents. Over the last year, some changes have occurred in the district. The district is building a 17,800-square-foot facility to house the new high school and the district is actively engaging the community and teachers in facility planning efforts. The district changed business managers and the new manager has been instrumental in the district's efforts to regain control of its financial situation with the help of the Regional Education Service Center 15. As a result of these efforts, the district's financial position has changed dramatically in just one year and continues to improve.

While work continues in the district, both VISD staff and TSPR team members have a sense of steady progress. Thirty-seven recommendations have been implemented; eight are in various stages of progress; and eight have been reviewed but not implemented. (See **Appendix A** for details on the recommendations' status.)

Veribest ISD Report Card

Chapter	Total	Complete	In Progress	Not Implemented	Rejected	Percent Complete/ In Progress	Grades
District Organization and Management	13	10	2	1	0	77%/15%	Satisfactory
Education Service Delivery	11	6	2	3	0	55%/18%	Needs Work
Financial Management	10	10	0	0	0	100%/0%	Excellent
Operations	19	11	4	4	0	58%/21%	Needs Work
Overall Grade	53	37	8	8	0	70%/15%	Satisfactory

Excellent = More than 80% complete

Satisfactory = 80% to 100% complete or in progress

Needs Work = Less than 80% complete or in progress

Exemplary Programs and Practices

VISD is a school district with some notable successes, and TSPR has identified numerous “best practices.” Through commendations in each chapter, the original report highlighted model programs, operations and services provided by VISD administrators, teachers and staff members. Other school districts throughout Texas are encouraged to examine these exemplary programs and services to see if they could be adapted to meet local needs. TSPR's commendations are listed below followed by updated information on each topic in italics.

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.

Teachers continue to use the Accelerated Reader and the Reading Renaissance programs to improve student reading. In 2001-02, TAAS reading scores improved by

another 1.3 percentage points, with 96.3 percent of students passing the TAAS.

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.

Since the review, the leadership of the Small Schools Cooperative has changed, and the superintendent noted that this has positively impacted communication and the services being provided through the Cooperative.

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.

The district has given greater emphasis to safety by conducting fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures on a monthly basis.

Mandatory direct deposit streamlines the payroll process and reduces costs. VISD requires that all employees be paid through direct deposit, which saves money by streamlining the payroll process and is convenient for employees.

Direct deposits continue to be used, but the district has taken this one step further by transmitting direct deposit payroll data to the bank electronically. Administrators said this is just another step in the district's overall goal of continually streamlining operations.

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.

While limited funds are preventing the district from purchasing more computers at this time, the district's

contractors are developing minimum performance standards for personal computers.

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 uses Telecommunication Infrastructure Grants (TIF) to purchase new computers. Those funds, however, were frozen by the state due to current budget shortfalls. Regardless, the district does use all of its computers in some capacity.

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.

As part of the district's continued efforts to streamline operations and cut costs, the mechanic now inspects the buses' belts, tires and fluids on a daily basis. Preventive maintenance is one sure way to reduce or eliminate some costly repairs in the future.

TSPR Key Recommendations

The following are some of the key recommendations that administrators and staff said they believe had the greatest impact on district operations. The highlighted recommendations are organized by chapter and by the area of operation as contained in the original report. The comments came from district administrators during the TSPR team's follow-up visit to the district.

District Organization and Management

Recommendation 9: Develop staffing formulas for all employee categories and reduce staff accordingly. According to the administration, this was not an easy recommendation to implement but it was something that had to be done for the financial viability of VISD. Based on its review of its staffing levels, the district reduced staff by six positions.

Education Service Delivery

Recommendation 14: Review PEIMS data collection methods and establish a system to verify the accuracy of PEIMS data before submitting it to TEA. The superintendent told the review team that the district needed to implement this recommendation because accurate PEIMS data is essential for state funding. Trained PEIMS personnel now collect and enter the data, and Region 15 checks the PEIMS data for accuracy before the district submits the data to TEA. The superintendent, principal and teachers also review PEIMS information for accuracy before submission.

Financial Management

Recommendation 29: Develop and document procedures for critical accounting functions. At the time that TSPR began its review in the district, VISD's financial reserves had been declining steadily since 1997. Although critical operations like accounting functions were being carried out, internal controls were weak in some areas and day-to-day processes were not well documented. The new business manager is working directly with Region 15 staff to develop operating procedures and prioritize the critical functions of the department so that needed changes can be implemented systematically and effectively. Administrators feel this process was critical to the restoration of a strong financial management system.

Operations

Recommendation 48: Annually assess meal rates to ensure that costs are recovered for full price meals. VISD administrators said they needed to save money and this recommendation identified an area where the district was supplementing meal prices from general revenues. By successfully modifying the meal prices to be more in line with the cost of meals, the district has realized more than \$6,000 in additional revenues.

What Still Needs to be Done?

VISD has made steady progress in implementing TSPR recommendations. The district has implemented 37 recommendations; eight are in various stages of progress; and eight have not been addressed. This section addresses the key areas requiring additional attention.

Curriculum Development and Alignment

At the time of the review, VISD had no formal curriculum development and management plans in place (Recommendation 17). The curriculum was not vertically aligned to ensure smooth student transitions from elementary to middle school or from middle school to high school. While the district high school continues to achieve *Exemplary* ratings for student performance, the elementary school is still only given an *Academically Acceptable* rating, although in previous years the school has been given a *Recognized* rating or better.

However, the district's new assistant principal said he plans to address this recommendation in the near future. As districts implement the state's more rigorous testing and accountability programs, developing a strong curriculum system will be vital. TSPR encourages the district to move forward to begin implementation of this recommendation during the summer of 2003, so that full benefits can be derived during the 2004 school years, when the results of the new Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) will be used for accountability purposes for the first time.

School Safety

While VISD has been very aggressive in conducting monthly fire drills and emergency evacuation plans, school administrators said that the district did not have the \$2,340 to install fire alarms in portable buildings throughout the district (Recommendation 24). While TSPR understands that budgets are tight, the safety of students and staff must be given a high priority in the grand scheme of things. TSPR encourages the district to make this investment or ask community leaders to donate the fire alarms that will make these buildings safer for everyone involved.

Disaster Recovery

VISD officials said that they did not believe that a district of their size needed a disaster recovery plan (Recommendation 40) to protect the district's hardware from fire, tornado or other catastrophic events. VISD officials maintain that an alternative site could be established, and day-to-day operations of the district, such as cutting payroll checks and issuing report cards, could be continued while regular service is restored. The district does have backup for data, and much of their software runs on Regional Education Service Center software and hardware—but this does not ensure that all systems can be restored in a timely manner to guarantee that operations could continue with limited interruptions. Fortunately, though, Glen Rose ISD has a simple model for a disaster recovery plan on their Web site at:

<http://www.grisd.net/tech/support/GRISDDisasterRecoveryPlan.htm>.
VISD could use this template to create a disaster recovery plan and thereby protect the district against risks in the event of a catastrophe.

VISD's Ideas for Improving the Texas School Performance Review

The Texas School Performance Review team does not assume that its process for performing school reviews works so well that it cannot be improved. Therefore, as part of the progress report preparation, TSPR asked Veribest ISD staff members and administrators to discuss what went right and what went wrong—and how the process could be improved.

The feedback TSPR has received from other districts led to improvements in the review process. For example, early reports did not include implementation strategies, and districts told TSPR they needed help in getting started. As a result, the reports now include implementation strategies and timelines to complement the recommendations. Districts have told TSPR these blueprints are invaluable to achieving the desired results. It is important for TSPR to be aware of those things that did not work as intended so that the review process can be improved.

Administrators told the review team that while they did not accept all of the recommendations as being applicable directly to VISD's operations, many were important and helpful, particularly those that gave direction to the district's restoration of financial stability in the district. VISD officials said they appreciated the review, and added that they hoped the comptroller had confidence in district superintendents, administrators and boards that they would know what was needed to improve their districts and do them. TSPR certainly appreciates these comments, and while many district individuals are aware of problems facing their district, often the reviews give priority to accomplishing those tasks and provide administrators and the board with tangible reinforcement as they attempt to overcome the status quo.

One particular area of concern of VISD officials was the fact that when TSPR comes to a district, the individuals that often speak out—the 10 percenters—provide one-sided information. TSPR does hear from people on a wide variety of topics, many of which are one-sided or represent one point of view. However, when TSPR develops recommendations, the review team compares perceptions against the situational facts. When the facts substantiate the perceptions, then TSPR subsequently makes recommendations for change. In some cases, when the facts do not support the perceptions, TSPR makes every effort to clarify the situation so that those who are misinformed will better understand the issues.

Appendix A

Status of Recommendations and Savings

Chapter 1 District Organization and Management						
Rec #	General Recommendation	Implementation Status	TSPR's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Actual Savings (Costs) to Date	VISD's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Comments
1	Implement a strategic planning process that links the District/Campus Improvement Plan to the budget. p. 22	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district now includes compensatory education and the Gifted and Talented program among its goals and objectives in the district/campus planning process. The District/Campus Improvement Plan now is tied to the budget. Beginning in 2002-03, the principal meets three days per week with the campus site-based committee to discuss the fund/function components of the budget. The district's financial goal is to be debt-free by 2004-05. Because of limited funds,

						<p>the district's two priorities are to pay the bills and give teachers what they need to provide quality education to the students. In short, the campus and district plans now provide for budget decisions throughout education at Veribest ISD.</p>
2	<p>Encourage the public to attend school board meetings and ensure that adequate time is allowed to hear all public concerns. p. 24</p>	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	<p>VISD now actively encourages the public to attend board meetings. To prove this, VISD eliminated its public-speaker time limit for open forum and posts board meeting agendas in three locations within the community: the post office, the administration building door and the gymnasium. Yet, even with these changes, the district has only had five community members attend its board meetings since</p>

						July 2001.
3	Provide VISD's board with meaningful, well-organized information for each board meeting. p. 25	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	Board packets now include an agenda, explanatory notes and other pertinent information. The district also sends an information sheet to board members one week before each board meeting.
4	Prepare more detailed board minutes and improve the format. p. 28	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The superintendent implemented a new form that makes note taking easier and more accurate. In December 2001, the district began posting board-meeting minutes on the district's Web site. Board members received training on the new form by the Service Center in November 2001.
5	Use timed agendas to better manage board meetings. p. 29	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	Since implementing the new form, the district has not experienced bogged-down meetings. The board president also keeps the meetings on task

						and moving ahead by attending to the business at hand.
6	Place board policies on the district's Web site. p. 29	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district's Web Master class is in the process of placing board policies on the district's Web site. The district maintains a copy of board policies in the central office and in the principal's office. The district also initiated a community newspaper that includes board minute information.
7	Ensure that all board members are aware of continuing education requirements. p. 31	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district now vigilantly monitors the status of training credit hours for board members. Each month, the district reviews board training for the following month. The board members would have received all of their training credits this year but were not able to because the district lacked the funds to send them to the

						conference in Dallas. However, a representative from First Southwest presented information to board members about bonds. Board members will receive training locally via distance learning in November 2004.
8	Incorporate specific performance measures into the superintendent's performance evaluation to improve accountability. p. 34	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	In November 2001, the board adopted a new superintendent evaluation and appraisal instrument that the Texas Association of School Boards approved. This instrument identifies all criteria needed to adhere to the Texas School Performance Review's recommendation.
9	Develop staffing formulas for all employee categories and reduce staff accordingly. p. 38	Complete	\$544,374	\$194,833	\$651,500	The district now uses TEA's F.I.R.S.T. to gauge its ratios and staffing levels. Based on its review of its staffing levels, the district reduced staff by six positions.

10	Develop an employee handbook and distribute it to all employees. p. 39	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district developed an employee handbook that the board approved in August 2002. District administrators trained the staff on the handbook through in-service days.
11	Establish performance criteria for non-teaching staff members and school administrators and conduct regular employee evaluations. p. 40	Complete	(\$500)	\$0	\$0	In January 2002, the district finalized evaluation instruments for all staff, including an instrument for bus drivers.
12	Post news and bulletins on the district's Web site. p. 43	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district's technology coordinator now updates the Web site monthly and periodically posts news worthy items on it. Community volunteers gather information for the newsletter and Web site.
13	Establish partnerships with area businesses. p. 43	Not Implemented	\$0	\$0	\$0	VISD chose not to implement this recommendation because businesses within and around the Veribest

						community are few. A Vocational Education program offers VISD students a work-study program, but not within the district.
	Chapter 1 Total		\$543,874	\$194,833	\$651,500	

Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery						
Rec #	General Recommendation	Implementation Status	TSPR's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Actual Savings (Costs) to Date	VISD's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Comments
14	Review PEIMS data collection methods and establish a system to verify the accuracy of PEIMS data before submitting it to TEA. p. 54	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district now uses trained PEIMS personnel to collect and enter the data. The district pays a fee for a Region 15 representative to come to the district and check the PEIMS data for accuracy before the district submits the data to TEA. The superintendent, principal and teachers also review the PEIMS information for

						accuracy.
15	Employ fully certified teachers in their appropriate areas to the extent possible. p. 55	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	All teachers in the district now hold certificates. Two teachers passed their Excets and the VISD hired a certified science teacher when the coach left the district.
16	Closely review all opportunities and challenges regarding the operation of Veribest High School. p. 56	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	Each teacher and all board members set a goal to emphasize math and science. VISD offers AP classes, dual credit courses and distance learning. The distance learning allows the district to share Math and Science teachers with other districts. District leaders felt that the multi-grade classrooms recommendation would save the district money, but do not think the multi-grade teaching provides an adequate instructional setting. The district expressed

						comfort with the existing class sizes.
17	Develop functional curriculum guides and a curriculum management plan that includes all instructional programs. p. 58	Not Implemented	(\$600)	\$0	\$0	The district's new assistant principal plans to address this recommendation in the near future.
18	Effectively communicate with the Small Schools Cooperative to improve services. p. 64	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	VISD non-renewed the past Small Schools Cooperative (Co-op) director and instead hired a new director in February 2002. The superintendent communicates daily with the Co-op, to which the district pays \$200,000 annually.
19	Develop and implement pre-referral practices to ensure that all students are adequately served. p. 65	Not Implemented	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district's pre-referral practice consists of teachers evaluating students for referral to the Co-op and regular state-mandated referrals. VISD also initiates parent participation through conferences. The

						superintendent believes it is better to refer the students for Special Education services than to let special testing decide whether the student actually needs the services.
20	Fully implement the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students. p. 68					VISD's new principal fully implemented the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented (G/T) Students. The district is on track to identify approximately 5 percent of its students. G/T program committees are in place to process the nominations. Region 15 is assisting testing procedures. VISD plans to co-op its curriculum, share G/T field trips with other districts and incorporate distance learning in the curriculum. The district will
		In Progress	(\$6,000)	\$0	\$0	

						offer the gifted and talented program as a pullout program, three-days per week by May 2003.
21	Update the school-to-career program to meet TEA recommendations. p. 71	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district updated the school-to-career program and placed all of the information on its Web site. The district now offers dual credit courses.
22	Develop district/campus improvement plans that provide detailed information regarding compensatory funds to comply with state mandates. p. 74	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	VISD's administrators, teachers and site-based committees are revising district/campus improvement plans and targeting the specific areas where they need to spend compensatory education funds.
23	Practice tornado and fire evacuation drills. p. 77	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	During September 2001, the VISD administration met to discuss the importance of fire drills and emergency education. The district now conducts monthly fire drills and

						emergency evacuations.
24	Install fire alarms in all portable buildings. p. 78	Not Implemented	(\$2,340)	\$0	\$0	VISD applied for, but did not receive, a renovation grant to fund the installment of an alarm system in all portable buildings. As such, the district cannot afford an alarm system; however, it purchased compressed air horns that sound loudly and clearly throughout all portables.
	Chapter 2 Total		(\$8,940)	\$0	\$0	

Chapter 3 Financial Management						
Rec #	General Recommendation	Implementation Status	TSPR's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Actual Savings (Costs) to Date	VISD's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Comments
25	Transmit direct deposit payroll data to the bank electronically. p. 87	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	VISD began electronically depositing checks to individual banks in December 2001.
26	Form a committee of	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	Area superintendents,

	superintendents, Region 15 representatives and representatives from the Texas Education Agency to explore the opportunities for shared financial services. p. 90					Region 15 representatives and TEA representatives meet on a monthly basis to explore opportunities for shared financial services. The committee studies existing co-ops' services and explores the possibilities of creating other shared services. VISD shares nursing services with a neighboring district and a technology coordinator with Hawley ISD.
27	Develop a target balance for the general fund and manage to it. p. 92	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	VISD now manages its budget and expenses with the help of a cash flow chart. The district had a \$93,000 general fund balance deficit, but erased the deficit through staff reductions, retired district debt, and actually increased its general fund balance to

						\$324,000. VISD set its general fund balance target at \$500,000.
28	Monitor the budget closely and prepare budget amendments in a timely manner. p. 94					Because the district realized the seriousness of its financial situation, it cut the budget by more than 5 percent. The superintendent and business manager now closely monitor the budget with the help of a cash flow chart and prepare budget amendments in a timely manner. The superintendent also ensures adherence to the budget by signing all purchase orders. The business manager presents a monthly budget report to the board to show what percentage is spent. The board approves all budget amendments and agenda items.
		Complete		\$0	\$0	\$0

29	Develop and document procedures for critical accounting functions. p. 95	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district changed business managers and Region 15 trained the new business manager to develop procedures for critical accounting functions. The district regained control of its financial situation by using the following prioritized checklist: (1) reconciliation of bank statements, (2) budget awareness and (3) receipt and disbursement. VISD also has sold weighted average daily attendance to Austin ISD for two years.
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	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district participates in the state employee health insurance plan.
31	Strengthen controls for the	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district now works

	reconciliation of bank statements. p. 102					diligently with Region 15 regarding reconciliation of bank statements and now reconciles statements each month. VISD's auditor oversees and evaluates the reconciliation process.
32	Store cash receipts in a fireproof safe that is locked at all times. p. 103	Complete	(\$300)	(\$93)	(\$93)	In 2002, VISD purchased a fireproof safe and keeps it locked at all times. Only the business manager, the principal and the principal's secretary know the safe's combination. Two different people count cash receipts daily. The district sends cash to the bank daily.
33	Develop a system to tag, track and account for district fixed assets. p. 106	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district's auditor developed a system to tag, track and account for fixed assets. The fixed assets list includes, but is not limited to, items

						worth \$5,000.
34	Establish procedures to comply with state purchasing laws. p. 110					The district fully complies with state purchasing laws. VISD obtains bids or quotes from at least three different companies and uses the state bid list and the service center's co-op. The superintendent requires the use of purchase orders for all procurements, which he signs. The board approves all purchases valued at \$10,000 or more. The district also maintains a vendor list in the central office.
		Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	
	Chapter 3 Total		(\$300)	(\$93)	(\$93)	

Chapter 4 Operations						
Rec #	General Recommendation	Implementation Status	TSPR's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Actual Savings (Costs) to Date	VISD's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Comments
35	Develop a	In Progress	(\$6,000)	\$0	\$0	The district is

	facilities master plan that addresses all facility needs over the next five to seven years. p. 117					working on a facilities master plan. VISD surveyed teachers about future facilities needs, sites and enrollment growth, and then sent the responses to the board, but it has not held community meetings. The district is attempting to align facility needs with enrollment growth. The district is building a 17,800 square-foot facility to house a high school.	
36	Develop and maintain a facilities inventory. p. 118	In Progress		\$0	\$0	\$0	See comments for Recommendation 35.
37	Contract maintenance and repair for hazardous situations to outside professionals. p. 120	Complete		(\$10,000)	\$0	\$0	The superintendent said that VISD does not compromise the safety of students or employees by allowing unqualified personnel to perform repairs. While district maintenance staff performs minor repairs, professionals

						perform maintenance and repair for hazardous situations.
38	Participate in the Lone Star program administered by the State Energy Conservation Office to reduce energy costs. p. 121	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	After visiting with area school superintendents, VISD decided to implement its own energy-saving plan. The district uses teachers, maintenance staff and administrators as "watt watchers." These staff members ensure that thermostats are set properly. The district believes that setting a later date in August to start school will help cut energy costs. WTU Retail Energy visits the district and provides an energy conservation program. The district conducts random energy usage checks throughout its facilities. VISD also is contemplating the use of a private company to install a controlled

						heating and cooling system.
39	Involve schools in energy conservation. p. 122	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	See comments for Recommendation 38.
40	Develop a disaster recovery plan for technology. p. 127	Not Implemented	\$0	\$0	\$0	VISD officials believe that its size does not warrant a disaster recovery plan, but they contracted two individuals to update the district's technology plan and equipment, and to oversee repairs. VISD backs up, saves and mirrors its server daily. Region 1 houses RSCCC and other data such PEIMS, finance and payroll.
41	Develop minimum performance standards for personal computers and track vital statistics to ensure that obsolete equipment is retired. p. 128	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district's contractors are developing minimum performance standards for personal computers. VISD uses TIF grants to purchase new computers, but the district cannot purchase computers as needed without grants because of tight funds. The

						district uses all of its computers in some capacity.
42	Purchase refurbished buses and develop a bus replacement plan. p. 132	Not Implemented	\$40,500	\$0	\$0	While VISD officials realize the need for better buses, they found that affordable refurbished buses are in no better shape than their existing buses. The district traded a bus with San Angelo ISD (SAISD) for a bus that SAISD was putting on auction.
43	Coordinate an expanded driver training program with other districts in Tom Green County. p. 133	Complete	(\$600)	\$0	\$0	Region 15 provides bus driver training for VISD.
44	Adopt a program to perform regular preventative maintenance inspections on each school bus in the fleet. p. 134	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district's transportation director/mechanic now inspects the buses and checks belts, tires and fluids on a daily basis. The director also meets with drivers daily to examine bus exteriors. The buses undergo 5,000-mile oil and belt changes.
45	Establish evaluation measures and	In Progress	(\$460)	\$0	\$0	VISD officials developed an evaluation

	track data to analyze cafeteria operations. p. 142					instrument for cafeteria staff and encourage the staff to attend training sessions and seminars.
46	Implement a staffing productivity measure and reduce cafeteria staffing accordingly. p. 144	Complete	\$85,877	\$11,656	\$52,455	In May 2002, the district reduced its cafeteria staff by one position.
47	Purchase a point-of-sale system for food services. p. 146	Not Implemented	(\$2,400)	\$0	\$0	VISD attempted a co-op arrangement, but it increased district costs. The district has not considered purchasing a point-of-sale system, but plans to revisit this recommendation in the future.
48	Annually assess meal rates to ensure that costs are recovered for full-price meals. p. 147	Complete	\$36,177	\$6,237	\$29,939	At the start of 2002-03, the district increased all meal prices as follows: Elementary from \$1.00 to \$1.25; Secondary from \$1.25 to \$1.50; and Adult from \$2.00 to \$3.00.
49	Turn off the vending machines 30 minutes before the first cafeteria serving time until 30 minutes after the last cafeteria	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	As of January 2002, VISD's principal places tape over the money deposit slots of vending machines one

	<p>serving time. p. 148</p>					<p>hour before the cafeteria serving time until one hour after the last cafeteria time. The district does not turn them off because that effort is too labor intensive.</p>
50	<p>Use daily attendance information by grade to determine the amount of food to prepare for daily lunch menus. p. 149</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>Every day, each teacher fills out an attendance slip that provides spaces for the number of students eating plus the teacher. From this slip, cafeteria personnel calculate an average number of meals to prepare daily.</p>
51	<p>Annually conduct a survey of VISD students to find out what food items they would like to be served for lunch. p. 150</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>The board opted for a suggestion box instead of an annual survey. Not surprisingly, students' favorite foods (pizza and burritos) do not meet USDA requirements.</p>
52	<p>Aggressively seek to identify and qualify all eligible students for free- or reduced-price meals. p. 151</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>\$70,300</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>The superintendent said the district went on a mission with this recommendation and enlisted the assistance of teachers, the principal and</p>

						campus secretaries. The district sent letters to parents explaining the importance of identifying and qualifying all eligible students for free- or reduced-priced meals. As a result, the district increased the percentage of qualified students to 40 percent in 2001-02 and to 43 percent in 2002-03.
53	Enter into a countywide food-purchasing cooperative. p. 152	Not Implemented	\$21,210	\$0	\$0	The district examined this recommendation and found that it could purchase food cheaper from Ben E. Keith.
Chapter 4 Total			\$234,604	\$17,893	\$82,394	

Totals			
TSPR's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Actual Savings (Costs) to Date	VISD's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	
\$769,238	\$212,633	\$733,801	