TRANSMITTAL LETTER

August 21, 2002

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

Fellow Texans:

I am pleased to present my performance review of the Donna Independent School District (DISD).
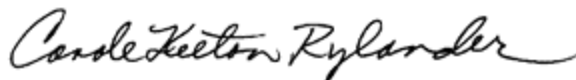
This review is intended to help DISD hold the line on costs, streamline operations, and improve services to ensure that more of every education dollar goes directly into the classroom with the teacher and children, where it belongs. To aid in this task, I contracted with Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

I have made a number of recommendations to improve DISD'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 105 detailed recommendations that could save DISD more than $17.3 million over the next 5 years, while reinvesting nearly $3.2 million to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to reach more than $14.1 million that the district can redirect to the classroom.

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

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

Sincerely,

Carole Keeton Rylander
Texas Comptroller

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary Overview
Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation (Exhibit 5)

In March 2002, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander began a review of the Donna Independent School District (DISD). Based upon more than six months of work, this report identifies DISD's exemplary programs and suggests concrete ways to improve district operations. If fully implemented, the Comptroller's 105 recommendations could result in net savings of more than $14.1 million 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 TSPR more valuable to the state's school districts. With the perspective of a former teacher and school board president, the Comptroller has vowed to use TSPR to increase local school districts' accountability to the communities they serve.

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

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

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

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

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

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

TSPR In Donna ISD

Comptroller Rylander selected Donna for a review in January 2002 and began onsite work in March 2002. The Comptroller's office selected Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., an Austin based consulting firm, to assist the agency with the review at a cost of $160,000. The review team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents, business leaders and community members and held public forums at two schools; Caseras/Rivas Elementary and W. A. Todd Ninth Grade Center on March 26 and 27, 2002 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

To obtain additional comments, the review team conducted several focus group sessions with teachers, principals, parents and community members. In addition, to ensure that all stakeholder groups had input, TSPR sent surveys to students, parents, teachers, principals/assistant principals and central administrators/support staff.

A total of 413 respondents answered surveys. Seventy-five administrative/support staff; five principals/assistant principals; 30 teachers; 200 parents; and 103 students completed written surveys as part of the review. Details from the surveys and public forums appear in **Appendices A** through **F**.

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).

DISD selected peer districts for comparisons based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The selected peer districts were Eagle Pass ISD, Edgewood ISD, Mission Consolidated, Rio Grande City Consolidated and San Benito

Consolidated. TSPR also compared DISD to district averages in TEA's Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1), to which Donna ISD belongs, and to the state as a whole.

During its six-month review, TSPR developed 105 recommendations to improve operations and save taxpayers more than $17.3million by 2006-07. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach more than $14.1 million by 2006-07.

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

Acknowledgments

The Comptroller's office and Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., wish to express appreciation to the DISD Board of Trustees, Superintendent Juan O. Garcia, district employees, students, parents and community residents who helped during the review. Special thanks go to Mr. Agapito Navarro Jr., assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, who served as DISD's liaison. Mr. Navarro arranged for office space, equipment and meeting rooms, organized the findings meeting, and responded to data requests and accommodated the review team's needs.

Donna ISD

The City of Donna is located on the Texas/Mexico BORDER=1 in the center of the Rio Grande Valley. Located about 11 miles east of McAllen, in the county of Hidalgo, the city is bordered by Weslaco to the east, Pharr, San Juan and Alamo, to the west and Edinburg to the north. Donna has a population of 12,895 residents, with agriculture being the major economic base.

In 2001-02, DISD is the 82nd largest school district in the state, serving a population of more than 10,451 students in 15 schools: 11 elementary schools, two middle schools, one high schools and one ninth grade center. DISD's students are 98.6 percent Hispanic, 1.2 percent Anglo, 0.1 percent African American and 0.1 percent Other. More than 90 percent of the district's students are economically disadvantaged. The ethnicity of teachers includes 81.4 percent Hispanic, 15.4 percent Anglo, 0.7 percent African American and 2.5 percent Other.

Exhibit 1 details the demographic characteristics of DISD's students and its peer school districts.

District	Enrollment	Ethnic Group				Economically Disadvantaged
	Number	African American	Hispanic	Anglo	Other	Percent
Edgewood	13,435	1.6%	97.1%	1.2%	0.1%	96.3%
Mission	13,122	0.1%	97.4%	2.5%	0.0%	82.2%
Eagle Pass	12,778	0.1%	97.1%	1.3%	1.5%	91.1%
Donna	**10,451**	**0.1%**	**98.6%**	**1.2%**	**0.1%**	**90.0%**
San Benito	9,102	0.1%	97.4%	2.4%	0.0%	85.7%
Rio Grande City	8,906	0.0%	99.6%	0.2%	0.2%	86.6%
Region 1	**314,566**	**0.2%**	**95.9%**	**3.5%**	**0.4%**	**84.5%**
State	**4,150,741**	**14.4%**	**41.7%**	**40.8%**	**3.1%**	**50.0%**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 2001-02.

In 2001-02, TEA rated Donna ISD as *Academically Acceptable*, with no *Exemplary*, two *Recognized*, 12 *Academically Acceptable* and no *Low-Performing* schools.

DISD's Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) performance has improved by 3.6 percentage points from 1996-97 through 2000-01 compared with 8.9 percentage points for the state and 11.4 percentage points for the region. DISD's peer districts improved by 6 to 21.2 percentage points during that period **(Exhibit 2)**. DISD's overall 2000-01 TAAS passing rate of 61.3 percent is still more than 20 percentage points behind the statewide average of 82.1 percent.

Exhibit 2
Percent of Students Passing TAAS, All Tests Taken (Grades 3-8 and 10)

DISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and the State
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98*	1998-99**	1999-2000**	2000-01**	Percentage Point Change
Mission	76.6%	80.7%	82.1%	80.2%	82.6%	6.0%
San Benito	73.5%	81.1%	79.2%	80.1%	85.0%	11.5%
Eagle Pass	64.3%	71.7%	74.2%	78.4%	78.6%	14.3%
Donna	**57.7%**	**60.8%**	**61.9%**	**55.9%**	**61.3%**	**3.6%**
Rio Grande City	56.3%	60.5%	61.0%	64.9%	68.3%	12.0%
Edgewood	55.1%	62.0%	70.2%	74.5%	76.3%	21.2%
Region 1	**66.5%**	**72.0%**	**73.9%**	**74.6%**	**77.9%**	**11.4%**
State	**73.2%**	**77.7%**	**78.3%**	**79.9%**	**82.1%**	**8.9%**

Source: TEA, Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 1996-97 through 2000-01.
*Recalculated from original posting to include special education and grades 3 and 4 Spanish TAAS.
** Recalculated from original posting to include special education and grades 3 through 6 Spanish TAAS.

DISD served 10,451 students during 2001-02, an increase of 5.9 percent over the last five years **(Exhibit 3)**.District officials expect enrollment to continue to increase in the future.

Exhibit 3
DISD Student Enrollment History

School Year	Actual Student Enrollment	Percent Change from 1997-98
1997-98	9,864	NA
1998-99	9,888	0.2%
1999-2000	10,013	1.5%

2000-01	10,332	4.7%
2001-02	10,451	5.9%

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

In 2001-02,the district had 1,865 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees; slightly more than 38.5 percent are teachers. Staffing trends in the district from 1997-98 through 2001-02 indicates that the number of central administrators and educational aides has decreased, while all other categories of the district's staff have increased. The largest percentage and number increases are found in campus administrators and auxiliary staff.

The district's 2001-02 budget is approximately $72.6 million, an increase of 5.9 percent over the 2000-01 annual budget of $68.5 million. DISD spends more than $55 million, or 75.9 percent of its total budget, on payroll costs.

DISD is a property-poor district, ranking within the lowest 2 percent of school districts in the state. DISD's 2001 tax rate is $1.49 per $100 taxable value; $1.49 for Maintenance and Operations and zero for debt service. In 2001-02, DISD's preliminary property value is $44,789 per student, compared to the state average of $236,543 per student.

The district has passed three bond elections in the past five years and the district's fund balance improved from a deficit of $2.8 million in 1997 to $5.1 million in 2001-02, still below the optimum balance TEA recommends, but improving.

TSPR also found several exemplary programs and practices being carried out by dedicated and hardworking employees of the district; however, the district is facing a number of challenges including:

- improving student academic performance;
- improving accountability and internal controls; and
- improving operating efficiencies.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Improve Student Academic Performance

Develop and update curriculum guides and ensure vertical alignment across all grades. The district does not have curriculum guides for 308 of its courses. None of the 53 courses offered to middle school students have curriculum guides and of the 298 high school courses taught, only 67 guides exist. Curriculum guides serve as work plans for teachers to use in

the classroom and provide direction on student objectives, prerequisite skills, instructional materials, resources, classroom strategies and assessment methods. In addition, not all the curriculum is aligned vertically so that the knowledge base of instruction builds from one grade level to the next. Developing and vertically aligning curriculum guides for all courses will assist the district in focusing its efforts on improving student performance.

Implement strategies to improve student performance on college entrance exams. DISD students' performance on college entrance exams is below regional and state averages. DISD's average score on the SAT (880) was 110 points lower than the state average (990) and 35 points lower than the regional average (915). In addition, the district's average ACT score (16.4) was 3.9 points lower than the state average (20.3) and 1.3 points lower than the regional average (17.7). By providing added resources like additional staff development geared to specific strategies for test taking, providing teachers with a stipend to take on added tutoring, purchasing SAT/ACT materials, offering students a preparation course and increasing parent and student awareness in middle school, the district can assist students in increasing their performance.

Develop strategies to reduce the number of students being held back or retained each year. DISD's retention rates are higher than the state average for all grades except kindergarten and grade 5. In 2000-01, DISD retained 11.8 percent of grade 6 students compared to the state average of 1.6 percent and 13.9 percent of grade 8 students compared to the state's 1.9 percent. DISD administrators and teachers attribute the high retention rates to students' failing to master the core subjects in the earlier grades, a lack of parental involvement and the lack of alignment between elementary and middle school curriculum. By revising and consistently enforcing the district's retention policies, identifying students at-risk of failing early, including specific instructional strategies in the campus and district improvement plans and targeting staff development on strategies for lowering retention, the district can increase student success and academic achievement.

Establish a taskforce to compile and study data on the number and reasons students are leaving school. DISD does not accurately track students leaving the district and students remaining in grade 9. Only 62 percent of students who attended grade 8 in 1996-97 were in the 2001 graduating class; 272 students fewer than when they started in grade 8. The district in contrast only reported 184 student leavers during the same timeframe. By establishing a task force of teachers in grades 8 through 12, high school administrators and GED teachers to compile, develop, analyze and implement a detailed tracking system for all students on leaver data, the district should be able to fully and accurately track and report leaver

and dropout counts to TEA. More importantly, the district can identify sooner those students who might not graduate or earn a GED certificate, or drop out of school altogether.

Improve Accountability and Internal Controls

Develop board operating procedures and a self-monitoring system. The board is becoming more involved in the management and operations of the district which, at times has resulted in the board directing administrative decisions, controlling staff appointments and salary increases and micromanaging district affairs. Developing board operating procedures detailing how to handle hiring, and appropriate communication for holding executive sessions can assist board members to more effectively carry out their role as policy makers.

Create an in-house counsel position. DISD's legal expenses have increased steadily over the past six years and the district continues to spend a disproportionate amount of its annual budget for attorney fees. In 1995-96 the district was spending approximately $27 per student or more than $254,000 on attorney fees. The figure escalated in 2001-02 to $62 per student or more than $648,000. Hiring an in-house attorney who is experienced in school law and statutory requirements of school governance can provide the district with lower legal fees and potentially help reduce the number of lawsuits and grievance proceedings while saving DISD more than $103,000 annually.

Restructure the bank depository agreement and sweep the daily balances from all district accounts into overnight investments. DISD is not maximizing interest income available from funds on deposit in the district's bank. By restructuring its compensating balance agreement to include monthly interest earnings on balances and nightly sweeps of all idle funds in the district's accounts, DISD can realize more than $275,000 in additional interest in five years without sacrificing its ability to meet its cash obligations.

Create a long-range financial plan to achieve an optimum fund balance and report monthly to the board. DISD's general fund balance declined sharply in 1997 to a deficit of $2.8 million and the district has since increased the balance to more than $5.1 million in 2001. However, this is nearly $3.9 million less than the nearly $9 million optimum fund balance established by TEA. By creating a financial plan and establishing a goal for fund balance as a percentage of the general fund expenditures, the board and administration can better monitor the impact of its decisions on the fund balance.

Hire an internal auditor who reports directly to the board. DISD does not have an internal auditor to monitor the administration's compliance with board policies, regulations or laws. Periodic audits of campus activity funds are not being conducted and periodic test counts of warehouse inventories are not being performed to ensure compliance with the competitive procurement laws. Hiring an internal auditor would improve internal controls in the district, provide a safeguard against theft or fraud and ensure that the district is complying with local policies and state laws.

Improve Operating Efficiencies

Implement staffing allocation formulas for all employee categories. DISD does not use staffing formulas to determine staffing needs for areas other than teachers and is overstaffed in many departments. For example, DISD has more clerical, food services, maintenance and custodians than needed. Implementing a staffing allocation formula will ensure that staff are equitably allocated to all departments.

Develop a long-range facilities plan. The district is currently undertaking a $65 million construction program for several new schools, yet it lacks an integrated, coordinated approach for planning, managing and controlling its construction program. In 2000-01 this lack of planning led to delays and cost overruns and ultimately resulted in the district only being able to construct three of the four planned schools. A long-range facilities plan can improve a district's management ability by allowing better scheduling and sequencing of events and can provide a monitoring mechanism to hold the line in costs.

Stagger school start times and establish bus route schedules to ensure students get to and from school on time. While school start times are staggered to a degree, the bell times are not set far enough apart for all buses to make multiple trips nor do drivers have schedules for each route. As a result, parents and students do not know when buses will pick them up in the morning or drop them off in the evening. Some students wait for long periods of time after school before a bus arrives to take them home. Setting and monitoring schedules can help transportation staff identify when schedules are not reasonable and need to be modified. Adjusting bell times to allow buses to run at least two trips each day will also increase the Transportation Department's efficiency and ensure that students get to and from school in a timely manner, and without unnecessary delays.

Add security cameras to schools with a higher risk of misbehavior or criminal activity and adjust the number of security staff. DISD uses a large number of security guards and a minimal amount of technology to perform routine surveillance. Instead of security cameras, the district uses security guards and golf carts to patrol the school grounds. Many districts

monitor student and visitor behavior with a combination of video security systems, security staff and peace officers. By using a combination of security guards and surveillance cameras the district can provide consistent coverage to wider areas with fewer staff.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

TSPR identified numerous "best practices" in DISD. Through commendations in each chapter, the report highlights DISD's model programs, operations and services provided by DISD 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:

DISD's Career and Technology Education (CATE) programs prepare students for high-tech employment. CATE participants in DISD are offered A+ certification courses. The A+ designation certifies that an individual has achieved entry-level knowledge as a computer service technician. Major technology vendors like IBM, Microsoft and Compaq recognize A+ certification as an important selection criterion when hiring technicians.

DISD involves its CATE Advisory Council in program planning and guidance. DISD effectively involves its CATE Advisory Council in program planning and evaluation. The Advisory Council includes 24 members: community members, business, industry and labor representatives, parents of CATE students who are members of special populations and persons knowledgeable about at-risk students and student representatives. The council addresses training needs, curriculum and public relations. In addition, council members also team up with CATE teachers to review program operations including the curriculum and update teachers on technology that industry and business is using.

The district has implemented a number of initiatives designed to control workers' compensation costs. DISD significantly reduced the average workers' compensation cost per claim by 73.1 percent from 1998-99 through 2000-01 by instituting a return-to-work program. The Workers' Compensation secretary maintains contact with the injured employee while the employee is off work and follows up with the physicians to track the employee's progress and to determine if the employee can be allowed to reassume light duty until the employee can resume normal work duties.

DISD effectively monitors the use and acquisition of copiers. The DISD's purchasing agent began monitoring the district's copy machines' use and acquisition in 1995 and has developed specifications for a high-speed

copier and a mid-size copier. Through this process, the district has not only identified a standard copier to be used districtwide but has also saved nearly $290,000 on copiers since 1997.

The creation of a Technician Support Specialist position has increased the service level provided by the Technology Department. DISD's Technology Department improved the efficiency and effectiveness of its field technicians by creating a position of Technician Support Specialist. The Technician Support Specialist assists field technicians with inventory management and the coordination of service repairs for warranty equipment. The Technician Support Specialist's role has also facilitated greater responsiveness to the district's computer problems by reducing the number of administrative tasks for field technicians and allowing them to focus primarily on technical issues.

Technology "Trade Shows" provide district staff an opportunity to review emerging technology. DISD's Technology Department hosts computer "Trade Shows" every other year to educate district employees about emerging technology. Potential vendors are invited to display and present their hardware and software in the Technology Department while designated teachers, librarians, administrators and Technology Department staff review the technology and ask questions of the vendors. Trade Shows give district personnel the ability to obtain hands on experience with the technology on display and the district is able to choose the "best-in-class" products at the best price.

DISD uses summer employment as an incentive to reduce food service employee absenteeism.The Food Service director has established a work attendance program during the school year as the primary factor in selecting employees to work in the summer program. The district's Food Service Department employs 24 out of 129 staff members to serve in the summer feeding program. Since its inception, employee attendance rates have increased significantly during the school year and costs for substitutes have gone down.

DISD's recognized mentoring program, Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL), has brought additional grant opportunities to the district. DISD participates in the Peer Assistance and Leadership Program (PAL), a mentoring program that pairs high school students with middle and elementary school students as role models and friends. The DISD program won recognition due to its high participation rates and on-line access. As a result of the recognition, the program received a $5,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Department to build a local wildlife trail. Local organizations have also expressed an interest in partnering with DISD's PAL program, bringing a potential for expansion and additional leadership opportunities for district students.

DISD developed its own police department through the federal COPS In Schools grant. In cooperation with the city Police Department, the district applied for and received a $563,000 federal COPS In Schools grant that funds five peace officers and a chief of police who are stationed at schools to provide rapid response to criminal activity. Developing a district police force has expanded the scope of available law enforcement solutions for DISD.

Savings and Investment Requirements

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

TSPR recommended 105 ways to save DISD more than $17.3 million in gross savings over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities will cost the district nearly $3.2 million during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of more than $14.1 million by 2006-07 (**Exhibit 4**).

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

Year	Total
2002-03 Initial Annual Net Savings	$1,313,811
2003-04 Additional Annual Net Savings	$3,121,979
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	$3,303,709
2005-06 Additional Annual Net Savings	$3,426,483
2006-07 Additional Annual Net Savings	$3,429,563
One Time Net Savings (Costs)	($475,859)
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2002-2007	**$14,119,686**

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 5**. The page number for each recommendation is listed in the summary chart for reference purposes. Detailed implementation strategies, timelines and the estimates of fiscal impact follow each recommendation in this report. The implementation section associated with each recommendation highlights the actions necessary to achieve the proposed results. Some items should be implemented immediately, some over the next year or two and some over several years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exhibit 5
Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

	Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total 5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1 District Organization and Management								
1	Develop operating procedures and a self-monitoring system for the board to ensure all board members understand their role and responsibilities. p. 31	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2	Strictly enforce anti-nepotism policies and chart board/employee relationships to ensure compliance with state law and board policies. p. 33	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
3	Establish a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of educating board members about the major issues and challenges facing the district. p. 34	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
4	Establish annual accountability and performance goals	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

#	Recommendation							
	for the superintendent. p. 37							
5	Adopt an organizational structure that will support the district's goals and objectives. p. 39	$66,628	$99,942	$99,942	$99,942	$99,942	$466,396	$0
6	Use staffing standards to allocate principal and assistant principal positions to schools. p. 42	$0	$191,841	$191,841	$191,841	$191,841	$767,364	$0
7	Create an in-house counsel position requiring experience in labor and school law to assist the board with governance, compliance and litigation. p. 46	$17,213	$103,277	$103,277	$103,277	$103,277	$430,321	$0
8	Develop a district strategic plan that is tied to the budget and form a strategic planning committee with broad representation from the district and community. p. 50	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals-Chapter 1	**$83,841**	**$395,060**	**$395,060**	**$395,060**	**$395,060**	**$1,664,081**	**$0**
Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery								
9	Develop and update curriculum guides for all courses and ensure vertical alignment	($111,575)	($109,575)	($109,575)	$0	$0	($330,725)	$0

	across all grade levels. p. 65							
10	Evaluate, implement and monitor effective strategies to improve student performance. p. 68	($12,000)	($24,000)	($24,000)	($24,000)	($24,000)	($108,000)	$0
11	Clarify retention policies and develop strategies to reduce the number of students being held back in a grade. p. 71	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
12	Coordinate the summer school curriculum and tests with the district's regular curriculum and continuously monitor program effectiveness. p. 73	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($22,500)	($2,650)
13	Establish a taskforce to compile and study data on the number and reasons students are leaving school. p. 77	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
14	Improve student performance on college entrance tests by providing staff development to designated teachers on test preparation and offering a preparation course. p. 79	($30,000)	($33,750)	($33,750)	($33,750)	($33,750)	($165,000)	($9,450)

15	Develop a comprehensive program evaluation system including procedures for monitoring the implementation of corrective actions. p. 83	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
16	Centralize the district's grant application and writing process through the Grant Writing Office. p. 84	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
17	Develop and implement a plan to increase the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses and passing exams. p. 89	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
18	Align compensatory education programs with the regular curriculum to address TAKS and TAAS objectives in which students need assistance. p. 96	($49,250)	($10,100)	$0	$0	$0	($59,350)	$0
19	Establish a multi-step pre-referral process and provide uniform training in the referral and identification of special education students. p. 105	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

20	Support bilingual teacher certification and training, material development and effective program delivery. p. 111	$0	($38,000)	($34,409)	($20,510)	($20,510)	($113,429)	$0
21	Increase library collection size to meet acceptable standards. p. 122	$0	($25,348)	($25,348)	($25,348)	($25,348)	($101,392)	$0
	Totals-Chapter 2	**($207,325)**	**($245,273)**	**($231,582)**	**($108,108)**	**($108,108)**	**($900,396)**	**($9,450)**

Chapter 3 Community Involvement

22	Open lines of communications among all divisions responsible for the Community and Parental Involvement Department and develop joint departmental goals. p. 133	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
23	Centrally inventory and evaluate all community involvement programs. p. 135	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
24	Adjust the Parent Education Centers' schedules and hours of operation to promote parent participation. p. 138	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
25	Develop a central tracking list of business partnerships. p. 139	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

26	Develop a system to allow and/or require all departments and divisions to update content and link to pertinent information for the community involvement programs. p. 142	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
27	Conduct a series of public forums to provide parents, staff and the community an additional method for communicating with the superintendent and board members. p. 143	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals-Chapter 3	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**

Chapter 4 Personnel Management

28	Centralize personnel and human resources functions under a single Human Resources Department and provide appropriate staff training. p. 151	($2,700)	($2,700)	($2,700)	($2,700)	($2,700)	($13,500)	($635)
29	Maintain files for all litigation and formal employee complaints and monitor them closely to try and resolve grievance issues before they become litigated	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	disputes. p. 156							
30	Develop new job descriptions for each position in the district and update them regularly, especially when job duties change. p. 158	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
31	Use staffing allocation formulas to determine the number of positions within each department and eliminate excess positions. p. 168	$992,746	$1,489,119	$1,489,119	$1,489,119	$1,489,119	$6,949,222	$0
32	Request a classification audit and compensation study and reassign duties to equalize pay with performance. p. 171	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($15,000)
33	Assign responsibility for notifying and tracking FMLA leave to a Personnel Department staff member. p. 173	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
34	Limit access of personnel files and confidential information to Personnel Department employees and senior staff. p. 174	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
35	Track the	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	effectiveness of individual recruiting initiatives. p. 176							
36	Develop a plan that expands recruitment efforts to hire more certified teachers. p. 178	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
37	Reduce the use of regular substitutes by improving teacher attendance. p. 180	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
38	Perform reference checks on all new employees and work with local law enforcement to ensure notification of pending criminal charges for current employees. p. 181	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
39	Assign responsibility for overseeing staff development to the Personnel director and create a staff development plan. p. 184	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals–Chapter 4	**$990,046**	**$1,486,419**	**$1,486,419**	**$1,486,419**	**$1,486,419**	**$6,935,722**	**($15,635)**
Chapter 5 Facilities Use and Management								
40	Develop a long-range facilities plan. p. 195	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($30,000)
41	Implement a process to evaluate the suitability and	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($20,000)

	value of potential building sites before the district purchases land. p. 198							
42	Hire an experienced construction manager to oversee the district's building program. p. 199	($24,451)	($48,902)	($48,902)	($48,902)	($48,902)	($220,059)	$0
43	Adopt staffing standards for the Maintenance Department. p. 202	$133,456	$266,912	$266,912	$266,912	$266,912	$1,201,104	$0
44	Develop a preventive maintenance plan to help reduce maintenance costs. p. 204	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
45	Use the existing work order system to track work orders and preventive maintenance needs by facility, frequency and cost. p. 206	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($3,200)
46	Use custodial staffing formulas to staff schools and other facilities. p. 208	$284,368	$568,737	$568,737	$568,737	$568,737	$2,559,316	$0
47	Request that an energy consultant conduct an energy management audit of all DISD facilities and create an energy	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	management plan. p. 210							
	Totals-Chapter 5	**$393,373**	**$786,747**	**$786,747**	**$786,747**	**$786,747**	**$3,540,361**	**($53,200)**

Chapter 6 Asset and Risk Management

48	Restructure the next bank depository agreement to combine district accounts, sweep all balances into overnight investments and include pay-per-service fees. p. 218	$0	$68,831	$68,831	$68,831	$68,831	$275,324	$0
49	Segregate the cash management and bookkeeping functions by immediately training the new accountant to reconcile all bank accounts. p. 220	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
50	Centralize the activity fund accounting and combine all activity fund bank accounts into one account that can be swept into overnight investments. p. 224	$0	$6,310	$6,310	$6,310	$6,310	$25,240	$0
51	Prepare weekly, monthly and annual cash flow forecasts. p. 227	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
52	Conduct a cost benefit analysis of the district's self-insured plan and	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	the state health plan and decide whether to enroll or remain self-funded. p. 233							
53	Draft district policy to reserve sufficient funds to cover accrued liabilities in the self-funded health plan, as recommended in the annual actuarial report. p. 235	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
54	Establish a comprehensive fixed asset management system and conduct an annual inventory. p. 243	($15,000)	($7,500)	($5,000)	($5,000)	($5,000)	($37,500)	$0
55	Include proficiency in GASB 34 compliance in Fixed Asset employees' job descriptions and performance evaluations. p. 244	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
56	Assign individual accountability for fixed asset custody to principals and department heads. p. 245	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals-Chapter 6	**($15,000)**	**$67,641**	**$70,141**	**$70,141**	**$70,141**	**$263,064**	**$0**
Chapter 7 Financial Management								
57	Restructure the Business Office to reduce the assistant	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	superintendent for Business and Finance's span of control. p. 256							
58	Create a long-range financial plan to achieve an optimum fund balance and report the fund balance monthly to the board. p. 258	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
59	Budget indirect costs in the general fund and allocate the costs to the appropriate federal program. p. 262	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
60	Establish timelines for the expenditure of federal funds. p. 265	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
61	Discontinue using student workers to file payroll records. p. 266	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
62	Require the board to meet to approve the annual audit in time to meet the statutory deadline. p. 267	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
63	Adopt a policy assigning responsibility for corrective action plans and require progress reports to the board on their implementation. p. 269	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
64	Hire an internal	($45,091)	($60,122)	($60,122)	($60,122)	($60,122)	($285,580)	$0

	auditor who reports directly to the board. p. 271						
65	Enter into an interlocal agreement with Hidalgo County to collect the district's property taxes. p. 275	$0	$87,323	$87,323	$87,323	$87,323	$349,292	$0
	Totals-Chapter 7	**($45,091)**	**$27,201**	**$27,201**	**$27,201**	**$27,201**	**$63,713**	**$0**
Chapter 8 Purchasing and Warehousing							
66	Use the online approval function of the district's purchasing system to reduce the time and effort required to issue a purchase order. p. 285	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
67	Update the Purchasing handbook every two years or when a major change in the law or district policy occur and post it on the district Web site. p. 286	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
68	Develop procedures to phase-in the purchase of supplies on a just-in-time basis. p. 288	$7,909	$94,904	$94,904	$94,904	$94,904	$387,525	$13,642
69	Purchase an automated textbook tracking system. p. 292	$0	($200)	($200)	($200)	($200)	($800)	($1,295)

70	Develop a contract calendar and ensure that it is monitored and updated as necessary. p. 294	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals Chapter 8	**$7,909**	**$94,704**	**$94,704**	**$94,704**	**$94,704**	**$386,725**	**$12,347**
Chapter 9 Computers and Technology								
71	Create a Technology director position that reports directly to the superintendent. p. 303	($31,920)	($76,609)	($76,609)	($76,609)	($76,609)	($338,352)	$0
72	Establish minimum standards of technological proficiency for district teachers and administrators. p. 307	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
73	Document and publish an annual technology plan designed to implement specific goals from the long-range technology plan. p. 309	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
74	Use problem-tracking software to better manage technology support. p. 311	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($9,910)
75	Document the district's network configuration. p. 314	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
76	Create a disaster	($893)	($85)	($85)	($85)	($85)	($1,233)	$0

#	Recommendation							
	recovery plan and improve the data backup process. p. 316							
77	Use industry standard tools to efficiently manage and monitor the network. p. 318	($20,029)	($15,034)	($15,034)	($15,034)	($15,034)	($80,165)	$0
78	Establish and efficiently apply standard desktop configurations. p. 320	($6,090)	($6,090)	($6,090)	($6,090)	($3,710)	($28,070)	$0
79	Purchase and install software to enable remote control of district computers. p. 321	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($42,785)
	Totals Chapter 9	**($58,932)**	**($97,817)**	**($97,817)**	**($97,817)**	**($95,437)**	**($447,820)**	**($52,695)**
Chapter 10 Transportation								
80	Reassign Transportation management duties to the director of Maintenance and Transportation and refocus the Transportation supervisor on staff supervision. p. 337	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
81	Create driver positions to cover all routes and driver absences and eliminate unnecessary general mechanic positions. p. 339	$0	$15,501	$15,501	$15,501	$15,501	$62,004	$0
82	Discontinue the practice of	$159,758	$319,515	$319,515	$319,515	$319,515	$1,437,818	$0

	assigning Transportation staff to additional unproductive duties. p. 340							
83	Develop staff teams in the Transportation Department to facilitate communication, increase trust and resolve problems and misunderstandings between staff and management. p. 342	($3,500)	($4,375)	($4,375)	($4,375)	($4,375)	($21,000)	$0
84	Develop and distribute a Transportation Department employee handbook documenting standard operating procedures. p. 344	$0	($700)	$0	($700)	$0	($1,400)	$0
85	Stagger school start times and establish bus route schedules to ensure students get to and from school on time. p. 347	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
86	Expand the regular and special education driver and bus aide training program and create a training manual. p. 349	$0	($10,584)	($10,584)	($10,584)	($10,584)	($42,336)	$0
87	Develop incentives	$0	($6,496)	($6,496)	($6,496)	($6,496)	($25,984)	$0

	and procedures for obtaining and maintaining maintenance certifications. p. 351							
88	Schedule annual bus safety presentations at all DISD schools. p. 352	$0	($2,940)	($2,940)	($2,940)	($2,940)	($11,760)	$0
89	Adopt a 15-year bus replacement policy. p. 355	$0	($175,320)	($175,320)	($175,320)	($175,320)	($701,280)	$0
90	Purchase and implement a vehicle maintenance information system. p. 356	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($650)
91	Conduct regular preventive maintenance inspections on school buses and general-service vehicles. p. 359	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals-Chapter 10	**$156,258**	**$134,601**	**$135,301**	**$134,601**	**$135,301**	**$696,062**	**($650)**
Chapter 11 Food Service								
92	Establish staffing and productivity measures and adjust staffing levels to achieve adopted standards. p. 371	$0	$252,212	$252,212	$252,212	$252,212	$1,008,848	$0
93	Analyze the effectiveness of storekeeper positions and transfer	$0	$61,857	$61,857	$61,857	$61,857	$247,428	$0

#	Description							
	corresponding duties to other district personnel. p. 372							
94	Develop and implement strategies to increase student lunch participation. p. 378	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
95	Solicit feedback to develop strategies to improve food quality and increase student participation. p. 380	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals-Chapter 11	**$0**	**$314,069**	**$314,069**	**$314,069**	**$314,069**	**$1,256,276**	**$0**
Chapter 12 Safety and Security								
96	Develop a comprehensive long-range districtwide safety and security plan that includes performance measures. p. 390	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
97	Add security alarm systems, eliminate security guard positions and add patrol officer positions. p. 393	$8,732	$103,681	$103,681	$103,681	$103,681	$423,456	($48,000)
98	Develop a staffing formula that considers workload, criminal activity per location and other effectiveness factors to assign security guards. p.	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	396							
99	Add security cameras to schools with a higher risk of misbehavior or criminal activity and adjust the number and location of security staff. p. 398	$0	$54,946	$219,785	$219,785	$219,785	$714,301	($303,000)
100	Purchase police report-writing software and train personnel on use of all software programs. p. 400	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($2,000)
101	Create a written policy and automate tracking procedures to maintain accurate records on keys made, keys assigned, lock replacements and related information. p. 403	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($700)
102	Provide an area in each classroom that the teacher can use to secure items such as keys, purse or wallet, or other necessary personal items. p. 404	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	($2,876)
103	Train staff on the importance of visitor identification and monitor policy compliance. p. 405	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
104	Develop drill plans for both school and	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	community crises that include a review and improvement component. p. 406							
105	Develop a tracking and review process for in-school suspension and other disciplinary measures to ensure discipline is fairly applied. p. 413	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Totals-Chapter 12	**$8,732**	**$158,627**	**$323,466**	**$323,466**	**$323,466**	**$1,137,757**	**($356,576)**
	TOTAL SAVINGS	**$1,670,810**	**$3,784,908**	**$3,949,747**	**$3,949,747**	**$3,949,747**	**$17,304,959**	**$13,642**
	TOTAL COSTS	**($356,999)**	**($662,929)**	**($646,038)**	**($523,264)**	**($520,184)**	**($2,709,414)**	**($489,501)**
	NET SAVINGS (COSTS)	**$1,313,811**	**$3,121,979**	**$3,303,709**	**$3,426,483**	**$3,429,563**	**$14,595,545**	**($475,859)**

5 Year Gross Savings	**$17,318,601**
5 Year Gross Costs	**($3,198,915)**
Grand Total	**$14,119,686**

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

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

A. Governance
B. District Management
C. Planning and Evaluation

The organization and management of a school district requires cooperation between the elected members of the Board of Trustees and the 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 to implement those policies; and provide the funding necessary to carry out the plans.

The superintendent, as the chief executive officer of the district, recommends the staffing levels and the amount of resources necessary to operate and accomplish the board's goals and objectives. The superintendent is also responsible for reporting management information to the board and making sure the district is held accountable for meeting its performance goals. District managers and staff are responsible for managing the day-to-day implementation of the policies and plans approved by the board and for recommending modifications to ensure the district operates efficiently and effectively.

BACKGROUND

The city of Donna is located on the Texas/Mexico BORDER=1 in the center of the Rio Grande Valley. Located about 11 miles east of McAllen, in Hidalgo County, the city is bordered by Weslaco to the east, Alamo, San Juan and Pharr to the west and Edinburg to the north. Donna has a population of 12,895 residents, with agriculture as the major economic base.

There are approximately 20 *colonias* in and around the Donna city limits. *Colonias* in Texas have been increasing in the past 20 years in response to the need for low-income housing and the availability of land in the BORDER=1 regions. *Colonias* are tracts of land established in unincorporated areas that typically lack such basic services as water, sewage connections and electricity. *Colonia* residents often do not have the financial backing to purchase land, so *colonia* developers offer a contract for deed (CFD) for land purchases. A CFD is similar to a mortgage loan, because it enables a buyer to purchase a lot. Unlike the

holder of a mortgage, however, the CFD buyer does not receive title to the land until the full price of the lot is paid. This process prevents the land buyer from building equity in their land holding and does not allow them to use the land as collateral for other loans. Purchasers of land in *colonias* often build their own homes, ranging from structures constructed from recycled building materials to trailers or campers. The median annual income per household in Texas *colonias* ranges from $7,000 to $11,000. Typical households number five to six members.

Donna ISD had an enrollment of 10,451 students in 2001-02. The district serves its students in one high school, one ninth grade center, two middle schools and 11 elementary schools. The district is completing two new elementary schools, scheduled to open in the fall of 2002.

DISD's student population is 98.6 percent Hispanic; About 0.1 percent of the students are African American; 1.2 percent are Anglo and 0.1 percent are classified as Other. Of the total population, 90 percent of DISD's students are categorized as economically disadvantaged, and 48.7 percent are identified as limited English proficient, according to data compiled by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The percentage of economically disadvantaged students and students classified as having limited English proficiency are considerably higher than the state averages in these categories. The state average for economically disadvantaged students is 50.5 percent, while the average percentage of students with limited English proficiency is 14.5 percent.

Donna is located in Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1). The Texas Legislature created 20 Regional Education Service Centers in 1967 to provide services to Texas school districts, such as cooperative purchasing, computer support and training. Region 1 covers a seven-county area in South Texas.

To alleviate classroom overcrowding and also to renovate deteriorating facilities, the district has issued three bonds. In December 1997, voters approved a $27 million bond issuance, and in September 2000 and June 2002, voters again approved a $29 million facilities bond and a $17 million facilities bond respectively.

The district received additional construction funding from the state under the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) Program, authorized the 1997 Legislature. The IFA program helps school districts make debt service payments on qualifying bonds and lease-purchase agreements. The amount of IFA funding depends upon several factors including district enrollment, local property values and the amount of the district's annual debt service obligation. DISD is planning to apply for additional IFA funding to increase the proceeds of the proposed 2002 bond issue.

DISD is a district facing many challenges. Enrollment has increased by approximately 587 students, or nearly 6 percent, since 1997-98, averaging about a 1.5 percent annually, and district management anticipates this increase in enrollment will continue in the future. Property values in the district, however, have not kept pace with the rest of the state or even with other cities in south Texas. The district has few major retailers or other businesses that contribute to its tax base, and the value of land in the *colonias* is low. A comparison of DISD to similar peer districts shows that DISD has the lowest per pupil property value (**Exhibit 1-1**). DISD's 2001-02 per pupil preliminary property value of $44,789 also is well below the state average of $236,543 per pupil.

Exhibit 1-1
DISD, Peer Districts and State
Comparison of Tax Rates and Property Values
2001-02

District	M&O Tax Rate (1)	I&S Tax Rate (2)	Total Tax Rate	Total Property Value	Property Value per Pupil
Donna	**1.4900**	**0.0000**	**1.4900**	**$468,086,617**	**$44,789**
Edgewood	1.5000	0.1307	1.6307	589,919,566	67,455
Mission Cons.	1.4394	0.0947	1.5341	800,420,482	60,998
Rio Grande City	1.4479	0.0660	1.5139	574,467,212	64,503
Eagle Pass	1.2400	0.0833	1.3233	861,935,948	67,455
San Benito	1.3119	0.1581	1.4700	448,499,351	49,275
State Average	1.3916	0.0942	1.4857	$981,826,800,793	$236,543

Source: Texas Education Agency, PEIMS 2001-02 and Comptroller's Office, Preliminary Property Tax Values 2001-02.
(1) Maintenance and Operations portion of property tax - used to fund general operating functions.
(2) Interest and Sinking portion of property tax - used to fund interest and principal payments on general debt obligations.

DISD is also limited in the amount of local tax revenue it can generate, because it is close to the state maximum rate of $1.50 per $100 of assessed

value for the maintenance and operation (M&O) portion of the total tax rate. The proceeds from the M&O portion of the total tax rate support the general operating needs of the district. On August 30, 2001, the district increased its M&O tax rate to $1.49 per $100 of assessed valuation, leaving it only $0.01 below the state maximum rate. Although the majority of the district's revenue is derived from state funding -approximately 83 percent - the district generates more than 10 percent of its revenues from local property taxes annually.

Another significant issue confronting DISD is student performance. While student performance, measured as the percentage of students passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), has improved slightly in recent years, the student performance both statewide and in Region 1 increased 3.2 percentage points. This increase does not compare favorably to the improvement in the state average of 8.9 percent or the 11.4 percent improvement in Region 1.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. GOVERNANCE

Section 11.151 of the Texas Education Code provides for an elected board of trustees to administer the district. District residents elect school board members either at large or from single-member districts.

As a legal agent of the state of Texas, the board derives its legal status from the Texas Constitution and state laws. School boards must operate in accordance with applicable state and federal statutes, regulations interpreting statutes and controlling court decisions. Under Section 11.151 of the Texas Education Code, each board must:

- Govern and oversee the management of the public schools of the district;
- Adopt such rules, regulations and bylaws as the board may deem proper;
- Approve a district-developed plan for site-based decision-making and provide for its needs;
- Select tax officials, as appropriate to the district's need;
- Prepare and adopt a budget for the next succeeding fiscal year and file a report of disbursements and receipts for the preceding fiscal year;
- Have district fiscal accounts audited at district expense by a Texas certified or public accountant holding a permit from the Texas State of Board of Public Accountancy following the close of each fiscal year;
- Publish an annual report describing the district's educational performance, including campus performance objectives and the progress of each campus toward those objectives;
- Receive bequests and donations or other money coming legally into its hands in the name of the district;
- Select depository for district funds;
- Order elections, canvass the returns, declare results and issue certificates of election as required by law;
- Dispose of property no longer necessary for the operation of the school district;
- Acquire and hold real and personal property in the name of the district; and
- Hold all powers and duties not specifically delegated by statute to the Texas Education Agency or the State Board of Education.

DISD's Board of Trustees consists of seven members. Trustees serve three-year terms on a rotating basis. All members are elected at-large. **Exhibit 1-2** lists the board members, appropriate titles, their terms' expiration dates, years of board member service and profession.

Exhibit 1-2
DISD Board of Trustees
2001-02

Board Member	Title	Term Expires	Full Years of Service as of October 2001	Occupation
Eloy Infante	President	2003	6 years	Service industry
George Hernandez	Vice President	2004	3 years	Self-employed
Aniceto Santana	Secretary	2004	3 years	Self-employed
Luis Omar Solis	Member	2005	0 years	Sales Representative
Juan G. Guerrero	Member	2005	0 years	Police Officer
Saul Mata	Member	2003	6 years (not consecutive)	Business owner
Ricardo Moreno	Member	2003	2 years	Deliveryman

Source: DISD Superintendent's Office, April 2002.

Regular board meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Donna High School Lecture Room, located at Mile East Wood Avenue. If necessary, the board conducts a second special meeting on the third Monday of the month. Meetings last an average of two to three hours. The public has an opportunity to comment at each of the regular meetings. Individuals are strictly limited to three minutes of time to address the board. Beginning at the April 11, 2002 regular school board meeting, the public input session moved to the end of the meeting rather than at the beginning. The board stated that this change was to encourage more community input, because many parents and community members did not get off work early enough to attend the beginning of the meeting.

The superintendent and board president create each meeting's agenda. A board member who wants to request an agenda item notifies the board

president, and any staff person who wants to request an agenda item contacts the superintendent who then decides whether or not to add the item. The attorney, who is on retainer for the district, then receives the agenda. The meeting notice is posted in the administration building 72 hours before the meeting as required by law.

FINDING

DISD board members are directly involved in daily operations of the district, and at times have exceeded their statutory authority as board members. According to interviews with district staff, community members and parents, individual DISD board members interact directly with staff, direct administrative decisions and micromanage district affairs. These individuals gave examples of the board creating positions for employees, instructing the superintendent how to reorganize the district's administrative structure and controlling staff appointments and salary increases.

While reviewing board minutes, taped board meetings and other documents, and from attending a full board meeting, the review team observed numerous instances in which the board interfered with district operations and management.

DISD's board approves all employment decisions for all employees. In Texas school districts, the responsibility for hiring, assignment and salaries of employees is generally delegated to the superintendent; however, DISD's board approves the creation of all positions in addition to approving the hiring and dismissal of all employees. During interviews with employees, many said this situation contributed to the frustration they have experienced working in the district.

In December 2001, the board purchased a 35-acre parcel of land for $382,987, which created an atmosphere of distrust in the community. The transaction to purchase the land was directed solely by the board without input from district staff or the community. The land changed ownership shortly before being purchased by the district, resulting in a per-acre price increase of almost 68 percent. Many community members told the review team that they feel the district could have easily approached the initial owner of the land to receive a better price.

DISD has had a history of high turnover in the superintendent position. Over the past 10 years, the district has had eight different individuals serving or acting as superintendent. **Exhibit 1-3** shows the history of this superintendent turnover since 1992.

Exhibit 1-3
DISD Turnover in the Superintendent Position
1992 - 2002

Term Served	Name
1992 - 1993	Interim Superintendent Jose E. Lugo
1993	Interim Superintendent Israel Rodriquez
1993 - 1994	Superintendent Enrique Gallegos
1994	Acting Superintendent Gene Kirby
1994	Acting Superintendent Frank Gonzales
1994 - 1995	Interim Superintendent Frank Gonzales
1995 - 1996	Superintendent Frank Gonzales
1996 - 1997	Interim Superintendent Frank Perez
1997	Interim Superintendent Juan O. Garcia
1997 - 2000	Superintendent Juan O. Garcia
2000	Interim Superintendent Andres Martinez
2 000 - 2001	Superintendent Andres Martinez
2001	Interim Superintendent Juan O. Garcia
2002	Superintendent Juan O. Garcia

Source: DISD Superintendent's Office, April 2002.

Interviews with board members and with staff revealed that the high turnover often resulted from irreconcilable differences between the superintendent and school board members and board members directing the district's management.

When questioned on how disagreements between the board and the superintendent are handled, board members and the current superintendent could not provide answers. The current superintendent said that since the new board has been in office, there have been no disagreements between him and the board. However, he also said that the reason he stepped down from the superintendent position in 2000 was due to disagreements with the sitting boarding in 2000.

The board has conducted closed sessions that violate its own policies. For example, in March 2002, several employees filed level 3 grievances with the district. A level 3 grievance review allows an employee to have the

board address their complaints directly if the employee feels that prior resolution efforts were not satisfactory. According to board policy DGBA (Local), if the grievance involves the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline or dismissal of the employee bringing the grievance, the grievance may be heard by the board in a closed meeting. The policy, however, provides an exception in that when requested by the grieving employee, the complaint or charge must be heard in an open session of the board. The policy contains a further exception that if the grievance names another employee, then it must be heard in closed session regardless of a request to be heard in open session. In the March grievance, the employees requesting that their complaint be discussed in open session were not naming any other employees, but the board met in a closed session going against their own policy in doing so.

In April 2002, the district's former superintendent asked the board to hear his level 3 grievance in open session. The district's attorney argued that the matter was of a confidential nature and would be heard in closed session. Only after the former superintendent's attorney argued for the hearing to be held in open session did the board agree to do so.

The board's actions have also contributed to distrust among employees and the community. At public forums held in the district to obtain community input, and through surveys of parents and staff, the review team heard many negative comments about the district's governance. **Exhibit 1-4** presents some of the comments received.

Exhibit 1-4
Public Input Comments On
DISD Board Governance

Public Forum Comments
- The control most school board members have over school personnel is unbelievable. The morale is low and people work there because they need a job.   - Before any school board meetings, organizational charts are already in progress - people get moved or fired because you're a board members' relative - or you didn't vote the right way. In this district, it's not what you know - it's whom you know.   - Great need for more professionalism and clear cut code of conduct on behalf of school board.   - Too much involvement by board members in the day-to-day operations of the school district. Board members take any complaint by district personnel and find means to retaliate in some way by demoting, firing, or not hiring anyone with different views. There is an internal political machine that has been established that the majority could continue to

dominate the board seats.
- Board Governance - Unfortunately it has gotten to the point that the board controls all personnel and is the decision maker rather than to leave that task to the superintendent or other department heads. Board president intimidates employees that if they don't vote accordingly on school elections that they will be terminated from their jobs.

Staff Surveys

- Donna ISD has a high rate of lawsuits against it. Donna ISD changes superintendents too often, and a curriculum or leadership is lacking. Donna ISD is controlled by the school board politics.
- Donna has the potential to offer the best education possible to meet the needs of our students. However, the strong political involvement often dictates certain procedures often conflicting with campus administrators and central office personnel.
- Our school board members run the district the way they want. They hire their relatives, friends, and wives to work in the district, and give them promotions and raises.
- All employees are afraid to speak out because of fear that they may be fired or reassigned.
- In my years of experience with the Donna Independent School District, I have noticed the educational performance of Donna ISD deteriorate due to political influence - first and foremost people being hired or given position advancements not for qualifications but for political favors.
- Positions are created to pay political supporters.
- Unfortunately, our district is run by local politics. Education and our children are not the priority; it is in the number of votes the politicians can get.
- Decisions regarding personnel are made based on political issues.
- The Donna Independent School District has such potential to be a great district, but it is constantly being undermined by politics.
- Donna ISD used to be a great place to work for a few years, but lately, if you don't vote for a board member you get moved or fired.
- Unfortunately, it seems as if our school board members are the ones to have the last say so in many things that are going on in our district. Even though we have our district leaders, they are not really allowed to make wise decisions because they feel that if they fail to make the decisions the school board members want, our leaders may lose their jobs.

Parent Surveys

- One concern that I have is that principals in most schools in Donna are almost always being changed by the school board.
- We need your help. Too many favors and too much money spent on lawsuits.

- The state should intervene and monitor the DISD board. Too many years have gone by with the board having intentions of self-interest instead of the needs of the taxpayer. There is much political influence.
- I feel the state provides enough money to maintain a high quality of education in our school district. Most of the money goes to the school board members' friends. These people are given made-up, unnecessary titles, which will provide them with a high income to go along with the title.
- Personnel are hired depending on who wins school elections.
- We have a lot of employees who get promised a job just because they know someone on the school board.
- Donna school system needs major revamping! Less politics, more teaching!
- The district is strictly run by politics! If you are not in favor of the right (winning) party, you cannot get anything accomplished.

Source: TSPR Public Forum comments, March 26 and March 27, 2002; TSPR survey results, May 2002.

Several school boards around the country have used an external facilitator to help them focus on school district goals and objectives. The process for choosing a facilitator may begin with a steering committee composed of the superintendent, board president, another board member and perhaps another senior staff member. Typically, this committee selects and meets with one or more facilitators who lead a series of workshops for the board and senior staffers focused on building trust and eliminating micromanagement.

Recommendation 1:

Develop operating procedures and a self-monitoring system for the board to ensure all board members understand their role and responsibilities.

To ensure board members fulfill their roles and responsibilities, operating procedures that detail how to handle board issues such as hiring employees, appropriate communication between board and staff and procedures for holding executive sessions,should be established, and each board member should agree to them. In addition, the board should create a monitoring system to ensure that board actions are consistent with agreed-upon operating procedures. When they are not, the board attorney should notify the board, and the minutes should reflect such notification.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board president creates an ad hoc steering committee of board members who will draft board operating procedures.	November 2002
2.	The ad hoc steering committee submits the operating procedures, including a monitoring plan, to the full board for input and adoption.	January 2003
3.	The board adopts the proposed procedures with modification as appropriate.	February 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The DISD Board of Trustees is not following state regulations and board policies related to nepotism. DISD board policy DBE states "no person shall be employed in the district who is related to a member of the Board by blood (consanguinity) within the third degree, or by marriage (affinity) within the second degree."

Board policy further states "the nepotism prohibitions described in this policy shall not apply to the confirmation or appointment of an individual to a position if the individual is employed in the position immediately before the election or appointment of the Trustee to whom the individual is related in a prohibited degree."

If a person continues in a position under this exception, the Trustee who is related to the employee *shall not participate in any deliberations or voting on the appointment, reappointment, employment, reemployment, change in status, compensation, or dismissal of the employees, if the action applies only to the employee and is not taken regarding a bona fide class or category of employee."*

In addition, Texas Government Code Section 573.062 states (emphasis added):

a. A nepotism prohibition prescribed by Section 573.041 or by a municipal charter or ordinance does not apply to an appointment, confirmation of an appointment, or vote for an appointment or confirmation of an appointment of an individual to a position if:
   1. the individual is employed in the position immediately before the election or appointment of the public official to whom the individual is related in a prohibited degree; and
   2. that prior employment of the individual is continuous for at least:

A. 30 days, if the public official is appointed;
B. six months, if the public official is elected at an election other than the general election for state and county officers; or
C. one year, if the public official is elected at the general election for state and county officers.

b. If, under Subsection (a), an individual continues in a position, the public official to whom the individual is related in a prohibited degree may not *participate in any deliberation or voting on the appointment, reappointment, confirmation of the appointment or reappointment, employment, reemployment, change in status, compensation, or dismissal of the individual if that action applies only to the individual and is not taken regarding a bona fide class or category of employees.*

The statute and policy state that board members may deliberate and vote on a bona fide class of employees. For example, they may participate in a decision regarding all custodial employees receiving a 5 percent increase, even if they have a relative who would be affected. However, they cannot participate in the deliberation or vote on specific employees to whom they are related as prohibited under the statute.

At the time of the review, four of the seven DISD board members had a brother or sister employed by the district; three of the seven trustees had a brother-in-law, sister-in-law or mother-in-law working for the district; three of the seven board members had aunts or uncles working for the district; and three of seven board members had spouses employed by the district.

During the August 30, 2001 board meeting, a board member moved to approve the recommendation of the interim superintendent to approve at-will employments as presented. The at-will employments included in the section of the executive session packet included salary adjustments and promotions for five specific employees. The board member who moved to approve the motion was approving the promotion of his wife to deputy superintendent's secretary with a corresponding $4,239 annual increase in salary.

Another board member voted in favor of the motion, which included a promotion for his aunt and a corresponding $4,458 increase in salary. Administrative appointments were also discussed during the executive session of the meeting, and session materials provided by the district show that the assignments included four specific employees, one of whom is the sister of a board member. This board member moved to approve the assignment recommendations of the interim superintendent. Clearly, these actions are violations of both state law and board policy.

Board members interviewed said they kept a chart of employees related to board members and abstained from voting on the promotions and raises of those individuals, but the review team has been unable to obtain a copy of this chart and actions of the board at the August 30, 2001 meeting. However, the Personnel director did create a list of employees related to board members when requested. The TSPR review team used this list to assess the actions of board members at this meeting.

Most Texas school districts have anti-nepotism policies to help ensure they do not violate the nepotism sections of the Texas Government Code. In addition to having polices outlining the prohibited relations, some districts require their board members file nepotism disclosure statements. Districts can then maintain accurate charts showing family relationships between board members and employees and know when board members must abstain from voting on prohibited actions.

Recommendation 2:

Strictly enforce anti-nepotism policies and chart board/employee relationships to ensure compliance with state law and board policies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	All board members sign disclosure statements detailing their familial relations to district employees.	October 2002 and Ongoing
2.	The Personnel director identifies and maintains a list of all employees related to board members as defined by Texas Government Code Section 573.062.	October 2002 and Ongoing
3.	The Personnel director provides this list to board members.	October 2002 and Ongoing
4.	Board members refrain from discussing or otherwise participating in decisions about the promotions and/or raises of relatives.	October 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The DISD Board of Trustees does not use committees or workshops to conduct district business. As a result, board members do not adequately understand the issues facing the district. The district is facing financial difficulties. Its fund balances are below state guidelines, and the averages

of other districts. Its future income is limited, because its tax base is low and its M&O tax rate is $0.01 under the state-mandated cap.

The district also is facing an increasing student population of approximately 1.5 percent annually, with future enrollment growth anticipated to be even higherwithout a corresponding increase in the tax base. Student performance scores remain significantly below the state and regional averages. When questioned about the most significant issues facing the district, however, most board members did not mention these issues. Some board members pointed to negative input from the community as a major concern facing the district, while another board member identified overstaffing in the district's cafeterias as the major issue faced by the district. When specifically questioned about the fund balance, tax base and test scores, many board members said that passing a new bond election and obtaining IFA funding would be the cure-all to these concerns.

The district recently held two board advisory committee meetings, the first one on November 28, 2001 and the second one on February 26, 2002. The purpose of these meetings is not entirely clear. When school board members were questioned about the meetings, they were not able to explain their bearing on the business of the district.

Districts that have board members who are well informed and have good working relationships with staff hold workshops and committee meetings so that detailed analyses or explanations can be discussed, without taking up time during regular board meetings. These workshops help to inform the board members of critical issues facing the district so they can make informed decisions.

Texas Education Code §11.061 authorizes school boards to create committees to facilitate their operations. The creation of committees is detailed in the district's Board Policy BDB (LEGAL) and BDB (Local). Such board committees must comply with the state's Open Meetings Act. DISD board policy stipulates that board committees must be advisory in nature, serving as fact-finding groups to make recommendations to the board as a whole.

Committees can serve as work sessions for board members and the superintendent's cabinet. Appropriately configured committees allow the board to interact openly with the superintendent and administrative team. Accordingly, questions about administrative and operational issues and their effect on school district policy can be discussed in considerable detail and resolved by committees without prolonging regular board meetings. The superintendent and cabinet can also use the committees to help train

board members in the details of district finance, budgeting, curriculum development and other critical district functions.

Some districts are effectively using other methods to meet their governance structure. For example, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) uses a Committee of the Whole rather than permanent board committees or standing committee to become knowledgeable about district operations and administration and to interact with the district's executive leadership team. Board members review all agenda action items with the executive leadership team in the Committee of the Whole meeting, where each board member has the opportunity to ask questions before the regular board meeting. The superintendent and executive team provide supporting documentation as required, and the board issues no directives through the Committee of the Whole. Committees of the Whole function in a similar fashion as workshops.

Recommendation 3:

Establish a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of educating board members about the major issues and challenges facing the district.

The DISD board, superintendent and staff should work as a team to inform the board of pertinent issues so that the board can make informed decisions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board president directs the superintendent to prepare a board action item to establish a Committee of the Whole.	November 2002
2.	The superintendent revises the policy and presents it to the board for approval.	December 2002
3.	The board uses its Committee of the Whole to improve board meetings.	January 2003 and Monthly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not use performance measures to evaluate the superintendent's performance. The DISD board has not developed goals and objectives for the superintendent and has not specified precise performance measures for his evaluation. The superintendent's contract,

dated December 27, 2001, states that "the board shall evaluate and assess in writing the performance of the superintendent at any time it deems necessary but not less than once a year during the term of this contract. This evaluation and assessment shall be reasonably related to the superintendent's performance with regards to the goals and objectives of the district for the year in question, and to the over-all administration of the district."

When TSPR requested the superintendent's written goals and objectives, the documentation provided included a letter from the superintendent to the school board outlining his accomplishments for the period and a list of district goals and objectives for the 1999-2000 school year. These goals were presented in nine sections as shown in **Exhibit 1-5**.

The specific goals under each section are broad and unrealistic. For example, under Instructional Management, goal number 3 states "Have all campuses reach a Recognized rating or higher within the next school year and reach Exemplary Status within the next two school years." Not only is this an aggressive and unrealistic goal, there are no intermediary steps to help achieve this goal. For example, to improve campus ratings, some intermediary steps would include ensuring that students master curriculum content and that the district recruit qualified teachers.

Exhibit 1-5
DISD Superintendent/District Goals and Objectives
1999 - 2000

I.	Instructional Management
II.	Organization Climate
III.	Organizational Improvement
IV.	Personnel Management
V.	Administration and Fiscal/Facilities Management
VI.	Student Management
VII.	School/Community Relations
VIII.	Professional Growth and Development
IX.	Board - Superintendent Relations

Source: DISD Superintendent' Office, April 2002.

DISD's superintendent is held accountable for a range of responsibilities, from student performance to management of administrative, fiscal and facilities functions. It is therefore imperative the board create documented performance goals and communicate those goals to the superintendent annually. The lack of documented and measurable goals and objectives for DISD's superintendent has limited the district's ability to improve student

performance and has resulted in only minimal improvement in its financial situation.

The Texas Commissioner of Education has drafted procedures for the appraisal of school superintendents. Although districts are not required to use these procedures, the Commissioner highly recommends them. These procedures are presented in **Exhibit 1-6**. As this exhibit shows, the first step in the evaluation process is to establish goals that define expectations and set priorities for the superintendent.

Exhibit 1-6
Procedures for Appraisal of Superintendent
Recommended by the Commissioner

Note: The following procedures, which are recommended but not required by the commissioner, may be used in whole or in part for the Superintendent's evaluation.

The Board shall establish an annual calendar providing for the following activities, in which both the Board and the Superintendent shall participate:

1. Procedures for setting goals that define expectations and set priorities for the Superintendent.
2. Formative conference.
3. Summative conference.

The Superintendent shall be involved in developing, selecting, or revising the appraisal instrument and process.

Student performance shall be a part of locally developed appraisal instruments for Superintendents as specified in Education Code 39.054.

A student performance domain shall be included in the appraisal of the Superintendent as follows: "The Superintendent promotes improvement of the performance of students in the District through activities such as comparing disaggregated student performance results to state accountability standards and to prior year performance." The domains and descriptors used to evaluate the Superintendent may also include:

1. Instructional management.
2. School or organization morale.
3. School or organization improvement.
4. Personnel management.
5. Management of administrative, fiscal, and facilities functions.
6. Student management.
7. School or community relations.

8. Professional growth and development.
9. Academic excellence indicators and campus performance objectives.
10. Board relations.

In developing the appraisal instrument, the Board shall use the Superintendent's job description as applicable.

The Board may implement a process for collecting staff input for evaluating the Superintendent. If such a process is implemented for use in the Superintendent's evaluation, staff input shall not be anonymous.

Before conducting the Superintendent's appraisal, Board members shall have evidence of training in appropriate personnel evaluation skills related to the locally established criteria and process.

The District, with the approval of the Board, may select the commissioner-recommended student performance domain for Superintendents or may develop an alternative process in consultation with the District- and campus-level committees and adopted by the Board. If the District uses the commissioner-recommended student performance domain, it shall meet the following requirements:

1. The Superintendent shall be required to attend an orientation approved by the commissioner;
2. The results on the commissioner-recommended student performance domain shall be incorporated into the local appraisal instrument;
3. The results on the commissioner-recommended student performance domain shall be a primary consideration of the Board in evaluating the Superintendent;
4. For a Superintendent new to the District, the results from the commissioner-recommended student performance domain shall be on a "report only" basis during the first year. Dropout and attendance data for the Superintendent shall be on a "report only" basis for the first two years.

Source: Texas Administrative Code, Title 19 §150.1021 and §150.1022.

Recommendation 4:

Establish annual accountability and performance goals for the superintendent.

The board should adopt a formal appraisal format to help the superintendent perform his job duties. The district should consider adopting the Commissioner of Education's recommended Procedures for Appraisal of Superintendent as presented in **Exhibit 1-6**.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent includes an agenda item on adopting the Commissioner of Education's Appraisal of Superintendent guidelines.	October 2002
2.	The board adopts the guidelines.	November 2002
3.	The board uses the guidelines to establish annual goals for the superintendent.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

B. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

While a district's board of trustees sets policy, the superintendent is responsible for carrying out that policy and managing the district in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The goal of administration should always be to facilitate and support the instruction of students by ensuring that every possible dollar and resource is directed to the classroom. As specified by §11.201 of the Texas Education Code, the superintendent is responsible for:

- planning, operation, supervision and evaluation of the educational programs, services and facilities of the district and for annual performance appraisals of the staff;
- assigning and evaluating all district personnel;
- terminating or suspending staff members or the non-renewal of staff members' term contracts;
- day-to-day management of district operations;
- preparing district budgets;
- preparing policy recommendations for the board and implementing adopted policies;
- developing appropriate administrative regulations to implement board policies;
- providing leadership in improving student performance; and
- organizing the district's central administration.

The management of DISD is the responsibility of Superintendent Juan O. Garcia. The board hired
Mr. Garcia as superintendent on December 27, 2001. Before being named superintendent, Mr. Garcia had been the superintendent for Donna ISD from 1997 through 2000. During the period of 2000 through 2001, Mr. Garcia served as the district's assistant superintendent for Special Programs.

The staffing structure that supports the superintendent is depicted in **Exhibit 1-7**. As the exhibit shows, the district has a deputy superintendent position. In addition to overseeing the assistant superintendents, the deputy superintendent is also functionally responsible for federal programs, grants, attendance evaluation, alternative education, student health services and textbooks. The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction is responsible for all curriculum in the district.

The director of Secondary Curriculum and the director of Elementary Curriculum both help the superintendent supervise campus principals. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance is responsible for the operations and financial functions of the district including maintenance, transportation, tax collections, food services, budget, payroll and purchasing as well as technology.

Reporting directly to the school board, as shown in the exhibit, are the attorney, external auditor and architect. These three positions are contracted through private firms.

Exhibit 1-7
DISD's Organizational Structure
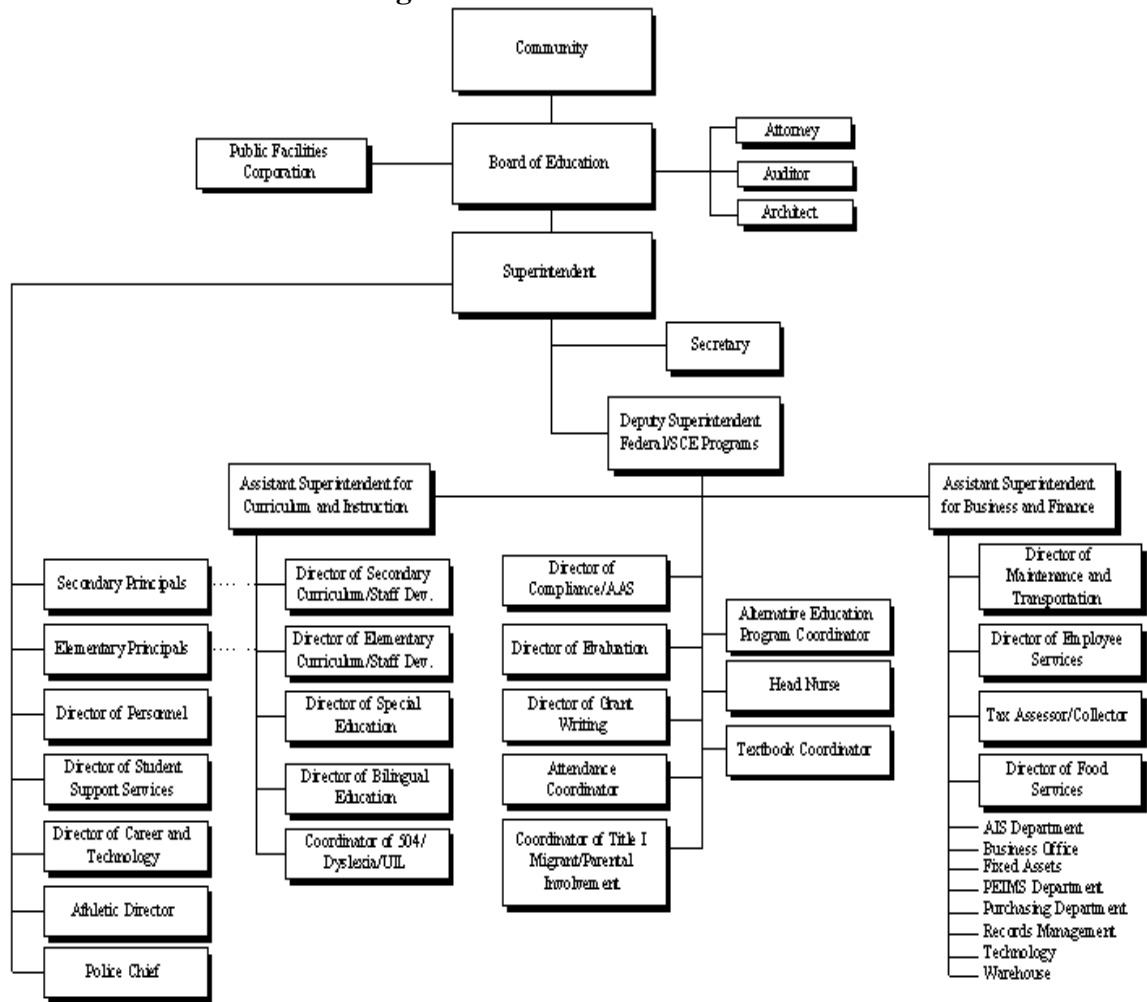
Source: DISD Superintendent's Office, April 2002.

FINDING

Frequent reorganization associated with administrative changes have resulted in misalignment or groupings of functions.

A review of past organizational charts shows a variety of different structures since 1997. In 1997, DISD had an assistant superintendent for Administration and Pupil Services, an assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, an assistant superintendent for Federal Programs and business manager. The assistant superintendent for Administration and Pupil Services oversaw a mixture of functions including personnel, public relations, attendance, high school principals, PEIMS reporting, textbooks, library services, grant writing and some federal programs. The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction oversaw elementary and secondary curriculum and elementary and middle school principals.

In 1999, the assistant superintendent for Administration and Pupil Services position was changed to deputy superintendent. The position kept its former responsibilities, yet became the supervisor to the remaining assistant superintendents. Also in 1999, the business manager position was upgraded to the position of assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.

In July 2000, the district eliminated the position of assistant superintendent for Federal Programs, and instead made this a director's position reporting to the deputy superintendent. Also in this year, the district made some functional changes that better aligned the district's staffing. These changes included moving all curriculum functions under the direction of the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.

In December 2000, the district reverted to a structure with four assistant superintendents: assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, assistant superintendent for Special Programs, assistant superintendent for Federal Programs and the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.

In December 2001, the district recreated the deputy superintendent position. This time in addition to overseeing the assistant superintendents, the deputy superintendent position also oversaw Federal Programs. In the 2001 re-organization, the district went from four assistant superintendents to two: one for Curriculum and Instruction and one for Business and Finance. The responsibilities of the former assistant superintendent for Special Programs now mostly fall directly to the superintendent including Personnel, Career and Technology, Athletics, Police Department and all principals.
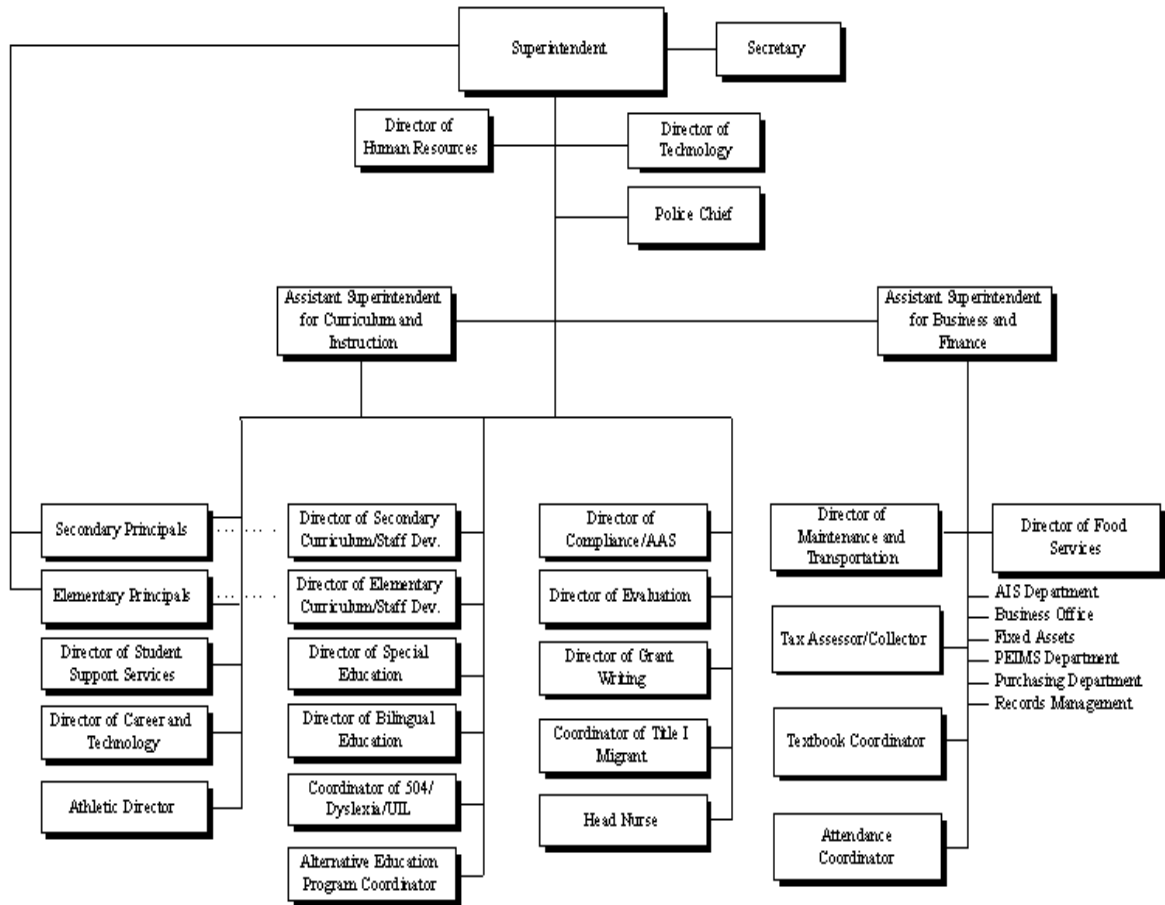
Historically, DISD's specific functions have been assigned to individuals rather than positions. For example, the individual currently holding the deputy superintendent position has been responsible for the same functions for several years, in spite of the fact that this individual has held three different positions: director, assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent. When the current superintendent was named superintendent in 2001, all departments reporting to him under his former position of assistant superintendent for Special Programs remained with him upon the appointment to the superintendent position. In another example, the district's attendance officer formerly held the position of Public Relations officer. When the Public Relations officer position was eliminated in 1998-99, this individual was placed in the attendance officer position. The individual, however, continues to oversee two Public Relations assistants.

Recommendation 5:

Adopt an organizational structure that will support the district's goals and objectives.

Exhibit 1-8 presents a proposed organizational chart for DISD.

Exhibit 1-8
Proposed Organization Chart for DISD

Superintendent — Secretary

Director of Human Resources — Director of Technology

Police Chief

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance

Secondary Principals

Director of Secondary Curriculum/Staff Dev.

Director of Compliance/AAS

Director of Maintenance and Transportation

Director of Food Services

Elementary Principals

Director of Elementary Curriculum/Staff Dev.

Director of Evaluation

Tax Assessor/Collector

- AIS Department
- Business Office
- Fixed Assets
- PEIMS Department
- Purchasing Department
- Records Management

Director of Student Support Services

Director of Special Education

Director of Grant Writing

Director of Career and Technology

Director of Bilingual Education

Coordinator of Title I Migrant

Textbook Coordinator

Athletic Director

Coordinator of 504/Dyslexia/UIL

Head Nurse

Attendance Coordinator

Alternative Education Program Coordinator

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., May 2002.

As this chart shows, all district functions are divided between two assistant superintendent positions and the deputy superintendent position is eliminated. The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction is responsible for all curriculum functions in addition to supervising the Athletic director and Grant and Federal Programs. Placing the responsibility of Grant Writing and Federal Programs under the Curriculum functions will provide for better coordination between these curriculum and instruction efforts.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance is responsible for all business operations including maintenance, transportation, tax collections, textbooks, personnel, food services and accounting/finance. The new functions under the proposed re-organization include textbooks and attendance. In addition, Employee Services is combined under Personnel.

This proposed structure allows the superintendent to rely on seven direct reports (excluding the principals and assistant principals) so that he is not directly managing a large number of people. The police chief and director of Personnelwill still report directly to the superintendent under this proposed reorganization. The proposed organizational structure shows one new position: a Technology director. A more detailed discussion of the role and responsibilities of this new position, in addition to the fiscal impact of adding this position, is discussed in the *Computers and Technology* sections of this report.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops an organizational structure that will help achieve the district's goals.	January 2003
2.	The superintendent presents the structure to the board for approval.	February 2003
3.	The superintendent implements the organizational structure.	March 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

Because of the elimination of the deputy superintendent position, the implementation of this recommendation will result in the savings of $99,942 annually. These savings are calculated as follows:

Salary for deputy superintendent	$84,000
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16
Total annual savings in salary and variable benefits	$97,440
Fixed annual benefits (health insurance)	$2,502
Total salary and benefits	$99,942

For the first year of implementation, the savings will be $66,628 ([$99,942/12 months] x 8 months) for the months of January through August 2003.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Adopt an organizational structure that will support the district's goals and objectives.	$66,628	$99,942	$99,942	$99,942	$99,942

FINDING

DISD has more campus administrators than are recommended by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). **Exhibit 1-9** presents staffing levels for principals and assistant principals by school.

Exhibit 1-9
DISD Principals and Assistant Principals by School
2001-02

School	School Enrollment	Number of Principals	Number of Assistant Principals	Total School Leadership
Donna High School	1,519	1	2	3
Todd 9th Grade Center	736	1	2	3
Solis Middle School	1,139	1	2	3
Veterans Middle School	1,127	1	2	3
C. Stainke Elementary School	367	1	0	1
Runn Elementary School	356	1	0	1
J.P. Lenoir Elementary School	470	1	0	1
B.G. Guzman Elementary School	442	1	0	1
M. Rivas Elementary School	475	1	0	1
Caceres Elementary School	505	1	0	1
T. Price Elementary School	488	1	0	1
A.M. Ochoa Elementary School	514	1	0	1
P.S. Garza Elementary School	843	1	1	2
M.A.P. Munoz Elementary School	786	1	1	2
Salinas Elementary School	684	1	1	2
Totals	**10,451**	**15**	**11**	**26**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits more than 12,000 public and private institutions, from pre-K through the university level, in 11 states in the southeastern U.S., including Texas, and in Latin America. SACS recommends minimum personnel requirements for elementary schools, based on enrollment, in its publication *Policies, Principals, and Standards for Elementary Schools Accredited by the Commission of Elementary and Middle Schools.*

The chart presented in **Exhibit 1-10** compares principal and assistant principal staffing at DISD schools compared to SACS standards. As this chart shows, DISD is overstaffed by three assistant principal positions.

Exhibit 1-10
SACS Minimum Requirements for School Leadership Personnel

School	DISD		SACS Standards		Differences	
	Principals	**Assistant Principals**	**Principals**	**Assistant Principals**	**Principals**	**Assistant Principals**
Donna High School	1	2	1	2.5	0	0
Todd 9th Grade Center	1	2	1	1.5	0	0.5
Solis Middle School	1	2	1	1.5	0	0.5
Veterans Middle School	1	2	1	1.5	0	0.5
C. Stainke Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
Runn Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
J.P. Lenoir Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0

B.G. Guzman Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
M. Rivas Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
Caceres Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
T. Price Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
A.M. Ochoa Elementary School	1	0	1	0	0	0
P.S. Garza Elementary School	1	1	1	0.5	0	0.5
M.A.P. Munoz Elementary School	1	1	1	0.5	0	0.5
Salinas Elementary School	1	1	1	0.5	0	0.5
Totals	**15**	**11**	**15**	**8.5**	**0**	**3**

Source: SACS Policies, Principals, and Standards for Elementary Schools Accredited by the Commission on Elementary and Middle Schools, 2001-02 School Year, and DISD Staff Directory, 2001-02.

Staffing allocation standards helps school districts to staff appropriately and to reduce their expenditures on personnel.

Recommendation 6:

Use staffing standards to allocate principal and assistant principal positions to schools.

Using a staffing standard such as SACS, DISD could eliminate three full-time assistant principal positions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, along with the superintendent, develops staffing formulas for schools based on SACS standards.	January 2003
2.	The superintendent presents the formulas to the board for approval.	February 2003
3.	The board approves the formulas.	March 2003
4.	The superintendent implements the staffing formulas for the 2002-03 school year.	July 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The total fiscal impact for this recommendation results in an annual savings of $191,841 beginning in 2003-04. These savings are calculated as follows:

Average salary for elementary assistant principal	$52,970
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16
Total annual savings in salary and variable benefits	$61,445
Fixed annual benefits (health insurance)	$2,502
Total salary and benefits	$63,947
Number of Positions Eliminated	x 3
Total salary and benefits	$191,841

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Use staffing standards to allocate principal and assistant principal positions to schools.	$0	$191,841	$191,841	$191,841	$191,841

FINDING

DISD's legal expenses have increased steadily over the past six years, and the district continues to spend a disproportionate amount of its annual budget for attorney services. The district maintains a contract with a law firm for legal services. The contract with the firm, dated June 14, 2001, states "...the Client agrees to deposit a monthly non-refundable retainer of $5,000 with the Attorney to pay for the Attorney's time, research, review and preparation of Client's matters." The contract also states that professional legal services will be rendered at a cost of $150 per hour. The attorney attends all school board meetings including closed sessions.

Exhibit 1-11 presents a schedule of payments made to the attorney for the period of June 12, 2001 through February 28, 2002. As this exhibit shows, the attorney has invoiced fees of $270,359 for this period.

Exhibit 1-11
DISD Payment to Attorney
June 12, 2001 thorough February 28, 2002

Invoice Date	Billing Period	Invoice Amount
June 28, 2001	N/A - retainer	$5,000.00
July 12, 2001	June 12 - June 29	$24,201.80
July 12, 2001	N/A - retainer	$5,000.00
August 16,2001	July 1 - July 31	$30,787.50
September 13,2001	August 1 - August 31	$30,750.00
October 4, 2001	September 1 - September 30	$25,462.50
November 15, 2001	October 1 - October 31	$32,818.29
December 13, 2001	November 1 - November 30	$32,356.38
January 10, 2002	December 1 - December 28	$33,392.50
February 15, 2002	January 1 - January 31	$26,390.00
March 21, 2002	February 1 - February 28	$34,200.00
Less retainers deducted from bills		($10,000.00)
Total June 2001 through February 2002		$270,358.97

Source: DISD invoices for legal fees, June 2001 through March 2002.

In addition to the contracted attorney, the district uses other attorneys for specialized services such as bond counsel.

Exhibit 1-12 shows a history of total attorney fees for DISD from 1995-96 through 2001-02. As the exhibit shows, fees continue to increase substantially each year. The amount shown for fiscal 2001-02 includes a settlement amount paid to the board's previous attorney for $284,621 for services rendered in prior years. The board can expect to spend more than $600,000 on legal fees for 2001-02. This estimate is derived by annualizing the amount of legal fees paid for the period of September 2001 through March 2002, excluding the settlement amount ([$363,398 / 7 months] x 12 months = $622,968).

Exhibit 1-12
DISD Legal Fees
1995-96 through 2001-02

| Year	Total Paid for Legal Services	Amount Per Student
1995-96	$254,590	$27
1996-97	$209,277	$22
1997-98	$214,393	$22
1998-99	$333,666	$34
1999-2000	$237,947	$24
2000-01	$584,823	$57
2001-02*	$648,019	$62
Percent Increase 1996 to 2001	**130%**	**28%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS data for object code 6211, Legal Services, for the years presented except as noted.
*Amounts derived from DISD general ledger activity for September 1, 2001 through March 21, 2002 plus an amount of $284,621 billed by the district's former attorney for services provided in prior years but paid during 2002.

Exhibit 1-13 shows a comparison of DISD legal fees to those of its peers for 2000-01. DISD is by far the district with the highest amount paid in annual legal fees. Edgewood ISD, the peer district with the second highest per pupil legal fees, had fees that were less than half the per pupil amount paid by DISD for this time period. San Benito CISD, the peer district with

the lowest per pupil legal fees, was $3.85. DISD's per pupil legal fees were almost 15 times higher than San Benito ISD.

Exhibit 1-13
DISD and Peer Legal Fees
2000-01
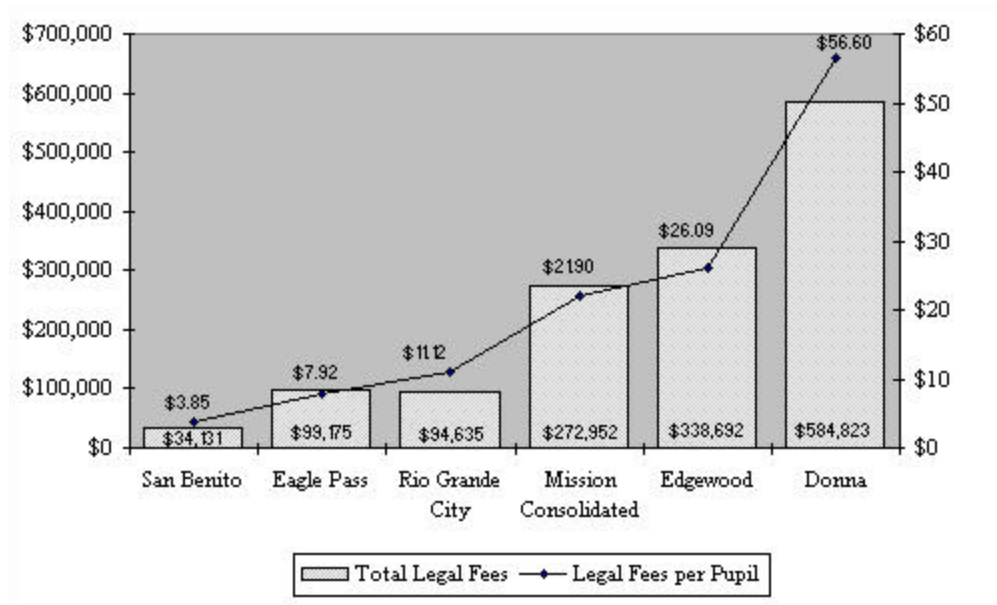
Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2000-01.

In addition, the district does not effectively manage attorney services. A review of legal bills for the period of June 2001 through March 2002 indicates that there are no controls in place to monitor or manage the amount of time the attorney spends on matters. For example, all open records requests are submitted to the attorney, regardless of whether they are routine in nature or not. Detailed billing journals for the attorney show that school board members and staff spend an inordinate amount of time on the telephone with the attorney.

Exhibit 1-14 provides an example of the contracted attorney bills on a monthly basis. For example, the bill for June 2001, amounting to $24,202 for the period of June 12 through June 29, 2001, shows that school board members spent nearly 65 hours with the attorney, either through telephone calls or personal conferences. This time does not include the time spent by the attorney at board meetings. In addition to meeting and talking with school board members, the attorney spent a total of 24 hours meeting with district staff, including secretaries, food service workers and finance personnel.

Exhibit 1-14
DISD Breakdown of Attorney Fees
June 2001 Bill

Description of Service	Hours Billed
Telephone or personal conference with school board members	64.50
Telephone conference with school board secretary	5.25
Telephone or personal conference with superintendent	4.50
Telephone or personal conference with other district staff	14.25
Research	36.50
School board meetings (review board agendas, prepare for meetings, attend meetings)	10.00
Review district documents (policies, contracts, proposals)	25.00
Other	4.25
Total Hours Billed June 2001	**164.25**

Source: DISD attorney bills for the month of June 2001.

Fort Worth ISD uses a staff attorney to control the cost of legal fees and related expenses. The staff attorney provides direct legal support and advice to administrators and school personnel about contractual matters, employee grievances, student discipline hearings, interpretation of board policy and employment matters, workers' compensation, Open Records and Open Meetings Act issues and special education matters. The staff attorney coordinates and monitors services provided by outside legal counsel, particularly services related to special education matters, litigation and special legal matters requiring outside expertise.

Recommendation 7:

Create an in-house counsel position requiring experience in labor and school law to assist the board with governance, compliance and litigation.

The district should hire an in-house counsel to serve as general counsel to the district; one who is experienced in school law, labor law and is knowledgeable about the statutory requirements of school governance. This position should manage outside counsel on litigation matters. The in-house counsel should coordinate legal representation and monitor firms' billing to keep costs down. The district could potentially lower the number

of cases and reduce costs by providing the in-house counsel a bonus for reducing legal fees and the number of lawsuits and grievances pending.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with the Personnel director to create a job description for an in-house counsel.	February 2003
2.	The superintendent presents the job description to the board for approval.	March 2003
3.	The board approves the job description.	April 2003
4.	The district posts the position of in-house counsel.	April 2003
5.	The superintendent and board members interview the candidates hires an in-house counsel.	April - May 2003
6.	The in-house counsel begins work.	June 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The district could advertise an in-house counsel position at $85,000. With benefits, the annual amount for an in-house attorney would be $101,102 [($85,000 x 1.16 variable benefits) + $2,502 fixed benefits].

The district should offer the in-house attorney an incentive bonus equal to one month's salary for reducing legal fees and the number of lawsuits and grievances. The bonus, if awarded, would be $8,425 ($101,102 / 12 months).

The board spent an average of $354,674 ([$254,590 + $209,277 + $214,393 + $333,666 + $237,947 + $584,823 + 648,019=$2,482,715]/7) over the past seven years. Hiring an in-house attorney will serve to reduce the amount of legal fees to the district, however, the in-house attorney cannot be expected to handle 100 percent of the district's legal matters. Outside attorneys will still be needed on occasion for matters such as bond counsel . However, it is likely that the district could reduce the average cost of an attorney's fees by 60 percent, or $212,804 ($354,674 x .6).

Total savings to the district are calculated by taking the estimated savings less the annual amount for obtaining in-house counsel. These savings are calculated below:

Estimated savings for legal expenses	$212,804
Annual salary and benefits for in-house counsel	(101,102)

Bonus for in-house counsel	(8,425)
Total annual savings	$103,277

Savings for the first of implementation would be $17,213 ([$103,277/12 months] x 2 months).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Create an in-house counsel position requiring experience in labor and school law to assist the board with governance, compliance and litigation.	$17,213	$103,277	$103,277	$103,277	$103,277

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

C. PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Planning is essential to effective school district management. Proper planning establishes a mission and identifies goals and objectives, sets priorities, identifies ways to complete the mission and determines performance measures and benchmarks to achieve goals and objectives. In its purest sense, planning anticipates the effect of decisions, indicates the possible financial consequences of alternatives, focuses on educational programs and methods of support and links student achievement to the cost of education.

Texas Education Code §11.251 requires boards of trustees of Texas school districts to ensure that district improvement plan (DIP) and campus improvement plans (CIPs) are developed, reviewed and revised annually. The goals of the plans should be for the purpose of improving the performance of all students in the district.

FINDING

DISD does not have a strategic plan or strategic planning committee and does not use performance measures to evaluate non-instructional departments, such as the Transportation or Food Services. Although the district maintains a position of evaluator, this position only evaluates educational programs.

The district prepares Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) and the District Improvement Plan (DIP) annually, but these focus solely on instruction. The district has no strategic plan, which could include performance measures for non-instructional departments.

While DISD's District Level Planning and Advisory Committee (DLPAC) established districtwide goals in its 2000-01 District Improvement Plan (DIP), the goals do not encompass all areas of planning (**Exhibit 1-15**).

Exhibit 1-15
DISD's Goals as Established in the District Improvement Plan

1. All students will meet or exceed student achievement performance.
2. All students will demonstrate an annual dropout rate of 1.0 percent or less.
3. All students in grades 1/12 will demonstrate an attendance rate of 94 percent or higher.
4. All students will be provided with a comprehensive, well-balanced and

> challenging curriculum.
> 5. The District will reduce the number of personnel not qualified and/or certified to teach.
> 6. The District will implement a collaborative input and ownership by principals, teachers, campus/district staff, parents and community representatives.
> 7. The District will develop and maintain a comprehensive and well-balanced budget.
> 8. The District will provide a comprehensive parental involvement program to maximize and strengthen parental/community involvement.

Source: DISD's District Improvement Plan, 2000-01.

DISD does not have a long-range facilities plan or a method of evaluating the district's food services. No documents were available to indicate what process the district used to determine whether schools needed renovations or new schools needed to be built. In addition the Food Services Department ran a deficit budget in 1999 through 2001, relying on general funds monies to operate.

Without a written and agreed upon strategic plan there is no road map showing where the district is or where stakeholders have agreed they would like it to go.A strategic plan incorporates various district plans into one long-range plan. It sets goals and broad direction for the district and looks at the entire educational system including the community. An effective five-year strategic plan prioritizes a district's goals and specifies courses of action, timelines and required resources and increases the overall effectiveness of the district planning process. It includes a method for evaluating the district's process and for making adjustments to the plan as needed as students or staff decline or increase in numbers.

Some Texas school districts are developing their own accountability systems to improve efficiency and effectiveness in non-instructional areas. **Exhibit 1-16** presents examples of performance measures for non-instructional departments.

Exhibit 1-16
Examples of Non-Instructional Performance Measures, by Functional Area

Functional Area	Performance Measure (Trend and Peer Comparisons)
Human Resources	• Ratio of total students to total staff • Ratio of employees to human resources staff

	• Ratio of acceptances to total job offers made • Turnover ratios, by class of employee and by school • Number of vacant positions at end of month, by department and by school
Facilities Management	• Number of square feet per custodian, by school • Custodial cost per square foot • Maintenance cost per square foot, by trade, by school • Energy cost per square foot, by type, by school • Number of square feet per student, by school
Technology	• Ratio of students to instructional computers • Ratio of administrators to administrative computers • Ratio of total computers to technical support • Ratio of total computers to help desk support • Number of computers more than five years old
Food Services	• Meals per labor hour, by school • Food cost per meal, by school • Meal participation rates, by school • Profitability by school, after indirect cost allocation
Transportation	• Cost per mile, by program • Cost per rider, by program • Number of miles per student, by program • Maintenance cost per bus • Rider ship, by program, by school • Bus Utilization, by program Average bus age • Linear density
Safety and Security	• Number of incidents reported, by type, by school • Security cost per student, by school
Purchasing	• Average dollar amount per purchase order • Ratio of purchase orders processed a month to purchasing staff
Accounting	• Ratio of number of operating account check a month to accounts payable staff

Some districts like Fort Bend ISD (FBISD) developed a six-step strategic planning process containing a mission and vision, belief statements, goals and objectives. While FBISD is a large district, the planning concepts can be modified to work for smaller districts.

FBISD's plan is supported by detailed action plans in the form of project task maps containing implementation strategies, timelines and responsibility assignments. FBISD's goals are organized into six strategic areas. **Exhibit 1-17** presents FBISD's goals organized by strategic area.

Exhibit 1-17
FBISD District Strategic Plan 2000-05
Six-Step Strategic Planning Process

Steps and Timing	Activities
Step 1 - Plan the Plan September - November 1998	FBISD established planning teams to complete the strategic plan, identified their respective roles, determined timelines and developed task maps. Task maps are detailed and show the project title, starting date, target completion date and actual completion date. Task maps also list task force committee members, define the project objectives and project expected results. Discrete tasks are also listed with individual responsibility assignments, start dates, target completion dates, actual completion dates and an area for planning notes.
Step 2 - Situational Analysis and Diagnosis February 23, 1999- February 25, 1999 March 9, 1999 Spring 1999 August 1999	FBISD conducted a series of community meetings, focus groups and surveys throughout the district to obtain stakeholder input at the outset of the planning process. These activities are considered district needs assessments and include specific sessions with students (February 23, 1999), district staff (February 25, 1999), parents and community members (March 9, 1999) and employee and parent satisfaction surveys (spring 1999). In addition, during the situational analysis and diagnosis phase, FBISD cabinet members engaged in the planning process and reviewed the Academic Excellence Indicator System Report (AEIS) and national, state and district priorities (August 1999) before the goal setting phase.
Step 3 - Goal Setting April - November 1999	FBISD used information gathered from its stakeholders and analysis of AEIS data and related national, state and district priorities to establish the district's goals. The superintendent and cabinet reviewed these goals with the

	board for its input, shared the goals with stakeholders and refined them as appropriate.
Step 4 - Action Planning September 1999 - January 2000	FBISD administrators developed tactical plans to implement the strategic direction contemplated by the goals and objectives established during the goal setting phase of the process. Action planning considers the interrelationships of time, money, human resource capabilities and efficiencies to ensure proper implementation. FBISD uses task maps as an integral component of its action planning.
Step 5 - Budgeting March - July 2000	FBISD allocated budget resources to the eight goals included in the *District Strategic Plan 2000-2005*. Budget resources were allocated based on priorities established during the goal setting and action planning steps.
Step 6 - Writing Publishing and Sharing the Plan with Stakeholders January - July 2000	FBISD wrote and published its strategic plan and clarified in writing the strategic plan communicating to stakeholders the direction in which the district is going in order to improve student achievement. After publishing the plan and sharing it with stakeholders, FBISD treats the plan as a "living document" through which it continuously monitors and reports the progress toward implementation with quarterly updates to the board and district stakeholders.

Source: Fort Bend ISD District Strategic Plan, 2000-05.

FBISD's model six-step strategic planning process refines a potentially voluminous strategic plan into a manageable document that focuses on specific goals and objectives fashioned from districtwide stakeholder input. The superintendent and the members of his cabinet present quarterly updates to the board and district stakeholders that provide detail concerning FBISD's progress toward implementing the plan.

Recommendation 8:

Develop a district strategic plan that is tied to the budget and form a strategic planning committee with broad representation from the district and community.

In forming the strategic planning committee, the district should follow procedures similar to the FBISD model so that the strategic planning committee receives updates from the board and the District Level Advisory Committee.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board convenes a strategic plan development committee.	November 2002
2.	Board members, the District Level Advisory Committee and the superintendent review the Fort Bend ISD model.	November 2002
3.	The board asks the District Level Advisory Committee and the superintendent to draft specific goals for instructional and non-instructional areas and implementation steps for the strategic plan.	December 2002
4.	The superintendent asks department heads to work with their staff to develop realistic goals and implementation steps.	December 2002
5.	The District Level Advisory Committee and the superintendent propose specific goals for instructional and non-instructional areas and implementation steps to the board.	January 2003
6.	The board adopts goals for instructional and non-instructional areas and implementation steps and incorporates them into the next strategic plan.	February 2003 and Annually
7.	The strategic plan is placed on the district Web site and disseminated to all district staff that hold meetings on how best to implement the plan.	February 2003 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter discusses the Donna Independent School District (DISD) educational service delivery system in the following sections:

A. Student Performance and Instructional Resources
B. Gifted and Talented Education
C. Compensatory Education
D. Special Education
E. Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language
F. Career and Technology Education
G. Library/Media Services
H. Health Services

An effective educational service delivery system aids student achievement and uses human and financial resources in a well-planned and coordinated manner.

BACKGROUND

DISD selected five Texas school districts to serve as peer districts for comparative purposes: Eagle Pass, Edgewood, Mission Consolidated (Mission), Rio Grande City Consolidated (Rio Grande City) and San Benito Consolidated (San Benito). To make these comparisons, the review team relied on information supplied by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on state-mandated student achievement test scores, results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and other student performance measures, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports provide demographic, staffing and financial data for each school district and school. AEIS reports are a summary of the more comprehensive Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data reported by school districts each year. These reports are sent to each school and district and are available on TEA's web site www.tea.state.tx.us. The latest AEIS data, published by TEA in November 2001, are for 2000-01. The latest PEIMS data available are for 2001-02.

Exhibit 2-1 presents demographic information for DISD, its peer districts, districts served by Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) and the state.

Exhibit 2-1
Demographic Characteristics of DISD

and Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	Student Enrollment		Ethnic Group (Percent)				Economically Disadvantaged
	2001-02	5 Year Percent Change*	African American	Hispanic	White	Other	
Edgewood	13,435	(5.0%)	1.6%	97.1%	1.2%	0.1%	96.3%
Mission	13,122	11.1%	0.1%	97.4%	2.5%	0.0%	82.2%
Eagle Pass	12,778	7.9%	0.1%	97.1%	1.3%	1.5%	91.1%
Donna	**10,451**	**5.9%**	**0.1%**	**98.6%**	**1.2%**	**0.1%**	**90.0%**
San Benito	9,102	5.7%	0.1%	97.4%	2.4%	0.0%	85.7%
Rio Grande City	8,906	9.2%	0.0%	99.6%	0.2%	0.2%	86.6%
Region 1	**314,566**	**10.5%**	**0.2%**	**95.9%**	**3.5%**	**0.4%**	**84.5%**
State	**4,150,741**	**6.7%**	**14.4%**	**41.7%**	**40.8%**	**3.1%**	**50.0%**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 2001-02.
*Percent change is defined as 2001-02 values minus 1997-98 values divided by 1997-98 values.

DISD serves 10,451 students in 2001-02, of which 98.6 percent are Hispanic and 90 percent are economically disadvantaged. Among peer districts, San Benito is closest in size to DISD, with a student enrollment of 9,102. DISD's percent of Hispanic students (98.6 percent) is more than twice the state average (41.7 percent) and its percent of economically disadvantaged students (90.0 percent) is 40 percentage points higher than the state average. DISD's percent of Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students is also higher than the regional average.

Exhibit 2-2 shows budgeted instructional expenditures for DISD and its peer districts in 2001-02. The district has the second highest per student expenditures as well as the second highest percent of regular education

expenditures among the peers and the highest percent of Bilingual/ESL expenditures. DISD has the second lowest percent of expenditures for Compensatory Education and the lowest percent of expenditures for Special Education.

Exhibit 2-2
Budgeted Instructional Expenditures
DISD and Peer Districts
2001-02

District	Total Expenditures	Instruct. Expenditures Per Student	Percent Regular	Percent G/T	Percent Sp. Ed.	Percent CATE	Percent Bil/ESL	Percent Comp.
Mission	$44,574,855	$3,397	79.1%	0.2%	6.1%	3.5%	1.4%	9.7%
Edgewood	$43,696,832	$3,252	70.7%	0.4%	11.6%	3.5%	1.3%	12.5%
Eagle Pass	$39,501,868	$3,091	69.4%	8.0%	9.1%	3.7%	2.0%	7.8%
Donna	**$34,648,525**	**$3,315**	**78.7%**	**0.3%**	**7.7%**	**3.6%**	**2.5%**	**7.2%**
San Benito	$29,512,304	$3,242	77.5%	0.3%	8.3%	4.4%	0.5%	9.1%
Rio Grande City	$28,063,737	$3,151	74.1%	0.2%	10.5%	3.5%	1.1%	10.6%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

As seen in **Exhibit 2-3**, DISD ranks first among its peer districts in the percent of students enrolled in Bilingual/ESL programs. It ranks fourth among its peers in the percent of students enrolled in G/T education programs, special education programs and CATE programs. DISD has almost 3.5 times the percent of Bilingual/ESL students as the state average. DISD's percent of special education (8.7 percent) and CATE (18.8 percent) students are lower than the state averages of 11.7 percent and 19.3 percent respectively. The district's share of students in G/T programs (8.6 percent) is slightly higher than the state average (8.2 percent).

Exhibit 2-3
Student Enrollment by Program
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	Percent Gifted and Talented	Percent Special Education	Percent Career and Technology	Percent Bilingual/ESL
Eagle Pass	11.8%	7.7%	22.8%	27.8%
Rio Grande City	9.5%	13.5%	25.8%	34.8%
Mission	8.7%	6.0%	18.8%	20.7%
Donna	**8.6%**	**8.7%**	**18.8%**	**45.7%**
San Benito	7.3%	12.3%	22.9%	15.8%
Edgewood	7.2%	14.5%	16.5%	13.5%
State	**8.2%**	**11.7%**	**19.3%**	**13.1%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 2-4 illustrates shares of expenditures by instructional function for DISD, peer districts and the state. DISD's per pupil expenditures are higher than its peers and the state average. DISD's percent of instructional expenditures is lower than the state average as is its percent of school leadership. However, DISD percent of expenditures on instructional leadership is more than twice the state's rate. These are preliminary numbers for the state.

Exhibit 2-4
Percent of Budgeted Expenditures by Instructional Function
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

Expenditures by Function	Eagle Pass	Mission	Edgewood	Donna	San Benito	Rio Grande City	State***
Instruction (11,95)	52.8%	51.4%	48.1%	**47.7%**	47.4%	47.0%	**51.0%**
Instruction-Related Services (12,13)	1.9%	3.5%	3.4%	**2.6%**	2.7%	2.5%	**2.7%**
Instructional Leadership (21)	1.1%	2.8%	1.2%	**2.5%**	1.4%	2.8%	**1.2%**
School	5.7%	4.3%	5.0%	**4.1%**	4.7%	4.7%	**5.2%**

Leadership (23)							
Support Services-Student (31,32,33)	4.3%	4.8%	5.6%	**4.8%**	4.2%	4.4%	**4.0%**
Student Transportation (34)	2.5%	2.1%	0.8%	**2.0%**	2.8%	3.0%	**2.6%**
Food Services (35)	7.6%	6.8%	7.2%	**5.9%**	7.0%	7.2%	**4.8%**
Cocurricular/ Extracurricular Activities (36)	2.4%	2.1%	1.8%	**2.4%**	2.8%	2.6%	**2.2%**
Central Administration (41,92)	3.6%	3.0%	3.9%	**3.4%**	4.0%	4.2%	**3.5%**
Plant Maintenance and Operations (51)	9.6%	10.0%	11.0%	**12.0%**	10.9%	12.2%	**10.1%**
Security and Monitoring Services (52)	1.5%	0.3%	1.4%	**1.4%**	1.0%	1.3%	**0.6%**
Data Processing Services (53)	0.6%	0.7%	2.1%	**1.4%**	0.1%	0.6%	**1.1%**
Other*	6.4%	8.2%	8.5%	**9.8%**	11.0%	7.5%	**10.8%**
Per Pupil Expenditures	$5,842	$6,604	$6,764	**$6,950**	$6,842	$6,709	**$6,907**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
* Includes any operating expenditures not listed above and all non-operating expenditures such as debt service, capital outlay and community and parental involvement services.

** Totals may not reflect 100 percent due to rounding.
***Preliminary figures until actual numbers are available in November 2002.

Exhibit 2-5 shows the percent of professional staff in various categories in 2001-02 for DISD, peer districts and the state. DISD's percent of teachers (38.5 percent) is significantly below the state average (50.5 percent), as is its percent of professional support staff (6.2 percent) compared to 8.9 percent for the state and campus administration (2.7 percent) compared to the state's 2.7 percent. DISD's percent of educational aides (13.2 percent) is higher than the state average (10.3 percent) as is its percent of auxiliary staff (39.6 percent) compared to the state's average (26.6 percent). Compared with its peers, DISD has the second-lowest percent of teachers and the second highest percent of auxiliary staff. Auxiliary staff include clerks, secretaries, food service, maintenance, custodial and transportation employees.

Exhibit 2-5
Professional Staff
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

Professional Staff	Mission	Eagle Pass	Edgewood	San Benito	Donna	Rio Grande City	State Average
Teachers	43.5%	42.8%	42.6%	41.9%	**38.5%**	37.3%	**50.5%**
Professional Support	6.5%	5.5%	10.3%	9.5%	**6.2%**	6.0%	**8.9%**
Campus Administration	1.6%	1.8%	2.4%	2.4%	**1.6%**	1.6%	**2.7%**
Central Administration	1.1%	0.3%	1.4%	0.9%	**0.9%**	0.6%	**1.0%**
Educational Aides	12.9%	15.6%	11.9%	13.6%	**13.2%**	12.6%	**10.3%**
Auxiliary Staff	34.4%	34.0%	31.4%	31.7%	**39.6%**	41.9%	**26.6%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Compared to the peer districts, DISD's teachers, with an average of nine years experience, are the least experienced as a group (**Exhibit 2-6**). DISD has the second highest percent of beginning teachers (12.1 percent) and the highest percent of teachers with one to five years of experience (32.3 percent) when compared to the peer districts. More than 40 percent

of DISD's teachers have five or fewer years of experience. DISD teachers have, on average, two to four years less experience than teachers in the peer districts. More than 9 percent of DISD teachers are on some form of permit which means that they are teaching in a subject area without certification in that area. Some teachers are in the process of certifying or receiving an additional endorsement in those areas.

Exhibit 2-6
Teacher Experience and Turnover Rate
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

Experience	Mission	Eagle Pass	Edgewood	San Benito	Donna	Rio Grande City	State Average
Percent of Teachers	43.5%	42.8%	42.6%	41.9%	**38.5%**	37.3%	**50.5%**
Beginning Teachers	6.2%	2.8%	6.5%	6.3%	**12.1%**	18.5%	**7.8%**
1 -5 Years	19.1%	29.3%	30.8%	27.0%	**32.3%**	26.9%	**27.8%**
6 -10 Years	19.7%	21.6%	17.3%	15.3%	**18.0%**	14.4%	**18.1%**
11-20 Years	30.9%	20.9%	25.2%	26.7%	**22.4%**	21.2%	**24.7%**
More than 20 Years	24.1%	25.4%	20.2%	24.7%	**15.2%**	19.0%	**21.6%**
Percent of Teachers on Permit	2.6%	16.9%	7.6%	6.5%	**9.3%**	16.4%	**N/A**
Average Years of Experience	13	12	11	12	**9**	11	**20**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

DISD also has the second highest percentage of teachers without a degree among its peer districts and the lowest percentage of teachers with advanced degrees (**Exhibit 2-7**).

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

Education Level	Rio Grande City	Donna	Mission	Edgewood	San Benito	Eagle Pass	State Average
No Degree	22.1%	**2.7%**	1.8%	1.2%	1.2%	0.6%	**1.4%**
Bachelor	64.9%	**85.7%**	81.5%	77.7%	84.2%	79.1%	**75.3%**
Master	13.0%	**11.6%**	16.6%	21.0%	14.6%	19.9%	**22.8%**
Doctorate	0.0%	**0.0%**	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	**0.5%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 2-8 presents the district's organizational chart for educational service delivery.

Exhibit 2-8
Education Service Delivery Organization
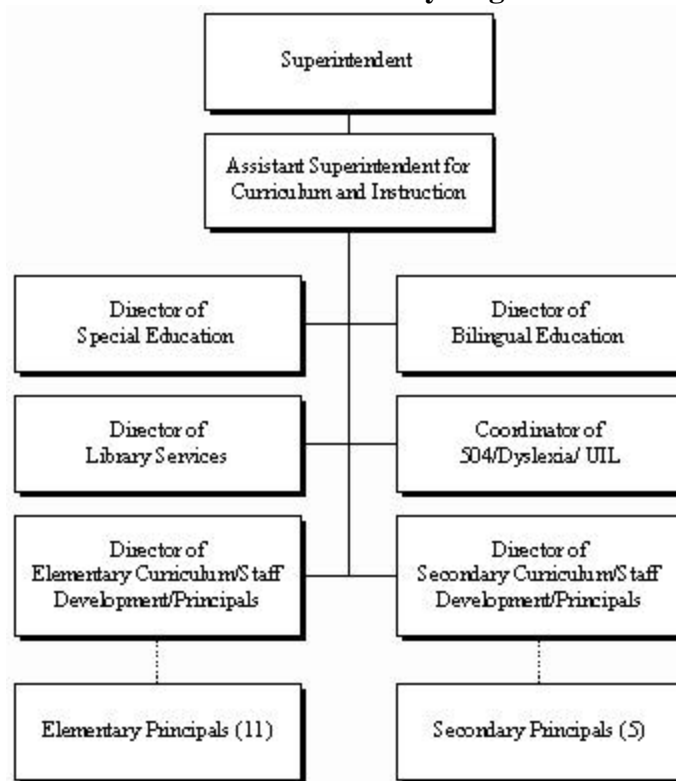
Source: DISD Organizational Chart, 2001-02.

TEA assigns annual accountability ratings to each district and campus based primarily upon the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and dropout rates. The accountability system includes five categories for districts: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, Academically Unacceptable and Unacceptable: Data Quality. For

campuses, the categories are: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable and Low Performing. To receive an Exemplary rating, at least 90 percent of all students, as well as 90 percent of each student group (African American, Hispanic, Anglo and Economically Disadvantaged) must pass the TAAS reading, writing and mathematics tests. To achieve a Recognized rating, 80 percent of all students and each student group must pass the TAAS reading, writing and mathematics tests. To be rated Academically Acceptable, 50 percent of each student group must pass TAAS. Scores for students with disabilities and from the TAAS Spanish version of reading and mathematics in grades three through six are included in the accountability calculations. According to TEA, failure to meet TAAS standards is the primary reason that schools are rated Low-Performing.

Exhibit 2-9 provides the accountability ratings for DISD and its peer districts from 1998 through 2002. All of the districts were rated as either Acceptable or Recognized throughout this period. DISD was rated Acceptable for the entire five-year period.

Exhibit 2-9
Accountability Ratings
DISD and Peer Districts
1997-98 through 2001-02

District	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Mission	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized
San Benito	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized
Eagle Pass	Acceptable	Acceptable	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized
Edgewood	Acceptable	Acceptable	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable
Donna	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**
Rio Grande City	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Source: TEA, Accountability Reports, 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Accountability ratings for 1998 through 2002 show that the districts' schools have experienced a range of ratings over the five-year period from a single Exemplary rating at Ochoa Elementary in 1998 during the entire time frame to two Low Performing ratings in 2000 and two Recognized ratings, 13 Acceptable and no Exemplary or Low Performing ratings in 2002 (**Exhibit 2-10**).

Exhibit 2-10
TEA School Accountability Ratings
1998 through 2002

Campus	Grade Levels	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Munoz Elementary	PK-5	***N/A	***N/A	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Garza Elementary	PK-5	***N/A	***N/A	Low Performing	Acceptable	Acceptable
Salinas Elementary	EE-5	Acceptable	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Rivas Elementary	PK-5	Recognized	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Caceres Elementary	PK-5	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Recognized
LeNoir Elementary	PK-5	Acceptable	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Recognized
Stainke Elementary	PK-5	Not Rated	PK-K Only No TAAS Data	Low Performing	Acceptable	Acceptable
Runn Elementary	PK-5	Recognized	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Price Elementary	PK-5	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Ochoa Elementary	PK-5	Exemplary	Recognized	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Guzman Elementary	EE-5	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Veterans Middle School	6-8	***N/A	***N/A	Not Rated	Acceptable	Acceptable
Solis Middle School	6-9	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Todd Middle School	6-8	Acceptable	Acceptable	*N/A	*N/A	*N/A

Donna High School Academy	9-12	Alternative Education: Acceptable	***N/A	***N/A	***N/A	***N/A
Donna High School	9-12	Acceptable	Acceptable	**Acceptable	**Recognized	**Acceptable
District	**EE-12**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**	**Acceptable**

Source: TEA, Accountability Reports, 1999-2000 through 2001-02.
*N/A denotes change to the Todd 9th Grade Center.
** Includes Todd 9th Grade Center for 1999-2000 through 2001-02.
*** N/A denotes not in existence.

In 1998, the district received one Exemplary rating, three Recognized ratings, eight Acceptable ratings, one Alternative Education: Acceptable rating and no rating for one school serving only Pre-K and Kindergarten students. In 1999, five schools were rated Recognized, seven were rated Acceptable and Stainke Elementary was again not rated because it served Pre-K and Kindergarten students. In 2000, 11 DISD schools were rated Acceptable and two were rated Low Performing. In 2000-01, Donna High School received a Recognized rating and all other schools were rated Acceptable. In 2001-02, Caceres Elementary and LeNoir Elementary schools received a Recognized rating and all other schools, including Donna High School, received an Acceptable rating.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES (Part 1)

TAAS performance is the primary factor in determining a district's accountability ratings. TAAS is administered in grades 3-8 and 10 in reading and mathematics. Grades 4, 8 and 10 are also assessed in writing and grade 8 is assessed in Social Studies and Science. An exit-level examination is given in grade 10.

In 2002-03, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) will replace the TAAS. The new assessment is more rigorous than the TAAS and will be administered in grades 3 through 11. Math will be assessed in grades 3-11. Reading will be assessed in grades 3-9 and English language arts in grades 10 and 11. Writing will be assessed in grades 4 and 7; social studies in grades 8, 10 and 11; and science in grades 5, 10 and 11. The exit-level examination will be at grade 11. The State Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA), introduced in 2001, assesses special education students in grades 3-8 who receive instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) but for whom TAAS is not an appropriate measure of academic performance. The test assesses students in reading, writing and math in their appropriate instructional levels as determined by their admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committees.

DISD students performed below the state and regional averages for 1996-97 through 2000-01 and all peers on all portions of the TAAS for 1999-2000 and 2000-01 (**Exhibit 2-11**). In addition, the district has also shown a low rate of improvement on TAAS scores from 1996-97 through 2000-01. Overall student TAAS performance improved by only 3.6 percentage points (57.7 percent to 61.3 percent) from 1996-97 through 2000-01 compared with an improvement of 8.9 percentage points for the state and 11.4 percentage points for the region. DISD is last among its peers in overall percentage point improvement on TAAS, and the district's overall TAAS passing rate (61.3 percent) is 7 percent below Rio Grande City's overall passing rate (68.3 percent), the lowest scoring peer district. DISD's overall TAAS passing rate is also 23.7 percent below that of San Benito, the highest overall scoring peer district. DISD's peer districts also improved by a range of 6.0 to 21.2 percentage points during that period compared to the district's 3.6 percentage point increase.

Exhibit 2-11
Percent of Students Passing TAAS, All Tests Taken (Grades 3-8 and 10)

DISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and the State
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98*	1998-99**	1999-2000**	2000-01**	Percentage Point Change 1996-97 to 2000-01
Mission	76.6%	80.7%	82.1%	80.2%	82.6%	6.0%
San Benito	73.5%	81.1%	79.2%	80.1%	85.0%	11.5%
Eagle Pass	64.3%	71.7%	74.2%	78.4%	78.6%	14.3%
Donna	**57.7%**	**60.8%**	**61.9%**	**55.9%**	**61.3%**	**3.6%**
Rio Grande City	56.3%	60.5%	61.0%	64.9%	68.3%	12.0%
Edgewood	55.1%	62.0%	70.2%	74.5%	76.3%	21.2%
Region 1	**66.5%**	**72.0%**	**73.9%**	**74.6%**	**77.9%**	**11.4%**
State	**73.2%**	**77.7%**	**78.3%**	**79.9%**	**82.1%**	**8.9%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.
*Recalculated from original posting to include special education and grades 3 and 4 Spanish TAAS.
** Recalculated from original posting to include special education and grades 3 through 6 Spanish TAAS.

The performance discrepancies between DISD students and the average state performance are especially acute (20 or more points) in grade 6 (34.1 points), grade 7 (25.0 points), grade 8 (21.5 points) and grade 4 (19.6 points) as shown in **Exhibit 2-12**.

Exhibit 2-12
Percent of Students Passing TAAS (English version)
In DISD, Region 1 and the State
1996-97 and 2000-01

	Reading		Mathematics		Writing		Science		Social Studies		All Tests Taken	
Grade	1997	2001	1997	2001	1997	2001	1997	2001	1997	2001	1997	2001

Level*											
Grade 3											
DISD (E)	**67.9%**	**66.7%**	**77.6%**	**73.0%**							**63.7%**	**59.7%**
Region 1	79.0%	82.2%	83.6%	82.1%							73.2%	74.8%
State	81.5%	86.8%	81.7%	83.1%							74.2%	78.2%
Grade 4											
DISD (E)	**74.0%**	**73.8%**	**80.6%**	**82.3%**	**83.0%**	**73.3%**					**65.0%**	**62.0%**
Region 1	80.1%	86.9%	84.1%	90.2%	87.3%	88.9%					71.3%	79.1%
State	82.5%	90.8%	82.6%	91.3%	87.1%	89.2%					72.0%	81.6%
Grade 5											
DISD	**74.4%**	**77.2%**	**88.4%**	**89.5%**							**71.6%**	**75.1%**
Region 1	80.6%	87.3%	86.9%	94.7%							76.1%	85.6%
State	84.8%	90.2%	86.2%	94.6%							79.2%	88.2%
Grade 6											
DISD	**64.2%**	**54.7%**	**63.0%**	**64.0%**							**53.2%**	**48.6%**
Region 1	76.3%	78.6%	76.2%	88.7%							68.3%	75.8%
State	84.6%	85.6%	81.8%	91.4%							76.8%	82.7%
Grade 7											
DISD	**63.3%**	**67.7%**	**66.8%**	**71.7%**							**56.2%**	**59.3%**
Region 1	73.9%	84.2%	74.1%	87.3%							65.2%	78.9%
State	84.5%	89.4%	79.7%	89.6%							75.1%	84.3%
Grade 8											
DISD	**63.7%**	**76.1%**	**61.3%**	**76.3%**	**66.9%**	**72.9%**	**68.9%**	**79.9%**	**42.5%**	**61.3%**	**34.5%**	**47.7%**
Region 1	74.0%	88.2%	68.4%	89.9%	72.8%	82.1%	74.7%	87.5%	50.5%	66.6%	42.1%	59.1%
State	83.9%	91.9%	76.3%	92.4%	80.7%	85.8%	84.6%	91.8%	67.4%	77.0%	57.3%	69.2%

Grade 10												
DISD	71.0%	85.1%	58.1%	82.4%	68.7%	83.3%					46.7%	72.1%
Region 1	77.7%	87.1%	66.1%	88.6%	81.8%	86.2%					58.1%	77.0%
State	86.1%	90.0%	72.6%	89.3%	88.5%	89.1%					67.8%	80.3%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 and 2000-01.
* Shaded areas show that those particular tests are not administered at those grade levels.

Although overall the district made progress between 1996-7 and 2000-01, the performance of several grade levels actually declined during this period. Performance in 2000-01 declined relative to performance in 1996-97 in grade 3 reading and math, in grade 4 reading, writing and all tests taken and in grade 6 reading and all tests taken. Grade 10 made the greatest progress, increasing performance by 25.4 percentage points from the 46.7 percent passing rate for all tests taken in 1996-97 to 72.1 percent in 2000-01.

FINDING

DISD does not have curriculum guides for all courses at all grade levels. Curriculum guides serve as work plans for teachers to use in the classroom, and provide direction on student objectives, prerequisite skills, instructional materials, resources, classroom strategies and assessment methods. The Secondary curriculum director reported that 231 of 298 total courses offered to students in grades 10 through 12 and none of the 53 courses offered to middle school students have curriculum guides. The 53 middle school courses include, for example, three courses for each subject area to correspond to each of the middle school grade levels - grades six, seven and eight. The 67 courses that do have curriculum guides in the high school are all Career and Technology Education (CATE) courses.

Although DISD schools report using TEA's available TAKS guides from 1999-2000 through 2001-02, their use is inconsistent and teachers still do not have a good understanding of TAKS and their application in instruction. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) outline expectations for student learning. Interviews with elementary teachers also pointed to a lack of consistency in curriculum across elementary schools.

Administrators at the elementary level identified a lack of any curriculum guides, until the district obtained TAKS guides in 1999-2000, as a

contributor to low elementary TAAS scores. The TAKS guides used at the elementary level consist of scope and sequences aligning the TAKS with the corresponding TAAS objectives in suggested six-week timelines. The curriculum guides do not include a listing of any instructional strategies, resources or assessments, all critical elements in actual instruction.

TSPR surveys (**Exhibit 2-13**) show that 30 percent of teachers and 60 percent of principals and assistant principals report the district does not have curriculum guides for all grades and all subjects. Additionally, not all elementary school teachers interviewed agreed that their schools have curriculum guides for all grade levels and all subject areas. A large percentage of teachers (33.3 to 43.3 percent) and principals and assistant principals (40 percent) also reported in the survey that the curriculum guides are not appropriately aligned and that the guides do not clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.

Exhibit 2-13
TSPR Teacher, Principal and Assistant Principal Survey Results
DISD Curriculum Guides

Teachers					
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	6.7%	60.0%	3.3%	20.0%	10.0%
The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	10.0%	46.7%	10.0%	20.0%	13.3%
The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	6.7%	40.0%	10.0%	23.3%	20.0%
Principals and Assistant Principals					
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%
The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%

The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%

The high school principal said that some of the high school teachers prepared a booklet for the new TAKS objectives in summer 2002 for the core subjects. This booklet aligns objectives in the areas of reading, writing and math to the TAKS and includes timelines for those subjects. In summer 2002, the district held a PK-grade 5 curriculum-writing project to help promote a consistent curriculum instructional plan for the elementary grades. In 2002-03, DISD plans to add uniform tests developed by elementary teachers during grade-level meetings.

Kerrville ISD (KISD) has curriculum guides for each grade level and subject area. KISD curriculum guides contain aligned student objectives, instructional strategies, instructional resources and assessments. The curriculum is also aligned with ACT/SAT and PSAT objectives, national standards and TAAS objectives. KISD updates its curriculum guides regularly and has a *Curriculum Planning Five-Year Schedule.* The curriculum writers, who are master teachers, align instructional materials, activities and strategies considered best practices to KISD curriculum objectives. Master teachers have classroom experience, certifications and training that enables them to guide instructional improvement at their school by working with other teachers. These best practices are aligned to the Professional Development Assessment System (PDAS) - the system that public schools in Texas use to assess teachers' performance-and have become part of KISD's automated, Web-based program-the Kerrville Instructional Improvement Model-that administrators and teachers can access for instructional improvement ideas and resources.

Christoval ISD (CISD) vertically aligns curriculum by using teams of teachers from each grade level that meet on a regular basis. Vertical and horizontal alignment ensures that concepts taught carry over from grade to grade across the district (horizontally) and from the primary level to the intermediate level and the secondary level (vertically). Teachers from each discipline and grade level meet to discuss the foundation material necessary for presentation and student mastery before students move to the next grade or course. These regular meetings also provide the teachers with a forum to discuss related issues such as remedial or tutoring efforts, teaching styles and the differences associated with moving from the elementary to the middle school level and from the middle school to the high school level. CISD administrators and teachers attribute this coordination and vertical alignment to their high TAAS passing rates.

Recommendation 9:

Develop and update curriculum guides for all courses and ensure vertical alignment across all grade levels.

DISD should identify and review curriculum guides that contain rich resources including best practices, instructional strategies and tests, like the Kerrville ISD curriculum. DISD should use these materials in developing, with the help of outside curriculum experts/consultants and teacher teams, curriculum guides that are based on and reflect best practices and are rich in instructional strategies, resources and activities. DISD should ensure that its curriculum guides are vertically aligned across all grade levels and give particular attention to elementary-middle school alignment. DISD should prepare a five-year plan for developing and updating curriculum guides. The plan should include a description of the curriculum development/updating teams, criteria for the selection/nomination of teachers to the teams and a schedule.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum prepare a plan to develop and update curriculum guides and submit it to the superintendent for review and approval.	October 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction identifies and hires curriculum consultants to work with teacher teams to develop curriculum guides with integrated instructional strategies, best practices, resources and vertical alignment across grades.	December 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction prepares a five-year curriculum plan to develop and update guides and submits it to the superintendent for review and approval.	January 2003
4.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction prepares a three-year plan for staff development on the curriculum guides and disseminates it to administrators and teachers.	February - March 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction establishes curriculum teams.	May 2003 and Annually
6.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction monitors the curriculum development plan and schedule and incorporates necessary adjustments.	June 2003 and Annually

7.	The curriculum consultants work with the teams and develop curriculum guides.	June - July 2003 and Annually
8.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the teams review the guides for vertical alignment.	July - August 2003 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact is based on the assumption that 154 total teams of two teachers each will provide input into the curriculum writing process. Twenty-six middle school teams will develop 53 new middle school guides, 116 high school teams will develop 231 new high school guides and 12 elementary school teams will update 24 elementary guides [six grade levels (K-5) x four core area subjects] in a three-year cycle. This estimate assumes that each teacher will receive approximately $200 per day (average teacher salary of $37,233/187 school days = $199 rounded to $200) for five days during the summer months (two teachers per team for five days at $200/day or two x five days = 10 x $200 = $2,000 x annual number of teams).

Curriculum guide writing will be implemented over a three-year period. The teams will develop and update 104 guides in the first year of implementation and 102 guides in the second and third years of implementation for a total of 308 new and updated guides. (Year one = 104 guides = $2,000 x 52 teams = $104,000; years two and three = 102 guides = $2,000 x 51 teams = $102,000 per year.)

The district will use three consultants, one per educational level, for each year. Consultant costs per educational level (elementary, middle and high school), include one consultant to conduct a one-day training in curriculum guide writing, a one-day review of the writing process and three-day critique of the guides, for a total of five days. Consultants will receive $400 per day plus the state rate currently set in 2002 to $80 per day for lodging and $25 per day for meals at a total cost of $505 per day each. Annual consultant costs per educational level are $2,525 (five days x $505 = $2,525). Total consultant costs are $2,525 x three = $7,575 per year. Over the three-year period, consultant costs will be $7,575 x three years = $22,725. Annual costs include consultant costs and teacher stipends.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07

Develop and update curriculum guides for all courses and ensure vertical alignment across all grade levels.	($111,575)	($109,575)	($109,575)	$0	$0

FINDING

DISD's strategies for improving student performance have proven ineffective due to poor implementation, communication and oversight. The district has developed several strategies for improving TAAS scores including: a process for reviewing TAAS results; a requirement that teachers address TAAS deficiencies in their six weeks plans; alignment of instruction to TAAS needs; TAAS preparation programs and monitoring of student progress. In 2001-02, DISD also implemented grade level meetings to discuss curriculum-related issues. These strategies, however, have not proven effective to date as evidenced by the small margin of improvement of overall student TAAS performance from 1997-98 through 2000-01. Administrators cited a lack of communication, coordination and teamwork among elementary campuses as possible factors contributing to students' poor performance on the TAAS. Elementary teachers interviewed exhibited different levels of awareness of these efforts and pointed to a persistent lack of curriculum consistency across elementary schools.

District administrators and secondary principals and teachers also mentioned similar reasons in regards to student performance in middle school. Although DISD has held grade level and elementary-middle school meetings addressing vertical curriculum alignment, administrators and teachers said they did not see all teachers incorporating curriculum from grades above and below their own into classroom instruction. This, according to teachers, was especially acute between the elementary and middle school grades and left many students unprepared and unable to succeed in middle school. Administrators and teachers said that students promoted to middle school read below grade level and are academically two or three grade levels behind expected levels. During interviews and focus group sessions, DISD administrators and teachers attributed the district's poor TAAS performance in middle school and high middle school retention rates to students' failing to master the core subjects in the earlier grades. The Secondary Curriculum director also said that middle school students are required to take the TAAS in English and that some grade six students are taking TAAS for the first time adding to the district's poor performance. The director of Secondary Curriculum also cited improper training of middle school teachers on instructional

strategies like interdisciplinary instruction or incorporating several subject areas into a combined lesson. The director said that employee turnover directly related to training efforts that, in turn, directly related to a more informed staff and more informed students.

Many districts evaluate the strategies employed to improve student performance on TAAS annually to determine whether or not they have been effective. Actual percentage point increases on overall, grade-level, subject and demographic group TAAS performance are used to measure the effectiveness of strategies employed during the year in question. Teams of teachers, consultants or experts in subject areas are also used to provide information and staff development training to all teachers regarding strategies that may be used to improve student performance in particular areas.

Kerrville ISD (KISD) implemented an automated instructional system, OASIS, for grades K-12 in all content areas. This system pulls together KISD's objectives, best instructional practices and resources and updated information about TAAS into a single system. Each KISD objective is aligned with TAAS Release Test questions, *Clarifying Activities and Assessment in Math* and *Snapshots in Science,* guides developed by the University of Texas, Dana Center that clarify the TAKS and indicate how they relate to curriculum and assessment. The system also includes clarifications from TEA's Educator's Guide and favorite Web sites. In 2001, KISD updated the best practices and resources in each core area and began the alignment of assessment, enrichment and remediation activities to each KISD objective. KISD also enhanced weekly lesson plans for kindergarten and grade 1 generated by the automated instructional system. These lesson plans are especially useful for new teachers and their mentor teachers. KISD used an outside consultant to align the new TAKS objectives for the system. KISD principals developed a plan in 2001 to ensure that all KISD objectives are taught thereby broadening the district's instructional focus beyond TAAS objectives.

Fort Bend ISD (FBISD) developed and implemented a comprehensive program at all grade levels to increase students' TAAS performance. While FBISD is larger than DISD, the strategies it has used are applicable to smaller districts. The program helped the district over a four-year period to improve TAAS performance in all grade levels and for all student groups. The largest improvements in performance were in grades six through eight and 10. FBISD used multiple strategies to improve the TAAS performance of the schools rated Acceptable or Low Performing. The district focused on the area of math. The district provided assistance to teachers in creating TAAS-related lessons, incorporating math activities in all subject area curricula and offering several local credit math courses for students who had not mastered grade eight or exit level math.

FBISD also provided staff development to teachers on math TAAS objectives and educated parents about TAAS so that they could help students at home. The district also paid math teachers a stipend after they had demonstrated that they have implemented the math content and instructional strategies that were addressed in staff development. Using funds from a Ninth Grade Initiative Grant, FBISD hired curriculum facilitators to assist English I and Algebra I teachers and offered tuition-free turn-around courses in English I and Algebra I for at-risk students in grade nine.

At the middle school level, Fort Bend ISD offered a full-year elective math lab for students in grades six through eight who were failing math or the TAAS math test. This lab offered daily TAAS warm-ups. Through a grant from the University of Houston, Fort Bend math teachers participated in ongoing professional development and received a stipend to attend a five-day training on math content and instructional strategies after showing documentation of implementing the strategies the training addressed.

At the elementary level, Fort Bend ISD is implementing programs such as Teacher-as-Mentor in addition to monitoring TAAS performance on practice tests, tutoring students on specific TAAS objectives they have not mastered and meeting with teachers to determine needs for additional student assistance.

Recommendation 10:

Evaluate, implement and monitor effective strategies to improve student performance.

DISD should contact Region 1, TEA and districts like Fort Bend and Kerrville that have successfully improved their TAAS performance districtwide. Review successful districts' plans, implementation strategies and the monitoring systems they have in place to ensure successful implementation. The district should use instructional teams of teachers from the elementary, middle and high school levels to assist the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum directors implement and evaluate successful strategies to improve student performance districtwide.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

| 1. | The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum directors contact other school districts, TEA and Region 1 for assistance in identifying successful strategies and programs | October 2002 |

	designed to assist students improve their academic and TAAS performance.	
2.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum review the strategies and programs from other districts used effectively to improve student performance as suggested by Region 1 and TEA.	November - December 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum submit suggested strategies for districtwide implementation to the superintendent for review and approval.	December 2002
4.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum establish districtwide instructional support teams and provide training on approved strategies.	January 2003
5.	The instructional support teams develop an implementation and monitoring system for initial use in 2003-04 and submit it to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for review and approval.	February - May 2003
6.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction ensures the strategies are implemented districtwide.	August 2003
7.	The instructional support teams prepare monthly reports for the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction monitoring implementation activities.	August 2003 and Monthly
8.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction reviews the reports, monitors districtwide implementation of the strategies, evaluates changes in student performance and submits an annual report to the superintendent and board.	May 2004 and Annually
9.	The instructional support teams submit annual evaluations of implemented strategies including suggested changes and requested staff development to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for review and approval.	May 2004 and Annually
10.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction incorporates the evaluation suggestions and staff development requests from the instructional support teams and data on student performance in an annual report to the superintendent and board.	June 2004 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact assumes three instructional support teams (elementary, middle and secondary) of four teachers each will receive stipends of $2,000 per year (three teams x four teachers per team x $2,000 per teacher = $24,000) to implement and monitor successful strategies to improve student performance. The first year of implementation assumes the support teams will begin work in January 2003 receiving stipends for five months, or half of a year, resulting in half the funding ($24,000 / 2 = $12,000). This fiscal impact also assumes that the district will use existing staff development funds to train teachers on successful strategies.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Evaluate, implement and monitor effective strategies to improve student performance.	($12,000)	($24,000)	($24,000)	($24,000)	($24,000)

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES (Part 2)

FINDING

DISD holds back or retains a higher percent of students in the elementary and middle school grades except kindergarten and grade 5 than the state's rate (**Exhibit 2-14**). DISD retained 11.8 percent of grade 6 students compared to the state average of 1.6 percent and 13.9 percent of grade 8 students compared to the state's 1.9 percent in 2000-01. DISD also had the highest retention rates among its peer districts in 2000-01 for grades 4, 6, 7 and 8. DISD's retention rates for grade 6
(11.8 percent) and grade 8 (13.9 percent) are both more than seven times higher than the state's rates of 1.6 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively, and more than four times higher than the state's average of 2.8 percent for the district's overall grade 7 retention rate (12 percent).

Exhibit 2-14
Retention Rates by Grade for 2000-01
DISD, Peer Districts and the State

Grade Level	Donna	Eagle Pass	Edgewood	Mission	Rio Grande City	San Benito	State Avg.
K	**1.6%**	2.8%	2.4%	2.4%	1.3%	0.4%	**2.3%**
1	**8.1%**	6.4%	13.0%	7.1%	3.6%	2.4%	**5.8%**
2	**8.1%**	5.8%	8.1%	5.8%	3.2%	1.7%	**3.1%**
3	**5.7%**	3.6%	6.1%	3.7%	0.9%	0.9%	**2.2%**
4	**3.1%**	2.2%	1.9%	1.1%	0.6%	1.3%	**1.3%**
5	**0.8%**	1.4%	1.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.2%	**0.8%**
6	**11.8%**	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	4.5%	**1.6%**
7	**12.0%**	4.7%	5.0%	1.1%	1.0%	2.2%	**2.8%**
8	**13.9%**	2.6%	3.4%	1.3%	0.8%	2.0%	**1.9%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

DISD presented its promotion/retention policy to principals in an August 2001 meeting and provided updates throughout the year. However,

teachers and administrators interviewed said that they find the district's retention policy confusing and that implementation varies from campus to campus because of differences in interpretation. DISD promotes students in kindergarten through grade eight who have passed three core subjects including both math and reading/language arts plus either science or social studies. Teachers said they were particularly upset that students could fail either social studies or science without jeopardizing their promotion to a higher grade. During interviews and focus group sessions, teachers said that this diminishes the importance of these subjects in students' minds and reduces students' motivation to do well in these subject areas.

A five-year history of DISD's retention rates by grade level (**Exhibit 2-15**) shows an increase in retention in all grade levels in 2000-01 with the exception of fifth grade, and especially in sixth through eighth grades.

Exhibit 2-15
DISD Retention Rates by Grade
1996-97 through 2000-01

Year	K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2000-01	1.6%	8.1%	8.1%	5.7%	3.1%	0.8%	11.8%	12.0%	13.9%
1999-2000	0.3%	6.0%	5.3%	3.4%	1.1%	0.5%	3.7%	8.7%	8.2%
1998-99	0.5%	5.8%	4.0%	1.9%	1.3%	0.9%	5.9%	6.3%	4.4%
1997-98	0.3%	6.4%	2.4%	2.0%	1.3%	0.3%	3.9%	2.9%	4.1%
1996-97	0.0%	4.7%	3.5%	2.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%

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

DISD administrators and teachers attribute the high retention rates to students' failing to master the core subjects in the earlier grades, to a lack of parental involvement and to the lack of alignment between elementary and middle school curriculum. Elementary and middle school administrators and teachers do not meet or work together in any curriculum alignment efforts. Teachers in the higher elementary grades do not prepare their students for the different style and greater rigor of middle school. The transition strategy specified in the DISD District Improvement Plan (DIP) involved meetings of the Hidalgo County Headstart and

elementary school teachers. Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and elementary students visited middle schools to become familiar with middle school teachers and course requirements. The transition strategy is helpful but insufficient.Administrators and teachers also said that students promoted to middle school read below grade level.

The National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC), TEA and the National Education Center have studied retention issues. In its spring 2000 newsletter, the NDPC reports, "The evidence of retention practices' negative effect on students' emotional development, social behavior, academic achievement, and dropping out continues to be overwhelming." According to the Intercultural Development Research Association, 64 out of 65 studies on retention conducted from 1990 to 1997 found retention to be at best ineffective and at worst harmful to students. Retention is strongly associated with dropping out of school in later years.

A 1994 TEA report, *First Impressions*, developed by the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education urged Texas educators to eliminate retention practices. TEA reports that the percentage of first-grade retentions in Texas dropped from 10 percent in 1992 to 5.8 percent in 2001.

While many educators agree retaining students can produce negative long-term consequences, promoting students who cannot master their schoolwork also can produce long-term negative effects. The passage of the 1999 social promotion law (TEC section 28.0211) requires educators to establish strong accelerated programs for students who have been retained. Most students who cannot read by the third grade have a difficult time catching up to their peers. TEA's Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education recommends that schools identify student needs early in the school year. The task force also recommends that schools use multiple assessments to ensure that students are identified early in their schooling and subsequently provided with the necessary resources to succeed in later years. Additionally, the task force recommends the use of portfolios and checklists to show students' academic progress over time.

Ingram ISD has developed a set of competencies for grades K through 12 that all students must have before they can be promoted to a higher grade. This set of competencies provides teachers with a clear guideline for what students need to know when they complete each grade and helps both teachers and administrators make promotion and retention decisions. Ingram ISD has also implemented the use of the Stanford 9 tests in grades 1 and 2 to assess preparedness for grade 3 and for TAAS. Many districts include details like Ingram's set of competencies and any budgeted funds in both the Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) and the District Improvement Plan (DIP).

Recommendation 11:

Clarify retention policies and develop strategies to reduce the number of students being held back in a grade.

DISD should establish a broad based committee including elementary, middle, high school and district administrators to address districtwide clarification of retention polces and research strategies to reduce the number of students being held back in a grade. Strategies should include preparation of students and staff for the transition from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. The committee should also develop topics and a schedule for vertical meetings between elementary-middle and middle-high school teachers as well as any needed professional development.

The district should consider incorporating study skills sessions including time management and organizational skills into the grade 5 curriculum, gradually increasing student accountability through the year, increasing expectations regarding late or redone work or extra credit and conduct cumulative and comprehensive tests in all subject areas. In addressing the transition from middle school to high school, the committee should examine the district's promotion practices from eighth to ninth grade and the failure of a large number of ninth grade students to advance to tenth grade. Detailed information and specific amounts of money budgeted for strategies and training should also be included in annual CIPs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs and the principals review districtwide, campus and teacher retention rates throughout all grade levels.	September 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs provide clarification to all district staff on the district's retention policy and ensure and consistent campus enforcement.	October 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum contact Region 1 and TEA for assistance identifying districts with successful retention prevention strategies and programs.	October - November 2002
4.	The superintendent establishes a committee including elementary, middle, high school and district administrators to work with Region 1 and the assistant superintendent of	October 2002

	Curriculum and Instruction to develop detailed strategies to reduce retention rates.	
5.	The committee reviews district practices, available resources and effective strategies and materials obtained from Region 1 and other districts.	November 2002 - January 2003
6.	The committee recommends strategies to reduce retention rates to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for review and approval.	January - February 2003
7.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction presents the detailed strategies and any associated funds for training or materials to the superintendent and board for approval and inclusion in the next year's budget.	February 2003
8.	The superintendent and assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs ensure the strategies are initiated, include them in the following year's campus improvement plan.	March - May 2003
9.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs analyze student performance on an annual basis and campus accountability for implementation of the district strategies and submit a report to the superintendent and the board.	June 2003 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The effectiveness of DISD's summer program is in question and little information is available to effectively evaluate the program. Teachers said that students who pass summer school and are promoted are not well prepared for the next grade. Principals and assistant principals and central office and support staff surveyed concurred with the teachers (**Exhibit 2-16**). Forty percent of the principals and assistant principals strongly disagreed that the district's summer school program is effective; 46.7 percent of central office administrators and support staff also did not consider the summer school program to be effective.

Exhibit 2-16
TSPR Principal and Assistant Principal and
District Administrator and Support Staff Survey Results
Summer School Programs

Principals and Assistant Principals					
Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Summer school programs are effective	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%
District Administrators and Support Staff					
Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Summer school programs are effective	5.3%	25.3%	22.7%	24.0%	22.7%

Source: TSPR Surveys, March 2002.

The Federal Programs Department manages the Summer School Program. Curriculum and Instruction Department directors meet with summer school principals to provide input into the program but they do not participate in the summer school program because of scheduled curriculum writing, training, evaluation and planning activities held during the summer months. Curriculum and Instruction Department directors expressed concern over the lack of summer school curriculum alignment to the regular curriculum and the lack of benchmark tests for measuring growth during the summer program. Curriculum and Instruction Department directors recommended that the summer program staff communicate summer school expectations to the Curriculum and Instruction Department staff and parents, that students not be promoted simply because they attended summer school and that the staff selected for the program be the most qualified.

During interviews and focus groups, administrators and teachers questioned the overall effectives of instructional strategies used in the summer school program since students who failed one or two core subjects during the year complete and master the material in a few weeks and pass tests required to advance to the next grade. DISD allows students to make up two core subjects in summer school.

Many school districts offering summer school programs provide training in research-based strategies about effective ways students can learn in a fast-paced environment or accelerated learning techniques and ensure that the presented curriculum in all subject areas mirrors that presented during the regular school year. Additionally, the director of Curriculum and Instruction for many districts is also the director and coordinator for summer school programs. Summer school teachers are often the same

teachers that teach the offered courses during the regular school year, and programs are monitored on an annual basis for effectiveness.

Recommendation 12:

Coordinate the summer school curriculum and tests with the district's regular curriculum and continuously monitor program effectiveness.

The district should research and offer training in research-based strategies such as accelerated learning techniques or ways students can master course curriculum in a shortened instructional time period. The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs should attend training and present peer training to a team of three teachers representing elementary, middle and high school teachers on researched strategies. The district should then consider an annual stipend for the team members and ensure that summer school teachers are appropriately trained.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs and the principals review performance of students who attended summer school, were promoted and identify remaining areas of academic weakness.	September 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction establishes a team of three teachers to represent the elementary, middle and high school grades to review current summer school programs, provide peer training to summer school teachers and to assist district administrators in monitoring student performance and program effectiveness.	September 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs, committee members and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum ensure the summer school curriculum is aligned to the corresponding regular school curriculum and develop or adapt benchmark and end-of-course tests to monitor the effectiveness of the program.	November 2002 - February 2003
4.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs, directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum and committee members develop criteria for selection of teachers for summer school.	February 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction assists the deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs	March 2003

	and the summer school principals to select summer school teachers.	
6.	The deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs trains committee members on effective strategies for use in summer school and ensures team members provide peer training to summer school teachers.	March - April 2003
7.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum monitor summer school teacher and student performance.	May - July 2003
8.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs, assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, committee members and the directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum monitor summer school students' performance during the school year to determine summer school instructional effectiveness.	August 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact assumes that the district will incur a one-time initial training cost of $1,300 for 10 training sessions for the deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs plus the state rate for expenses currently set in 2002 to $80 per day for lodging and $25 per day for meals at a total cost of $105 per day (10 days x $105 = $1,050) plus an estimated $300 for airfare ($1,300 training fee + $1,050 expenses + $300 airfare = $2,650 first year expenditure).

This fiscal impact also assumes that the district will give a $1,500 annual stipend to each of the three teachers chosen to participate on the elementary, middle and high school committee for a total of $4,500 each year.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
One-time cost for training and expenses.	($2,650)	$0	$0	$0	$0
Coordinate the summer school curriculum and tests with the district's regular curriculum and continuously monitor program effectiveness.	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)
Net Savings/(Cost)	**($7,150)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**

FINDING

DISD does not accurately compile and study data on the reasons students are leaving school or remaining in grade 9. TEA Leaver Codes describe reasons that a student may withdraw or leave school. For example, Code 01 is "student graduated." Code 14 refers to a student who "withdrew from/left school because of age." Code 28 refers to a student who "withdrew from school with declared intent to enroll in another Texas public school district." TEA requires districts to report information on students who withdraw from school using TEA Leaver Codes and Definitions. TEA then uses this information in its accountability rating system.

DISD's dropout rate and leaver data do not explain the disparity between the number of students entering ninth grade and the number attending grades 10, 11 and 12. The distribution of students across grade levels (**Exhibit 2-17**) shows a marked and unexplained difference between the number of students in ninth grade and the number of students in grades 10, 11 and 12.

Exhibit 2-17
DISD Enrollment Numbers and Percentage of Total Enrollment
by Grade Level
1997-98 through 2000-01

Grade Level	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
EE and Pre-K	642	6.5%	595	6.0%	611	6.1%	740	7.1%
Kindergarten	829	8.4%	820	8.3%	758	7.6%	811	7.8%
Grade 1	885	9.0%	885	9.0%	906	9.0%	876	8.5%
Grade 2	799	8.1%	847	8.6%	873	8.7%	935	9.0%
Grade 3	773	7.8%	794	8.0%	815	8.1%	866	8.4%
Grade 4	743	7.5%	765	7.7%	778	7.8%	805	7.8%
Grade 5	700	7.1%	752	7.6%	760	7.6%	755	7.3%
Grade 6	747	7.6%	733	7.4%	785	7.8%	825	8.0%
Grade 7	659	6.7%	723	7.3%	717	7.2%	706	6.8%
Grade 8	702	7.1%	654	6.6%	702	7.0%	751	7.3%
Grade 9	988	10.0%	924	9.3%	881	8.8%	893	8.6%

Grade 10	519	5.3%	524	5.3%	506	5.1%	458	4.4%
Grade 11	455	4.6%	485	4.9%	489	4.9%	468	4.5%
Grade 12	423	4.3%	387	3.9%	432	4.3%	443	4.3%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-98 through 2000-01.

Tracking the same group of students from 1996-97 to 2000-01 shows that only 62 percent of the students who attended grade 8 in 1996-97 graduated in the class of 2001. **Exhibit 2-18** shows DISD's grade 9 is 38 percent larger than the previous year's grade 8 and the following year's grade 10 is nearly half the size of grade 9. While high schools do not have a retention policy, students are not promoted to higher grades if they do not have the necessary credits.

Exhibit 2-18
Tracking of DISD Students
Class of 2001
1996-97 through 2000-01

Year	Grade Level	Number of Students	Percent Change From Year to Year
1996-97	8	715	N/A
1997-98	9	988	38.2%
1998-99	10	524	(47.0%)
1999-2000	11	489	(6.7%)
2000-01	12	443	(9.4%)

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

Exhibit 2-19 shows the number of students classified as leavers from 1997-2001, by leaver code. DISD leaver data for 1997-2001 shows that 184 students were classified as leavers between 1997-2001. Of the 184 leavers, 19.6 percent were middle school students and 80.4 percent were high school students. The largest percent of leavers falls in two categories: "poor attendance" (41, students; 22 percent) and "other-unknown or not listed" - (88 students; 48 percent)."

Exhibit 2-19
DISD Leavers
1996-97 through 2000-01

Leaver Codes	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Total
(8) Pregnancy	0	2	2	1	0	5
(9) Married	1	3	4	4	7	19
(15) Homeless or non-permanent resident	0	0	1	0	0	1
(16) Return to home country	4	0	0	0	0	4
(2) Pursue job	3	1	0	1	3	8
(4) Student left to join military	0	0	0	1	0	1
(11) Low or failing grades	5	1	0	2	0	8
(12) Poor attendance - enrollment not revoked	0	1	12	22	6	41
(14) Age	0	0	0	0	1	1
(76) 18 or over - 5 unexcused absences in semester	0	0	0	1	0	1
(27) Fail exit TAAS - did not meet graduation requirements	0	0	2	0	0	2
(65) No return after JJAEP term	0	0	1	0	0	1
(70) Attend alternative program (GED, JTPA, HEP) but not in compliance	0	0	0	1	1	2
(71) Did not accept document for completion of alternative programs (GED, JTPA, trade school, etc.)	0	0	0	0	2	2
(99) Other (unknown or not listed)	3	40	17	22	6	88
Total	**16**	**48**	**39**	**55**	**26**	**184**

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

However, Grade 12 of the class of 2001 has 272 fewer students than were in grade 8. Even assuming that all leavers are associated with the class of 2001, the number of leavers accounts for only 67.6 percent of the difference between the number of students in grade 8 in 1996-97 and the number in grade 12 in 2000-01. Applying the four-year dropout rate also does not explain the discrepancy in grade sizes. DISD principals and

district administrators were not able to provide conclusive information explaining either this cohort-related discrepancy or what happens to students who stay in grade 9 for two years or until they become 17 and who have accumulated less than one-quarter of the credits the district requires for high school graduation and are not identified by the district as leavers. Such students, under Section 89.1403 of the Texas Administrative Code, are eligible to participate in a High School Equivalency Program. However, they have to officially withdraw from school before they can enroll in such a program. The district has to consider these students as "leavers" and include them in the leaver data it reports to the TEA. DISD leaver data for 1997-2001 shows that only four students coded as leavers from 1996-97 through 2000-01 enrolled in such programs (codes 70 and 71). District staff said that the number, ongoing progress and final result of students enrolling in one of the four GED programs offered through the district are not tracked.

Galveston ISD created a taskforce in 1995-96 that was charged with tracking all students the district listed as leavers. The district not only tracked students listed as leavers but also encouraged them to return or stay in school. Members of the taskforce went to the student's last known address and talked to the student's relatives or friends to determine his or her status. Members also encouraged students they contacted to continue their education in the district or in other schools effectively helping the district reduce its dropout rate from 3.7 to 0.9 percent. The members reported the results of their investigations to the registrars at each student's home school.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES (Part 3)

Recommendation 13:

Establish a taskforce to compile and study data on the number and reasons students are leaving school.

The district should establish a taskforce committee including teachers from grades 8-12, high school administrators and administrators and teachers from the GED program that will compile and analyze leaver data over the past five years and track students who have stayed in grade 9 for more than one year. The district should use this data to determine the extent to which the district's leaver code reporting has been accurate.

The district should accurately track students' progress from grade 8 through grades 9-12, and monitor the status of students who have been in grade 9 for more than one year. The taskforce should develop a system allowing the tracking of each student from year to year while in school and if they leave school. Although not required by law, the district should determine the percentage of students enrolled in state approved High School Equivalency Programs who actually completed their GED. The taskforce should also ensure that the leaver data DISD reports to the TEA is accurate.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent establishes a taskforce committee to review leaver data and develop student tracking and follow-up systems.	October 2002
2.	The committee reviews district data on leavers and on students who have been in grade 9 for more than one year contacting these students to determine their status.	November - December 2002
3.	The committee prepares a report to the superintendent and board analyzing their success in tracking these students and the accuracy of the district's records and reports of leaver data to TEA.	January 2003
4.	The committee reviews the district's ability to account for all students as they progress across grade levels, identifies data gaps, incomplete and inaccurate information and makes	February 2003

	recommendations on changes to district's current procedures.	
5.	The taskforce committee develops a tracking system that includes identification data regarding students at risk of dropping out of school.	March - April 2003
6.	The taskforce submits a report on the tracking system to the superintendent and board for review and approval.	April 2003
7.	The director of Technology automates the tracking system and enters data on all students.	May - June 2003
8.	The director of Student Support Services tracks students annually, verifies the status of leavers and prepares a report to the superintendent and board.	Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD students' performance on college entrance exams is below regional and state averages. Only 6 percent of DISD students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) met the established criterion as compared to the state average of 27.3 percent. **Exhibit 2-20** shows the percent of DISD students who met or exceeded the criterion on college entrance tests was lower than the regional and state averages and third lowest among peer districts. In 2000-01 DISD's average score (880) on the SAT was 110 points lower than the state average of 990 and 35 points lower than the regional average of 915. DISD's average ACT score (16.4) was 3.9 points lower than the state average (20.3) and 1.3 points lower than the regional average (17.7).

Exhibit 2-20
College Entrance Examination Scores
DISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and the State
Class of 2000

District	Percent of Students Taking Examinations	Percent of Students Meeting the Criterion	Average SAT Score	Average ACT Score
Rio Grande City	71.6%	5.7%	871	16.4
Mission	54.7%	9.6%	896	17.7

Donna	**54.3%**	**6.0%**	**880**	**16.4**
Edgewood	53.7%	2.6%	780	16.2
Eagle Pass	53.3%	7.0%	872	18.6
San Benito	34.4%	9.8%	899	19.4
Region 1	**51.9%**	**10.8%**	**915**	**17.7**
State Average	**62.2%**	**27.3%**	**990**	**20.3**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Among its peer districts, however, DISD had the third highest percent of students taking college entrance exams. DISD's participation rate in the ACT and SAT is higher than the regional average but lower than the state average. Although the high school promotes SAT participation by communicating with teachers, displaying SAT posters in the classrooms and offering SAT/ACT software in the computer lab as an elective course, the performance of DISD students is significantly below regional and state averages.

The Academic College Test (ACT) includes questions concerning English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning, with scores ranging from 1 to 36 on each component. The ACT composite score is the average of the four component scores. The SAT includes a verbal and a mathematics component. Scores range from 200 to 800 for each test component. The combined total is the reported score and ranges up to a maximum of 1600. TEA has set the scores of 21 on the ACT and 1110 on the SAT as the minimum criterion for student scores to be acknowledged in the district's accountability rating.

Many Texas districts encourage secondary students to take college entrance exams before graduation by initiating a PSAT/SAT program targeted toward younger students. These programs not only provide younger grade 8 and high school students an opportunity to take a version of the SAT that targets their abilities. This gives students the experience of taking tests, as well as a score that can be used as a guide for improvement. Many districts also offer a financial incentive to students by waiving or discounting test fees for both the PSAT and SAT as well as providing teacher training in strategies designed to improve students' performance on college entrance exams.

Recommendation 14:

Improve student performance on college entrance tests by providing staff development to designated teachers on test preparation and offering a preparation course.

DISD should identify effective ACT and SAT test preparation strategies and resources that other districts use, assign teachers to prepare students for these tests, provide staff development to these teachers in the use of the materials and strategies and offer a preparation course to all students. The district should increase student and parent awareness of the importance of the ACT/SAT to their children's postsecondary education and career opportunities and of the instructional and financial resources available to them. The district should increase student and parent awareness in middle school and continue throughout high school, as part of a broader plan for preparing students for postsecondary education.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Secondary Curriculum and the high school counselor identify and obtain information about materials and strategies from several districts that successfully increased student participation in and performance on college entrance examinations.	October 2002
2.	The director of Secondary Curriculum works with the middle school and high school principals and counselors to develop a plan to increase parent and student awareness of the importance of ACT/SAT participation and performance, using information on effective strategies used by other districts.	November 2002
3.	The middle school and high school principals and counselors implement the plan to increase parent and student awareness of the ACT/SAT importance and the resources available to them.	December 2002
4.	The director of Secondary Curriculum reviews available test preparation course materials and associated staff development programs, selects a course and submits the information to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for review and approval.	December 2002
5.	The director of Secondary Curriculum and principals assign middle and high school teachers to teach a test preparation course.	December 2002
6.	The director of Secondary Curriculum makes arrangements for staff development for the assigned teachers and for obtaining teacher and student preparation materials.	January 2003
7.	The high school principal informs students about the preparation course.	February 2003

8.	The director of Secondary Curriculum monitors student participation in the preparation courses, participation in the tests and performance on the ACT/SAT.	March - May 2003
9.	The director of Secondary Curriculum meets with the high school principal and counselor to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and make needed changes.	May 2003
10.	The director of Secondary Curriculum prepares a report for the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the superintendent and board.	June 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact for this recommendation includes a one-time training cost of $6,950 and purchase of initial student packets for $2,500 in 2002-03, and annual costs for the purchase of additional student packets of $3,750 annually thereafter.

The fiscal impact is based on the assumptions that the district will purchase training and SAT/ACT preparation materials, that teachers who completed the training will teach SAT/ACT preparation courses and that the district will provide a $1,000 stipend to the teachers who will be selected to teach the SAT/ACT preparation courses. To be conservative, the maximum amount of teachers (30) is used to calculate the annual stipend for the selected teachers.

The Learning Systems, a non-profit company with 20 years experience, offers SAT training to districts at $6,950 for two days of training for four to 30 teachers. This training program includes all teacher course materials and 100 student packets. Additional student packets are available in lots of 50 for $625. DISD will need to purchase 200 additional student packets in addition to the packets included in the training program. Beginning in the second year, the district will need to purchase packets for 300 students per year.

The calculation for this fiscal impact is presented below:

	One-time cost	Recurring costs
Training cost	$6,950	
Additional student packets for first year (4 lots of 50 packets x $625)	$2,500	
Additional packets for subsequent years (6 lots of 50 packets x $625)		$3,750

Teacher stipend (30 teachers x $1,000)			$30,000
Totals		$9,450	$33,750

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
One-time investment for initial training and student packet purchase.	($9,450)	$0	$0	$0	$0
Improve student performance by offering college entrance preparation course.	($30,000)	($33,750)	($33,750)	($33,750)	($33,750)
Net Savings/(Cost)	**($39,450)**	**($33,750)**	**($33,750)**	**($33,750)**	**($33,750)**

FINDING

DISD's program evaluation system, Instructional Resource Framework, does not address instruction, program effectiveness based upon student TAAS performance or adequacy and quality of available resources. This computer evaluation system is designed to determine program effectiveness by analyzing yes and no questionnaire responses from teachers or administrators within a particular program area. For example, teachers or principals respond with a yes or no to a question asking if the program met its intended goal or if students use a computer or self-paced software in instruction, any available grades are also used to determine program effectiveness.

The director of Evaluation fully implemented this technology program for the first time in 2000-01 after two previous attempts failed because of lack of administrative response and support. Principals did not provide the data requested for the evaluation.

The DISD Evaluation director collects data from each of the schools and analyzes it. The evaluation report generated for each program identifies whether or not the program met the specified goals and objectives for each school and grade level. The DISD Evaluation director prepares and presents the data to the district administration and to principals. Based on the evaluation results for each campus, principals prepare campus plans to address or fix to corrective action plans. However, the evaluation system does not include procedures to monitor the implementation of any suggestions for improvement or corrective action plans.

The Instructional Resource Framework identifies the goal and objective(s) of each program. Examples of goals and objectives include: "Increase the number of economically disadvantaged students who attend college and

experience success" and "promote rigorous academic coursework, improve scores in math, reading, SAT, ACT and inform parents and students about college options and financial aid." The Framework identifies the funding source, estimated funding and the estimated number of participants. DISD's system also provides a description of the program, specifies grade level(s) in which it is administered, the number of periods per week, the teacher-student ratio, length of the instructional period, eligibility criteria, stage of implementation and number and type of staff funded. The Framework sets evaluation criteria that typically include pre- and post-tests, other tests and student grades. **Exhibit 2-21** shows a sample page of the Instructional Resource Framework for Bilingual Education.

Exhibit 2-21
Instructional Resource Framework
Sample Page

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR
Bilingual Education
2000-2001

Funding Source: Bilingual **Estimated Resources:** $xxxxxx Anticipated # of Participants: 3,919

GOAL: To provide a full opportunity to all identified LEP students to participate in a bilingual program in order to ensure equal educational opportunities.

OBJECTIVE: Annually, a minimum exit rate of 50 percent per grade level will be achieved; at least 80 percent of the students in grades Pre-kindergarten through grade 2 will gain a minimum of one language proficiency level based on the pre/post English Woodstock Munoz.

Program Description	Evaluation
Certified and endorsed teachers implement the bilingual program. Teacher assistants provide supplemental support for the instructional program. The bilingual program works toward the goal of developing comprehension, speaking, reading and comprehension of the English language. This is done through the development of literacy and academic skills in the primary language and English. Parental consent for program participation is required and encouraged. The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) annually monitors student progress to determine continued program placement. Staff development opportunities are afforded to all personnel by encouraging and allowing for participants to attend local/state conferences.	Pre-test: PK-2 Woodcock Munoz Post Test: PK-2 Woodcock Munoz Other: 3-5: TAAS (R/W)

Source: DISD Instructional Resource Framework, 2000-01.

Kerrville ISD's Program Evaluation Model is a comprehensive program evaluation that includes three evaluation phases: organization and design, information collection and analysis and conclusion. The model also includes seven steps. The program model defines the amount of funds actually spent by each program and whether or not the funds were

adequate for successful implementation. The model lays out all activities evaluators have to perform and contains associated forms and examples (**Exhibit 2-22**). The KISD superintendent selects three programs a year for in-depth evaluation.

Exhibit 2-22
Kerrville Program Evaluation Process

Steps	Purpose	Activities
1	Select a steering committee and organize.	Evaluation leader selects a committee, identifies a resource person, schedules committee meetings and establishes a deadline for the evaluation report.
2	Describe the program being evaluated.	Evaluators describe the program under evaluation and where and how it has been implemented, state the goal of the program and articulate expected outcomes.
3	Select the focus of the evaluation.	Evaluators define the purpose of the evaluation and identify specific concerns about the program that should be investigated.
4	Select the evaluation method.	Evaluators select the methodology associated with expected outcomes, define quantitative and qualitative measures, develop a data collection schedule and specify the population from whom data will be collected.
5	Collect data and document results.	Evaluators collect data from the target population using the specified data collection instruments.
6	Analyze and interpret the results.	Evaluators analyze the data and document results. Evaluators describe program implementation, whether and how it varies from the original plan and document the data obtained by each evaluation methodology.
7	Prepare report including recommendations.	Evaluators prepare a report that shows the degree to which the program met each expected outcome and support their conclusions. The report includes a cost/benefit analysis and a recommendation of whether the program should be continued as is, modified, or discontinued. The report also includes suggestions on how the program's weaknesses can be remedied and how its strengths can be perpetuated.

Source: Kerrville ISD Program Evaluation Model.

The Kerrville Program Evaluation Model explicitly states post-evaluation responsibilities. The evaluation committee forwards the report and recommendations to the superintendent. The superintendent reviews the report with the principals and respective directors. Before recommendations are implemented, the district checks whether the recommended changes are in compliance with pertinent federal or state laws and regulations. Kerrville ISD involves the Faculty Community Advisory Council and the site-based decision-making committees in planning and implementing major program changes.

Recommendation 15:

Develop a comprehensive program evaluation system including procedures for monitoring the implementation of corrective actions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Evaluation identifies and reviews program evaluation systems that other districts have developed that address quality and effectiveness of instruction, program implementation and resources as well as performance outcomes.	October 2002
2.	The director of Evaluation proposes a comprehensive program evaluation system and submits it to the superintendent for review and approval.	November 2002
3.	The director of Evaluation develops/adapts the program evaluation system, including all evaluation steps, data collection instruments, data collection and analysis procedures, report format and post-evaluation action and implementation monitoring.	November - December 2002
4.	The director of Evaluation trains district staff and principals in the evaluation process.	January 2003
5.	The superintendent and board select programs for evaluation.	January 2003
6.	The director of Evaluation assists the evaluation teams in implementing the evaluation, analyzing the data and preparing reports.	February - May 2003
7.	The evaluation teams present their reports to the board, superintendent and assistant superintendents.	May 2003
8.	The program directors prepare corrective action plans following the guidelines and submit them to the superintendent.	May 2003

8.	The superintendent monitors implementation of the corrective action plans.	August 2003 - May 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD's process for securing grants is fragmented. In 2001-02, DISD secured grants for more than $6.4 million (**Exhibit 2-23**). While DISD has a Grant Writing Office and its director is a certified grant writer, district employees at different levels including assistant superintendents, curriculum directors and campus administrators have written and secured grants without coordinating with the Grant Writing Office. The Grant Writing Office is not always notified about other grant writing efforts in the district. The district notifies the Grant Writing Office only about the awards for grant applications that the office prepared. Once the district gets the grant award and allocates grant funds to different campuses or programs, there is no communication between the Grant Writing Office and the principals or program directors receiving the grant about grant implementation.

Exhibit 2-23
DISD Special Revenue Funds
2001-02

Description	Grant Amount
Bilingual Education Collaborating Alliance (BECA)	$45,000
Texas After School Initiative for Middle Schools (Year 3)	$54,900
Sixth Grade Reading instruction Materials (Scholastic)	$15,000
Investment Capital Fund Grant	$49,995
Compu-Teach Educational Software Grant	$111,890
Academics & Reading Improvement	$329,300
Title-I School Improvement	$163,881
Vocational Education Basic	$131,583
ESEA, Title-I, Part A	$2,733,797
Teaching & Learning Grant	$102,403

IDEA-B Formula Program	$861,789
Teaching & Learning Grant	$102,727
Teaching & Learning Grant	$103,202
Teaching & Learning Grant	$103,178
ESEA, Title-I, Part C	$1,309,353
Comprehensive Development Guidance	$117,060
Test Fairy - 26 Diagnostic Testing Packets	$23,140
Total	**$6,358,198**

Source: DISD Business and Grant Writer Offices, April 2002.

Recommendation 16:

Centralize the district's grant application and writing process through the Grant Writing Office.

The district should coordinate all grant writing through the Grant Writing Office. The superintendent should direct the assistant superintendents, principals and program directors to notify the Grant Writing Office about any grant preparation activities. The Grant Writing Office staff should assist all grant writing efforts in the district and review all grant applications to ensure quality and maintain a database on all grant submissions and their status. The Grant Writing Office should communicate with and assist principals and program directors that received grant funds in grant implementation and monitoring.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs assistant superintendents, principals and program directors to channel all grant writing activity in the district through the Grant Writing Office.	October 2002
2.	The Grant Writing director writes grants and assists district staff in grant preparation.	Ongoing
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance informs the Grant Writing Office about the status of all grant applications.	Ongoing
4.	The Grant Writing director develops a database of all grants submitted by the district, updates the information and keeps principals and program directors informed of grant status.	Ongoing

5.	The Grant Writing director communicates with principals and program directors and informs them about the assistance available for grant management and implementation.	Ongoing
6.	The Grant Writing director annually reviews the district's success in securing grants and prepares a report with recommendations to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and to the superintendent.	May 2003 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

B. GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

Texas state law requires all school districts to identify and provide services for gifted and talented students. In 1990, the State Board of Education adopted its *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students,* a guide for meeting the law's requirements. In 1996, SBOE updated the plan to incorporate Texas Education Code Section 29.123 requirements, which form a basis for ensuring accountability for state-mandated services for gifted/talented students.

DISD's Advanced Academics Services serves academically gifted students in grades kindergarten through 12. Advanced Academic Services consists of the gifted and talented (G/T) program in kindergarten through grade 5, pre-Advanced Placement (AP) in grades 6 through 8 and the pre-Advanced and Advanced Placement in grades 9 through 12. The purpose of the Advanced Academics program at DISD is to provide an enhanced curriculum for students identified as gifted and talented.

DISD uses a four-step process to identify and screen G/T students. (1) Nominations are taken and permission forms are secured. Teachers and parents can nominate students. (2) All students who are nominated are screened. (3) A file is made for all students who will be tested. Students are tested using the Structure of Intelligence test that is available both in English and Spanish and has a non-verbal portion and a creativity test. (4) Students are screened based on the results of this test, the creativity test, Teacher Checklist and Parent Checklist and a letter is sent notifying parents whether or not the student qualifies for the program. Parents must grant permission for students to participate in the program. The nomination process starts when nomination letters are mailed at the beginning of February and when testing is completed by March 1. In the upper grades, students are also tested in the spring, based on parent or teacher requests.

At the elementary level, G/T students are served in heterogeneous classrooms or classrooms with children identified and not identified in the program with a G/T trained teacher at all but one school. Runn Elementary has a pullout G/T program. G/T students are pulled out of their regular class schedules twice a week and served by a G/T certified teacher. In the elementary schools, every elementary grade level has one regular and one bilingual G/T class. Each teacher must show in her/his lesson plans how the curriculum differs for G/T students in the classroom. DISD reassesses all G/T students in grade 5.

At the secondary level G/T students receive instruction through pre-AP and AP classes with AP-trained teachers. In grade 8, students can take Pre-AP Algebra, Pre-AP Biology, Spanish I and Keyboarding for high school credit. DISD has Pre-AP classes in grades 9 and 10 and AP classes in grades 11 and 12. The high school offers Pre-AP and AP classes in English, social studies, science and mathematics. DISD developed a curriculum resource guide in 1997-98 to help teachers take the general curriculum and differentiate it for the G/T students in kindergarten through grade 8. DISD developed the resource guide in collaboration with Pharr-San Juan ISD.

DISD served 902 students in its 2001-02 G/T program (**Exhibit 2-24**). Grade 5 has the largest number of students in the G/T program. DISD has a 2001-02 budget of $142,634. The budget funds are divided among the schools based on the number of G/T students.

Exhibit 2-24
DISD Gifted/Talented Students by Grade Level
2002

Grade	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Grade 1	14	1.6%
Grade 2	68	7.5%
Grade 3	93	10.3%
Grade 4	106	11.8%
Grade 5	134	14.9%
Grade 6	108	12.0%
Grade 7	79	8.8%
Grade 8	104	11.5%
Grade 9	55	6.1%
Grade 10	62	6.9%
Grade 11	52	5.8%
Grade 12	27	3.0%
Total	**902**	**100.0%**

Source: DISD Advanced Placement Program, May 2002.
*May not total to 100 percent due to rounding.

Exhibit 2-25 shows G/T students, teachers and expenditures for DISD, peer districts and the state. DISD's percent of G/T students and teachers is higher than the state average.

Exhibit 2-25
Number and Percent of Gifted/Talented Students and Teachers
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	G/T Student Enrollment		G/T Teachers		Budget Instructional Expenditures for G/T	
	Number	Percent	Number*	Percent	Amount Per Student	Percent**
Eagle Pass	1508	11.8%	64.8	8.9%	$2,105	8.0%
Mission	1,146	8.7%	46.3	5.5%	$80	0.2%
Edgewood	971	7.2%	8.2	1.0%	$176	0.4%
Donna	**902**	**8.6%**	**22.2**	**3.1%**	**$112**	**0.3%**
Rio Grande City	857	9.6%	46.1	7.7%	$60	0.2%
San Benito	672	7.4%	25.2	4.4%	$117	0.3%
State Average	**339,270**	**8.2%**	**6,438.7**	**2.3%**	**$78**	**2.2%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
* Expressed in Full-Time Equivalents.
** G/T expenditures as percent of total budgeted instructional program expenditures.

DISD also offers G/T students extended day and extended year activities. Extended day activities include participation in the Destination Imagination program. The program has two components. The Instant Challenges component teaches students creativity skills, risk taking, time awareness and team skills by requiring students to solve a challenge quickly and decisively. The Team Challenges component requires the team to do research and experimentation to solve every aspect of the problem they get and develop a performance-based presentation demonstrating the team's solution. The challenge associated with this

component may take several weeks to several months to solve. Extended year activities include a Summer Challenge program that focuses on arts, reading, math and technology.

At the secondary level, seniors can participate in a concurrent enrollment program with the South Texas Community College and the University of Texas Pan American. Concurrent enrollment means that students may enroll at a college or university to begin their college work while they are still in high school. In 2001-02, DISD has 112 students with concurrent enrollment through South Texas Community College and 40 students with concurrent enrollment through University of Texas Pan American. DISD used distance learning for the concurrent courses, except for one course that is taught at the school by a college faculty member because it has a large number of students. DISD helps students in concurrent courses pay the tuition required.

The Advanced Academics Services director meets every six weeks with the District G/T Committee. The committee is composed of one representative from each campus, either a teacher or administrator. The committee helps the coordinator guide the G/T program and formulate or amend policy that impacts the program. The Advanced Academics Services director has two districtwide meetings with parents each year. Mainly, these meetings address pre-AP and AP courses. The Advanced Academics Services director also speaks once a year, at the beginning of the year, at the high school PTO meeting. The G/T parents group has not been active this year because of a change in the Advanced Academics program administration.

The DISD Advanced Academics program went through a District Effectiveness and Compliance review in January 2001. The program was reviewed on 11 G/T indicators and was found in compliance with state requirements. The review recommended that the district continue G/T staff development at both the elementary and secondary levels.

The Advanced Academics Services director reviews TAAS and AP scores of students in the program as one way of looking at program effectiveness. **Exhibit 2-26** shows 2000-01 TAAS results by grade level comparing the performance of students in the program with students not in the program.

Exhibit 2-26
TAAS Performance by Grade Level
DISD G/T and Non-G/T Students
2000-01

	Reading	Mathematics	Writing

Grade Level	G/T	Not G/T	G/T	Not G/T	G/T	Not G/T
Grade 3	93%	62%	97%	69%		
Grade 4	96%	68%	98%	78%	94%	67%
Grade 5	99%	72%	100%	87%		
Grade 6	97%	48%	96%	59%		
Grade 7	99%	61%	97%	66%		
Grade 8	99%	70%	97%	71%	99%	66%

Source: TEA, TAAS Summary Report, 2000-01.

The Advanced Academics program was formally evaluated in 1999-2000 by an external evaluator under the former director; but the district does not have the evaluation report. The Advanced Academics director recognizes the need to evaluate the program by surveying parents, students and teachers.

FINDING

The participation rate and performance of DISD students on Advanced Placement (AP) exams is below the state average. The percentage of students from DISD taking AP examinations is also lower than four peer districts. The percentage of resulting scores above the criterion is lower than its peer districts and the state. **Exhibit 2-27** shows the percent of DISD students that have taken advanced courses, the percent tested and resulting student performance. The concept behind the AP program is to provide college-level courses to high school students to ease the transition to college. According to the College Board, the organization that manages the SAT, the number of advanced courses that students complete is one of the best predictors of success on the SAT and in college.

Exhibit 2-27
Advanced Course Completion and
Advanced Placement Examinations
DISD, Peer Districts and the State

District	Percent of Students Completing Advanced Courses 1999-2000	Percent of AP Students Tested 2000-01	Percent of All AP Scores Exceeding Criterion 2000-01	Percent of AP Examinees with Scores Exceeding Criterion 2000-01

Mission	37.6%	11.5%	30.6%	38.9%
Donna	**13.5%**	**11.7%**	**13.2%**	**17.0%**
San Benito	13.1%	15.6%	8.4%	12.5%
Eagle Pass	11.5%	17.4%	37.8%	56.9%
Rio Grande City	11.0%	17.7%	23.3%	38.7%
Edgewood	10.2%	15.9%	5.6%	9.5%
State Average	**20.1%**	**14.3%**	**50.1%**	**54.0%**

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

The percentage of DISD students completing AP courses is also below the state and regional averages (**Exhibit 2-28**). DISD did not rank well compared with its peers on any of these measures. The percent of DISD students completing AP courses has actually decreased annually from 1997-98 to 1999-2000.

Exhibit 2-28
Percent of DISD Students Completing Advanced Courses
1997-98 through 1999-2000

	1997-98	**1998-99**	**1999-2000**
DISD ISD	17.0%	11.0%	13.5%
Region Average	20.2%	17.7%	19.7%
State Average	18.9%	17.5%	20.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-98 through 1999-2000.

The performance of DISD students on AP tests also decreased in 2000-01 compared to 1999-2000 performance levels (**Exhibit 2-29**). In 1999-2000, 28.4 percent of the AP test grades were 3 or higher. In 2000-01, only 12.3 percent of the AP test grades were 3 or higher.

Exhibit 2-29
Performance on Advanced Placement Tests
1999-2000 and 2000-01

	1999-2000	**2000-01**

Number of Grades Reported*	123	162
Percent Who Scored a 3	13.8%	6.8%
Percent Who Scored a 4	6.5%	0.0%
Percent Who Scored a 5	8.1%	5.5%

Source: DISD Advanced Placement Program, April 2002.

Many Texas districts, such as Comal ISD, encourage students to take AP courses and the subsequent AP examinations to receive college credit for courses taken while in high school. Many other districts offer training to AP and regular education teachers in test-taking strategies as well as similar tutorials and access to computer labs supplied with applicable software to students. Texas encourages students to pay a small portion of the examination fee, rather than have the district cover the entire fee, as DISD has done, because industry standard research indicates that these students score higher than those students who do not pay a fee for AP examinations. DISD has recently changed its fee-paying policy after students whose AP fees were paid by the district did not show up for the exam.

Recommendation 17:

Develop and implement a plan to increase the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses and passing exams.

DISD should develop a comprehensive plan for increasing the number of students taking AP courses and tests and improving students' performance on these tests. The plan should incorporate a staff development schedule; provide staff development to teachers of AP courses and include staff development in the area of test-taking strategies and preparation for AP tests. The district may consider paying stipends to teachers teaching AP courses to motivate these teachers to recruit students for AP courses. The district should also survey students about reasons for non-participation in AP courses and potential incentives they would consider effective. Teachers and administrators should begin informing parents and students in middle school about the AP program and its academic and financial benefits, such as getting college credit and reducing college costs. The district should advertise the program in its newsletters and increase community awareness through articles in the local newspaper. School and district administration should recruit parent organizations and school improvement teams to advocate for the program. The middle and high school should invite representative of local colleges and universities to speak about the benefits of having college credit through the AP program. The district should also invite former students who participated in AP

courses to speak to current students on how these courses have helped them in college. The district should review its AP curricula and AP tests to identify instructional gaps or areas of weakness.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The AP coordinator contacts districts with high participation in AP courses and good performance on AP tests and studies their AP programs including curriculum, staff development and strategies.	October 2002
2.	The AP coordinator and counselor develop an AP plan and submit it to the assistant superintendent for Special Program for review and approval.	November - December 2002
3.	The AP coordinator and counselor implement the plan.	January - May 2003
4.	The AP coordinator monitors changes in the number of students taking AP courses and AP exams and in their performance to determine the effectiveness of the strategies.	May 2003
5.	The AP coordinator and counselor modify the plan as needed.	June 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

C. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

DISD uses compensatory education funds to provide special support for students at-risk of dropping out and students who are not performing at grade level. TEA distributes Title I funds based on the number of economically disadvantaged students in a school. Economically disadvantaged students are typically those who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch or breakfast. The students served, however, are selected based on educational need, not economic status. The law allows a school to be designated as a Title I, Part A school wide program if 50 percent or more of students at the school, or in the attendance zone, are low income. DISD is designated districtwide as a Title I, Part A program. In 2001-02, 90 percent of DISD students were classified as economically disadvantaged and
71.5 percent were classified at-risk.

Texas began to fund compensatory programs in 1975. In 1997, Section 42.152 of the Texas Education Code was amended to include reporting and auditing systems covering the appropriate use of compensatory education allotment funds. Senate Bill 1873 requires state compensatory education (SCE) funds, like federal Title I funds, to be supplemental in nature. That is, these funds are to be added to the regular program but cannot take the place or supplant regular funds. SCE fund rules allow a great deal of flexibility in identifying students and creating successful programs. Senate Bill 702 changed the state criteria for identifying students at-risk of dropping out of school and required districts to use student performance for designing and implementing appropriate compensatory, intensive or accelerated instructional programs so these students will perform at grade level at the end of the following school year. This allows districts to use local criteria for identifying at-risk students but these criteria have to be board approved. Senate Bill 702 also requires each district to evaluate and document the effectiveness of the state compensatory education program in reducing any disparity in performance and restricts the amount of SCE funds that a district can use to fund basic services for disciplinary alternative education programs not to exceed 18 percent of the total amount of SCE funds allotted to the district. Senate Bill 702 requires that districts integrate SCE budgetary appropriations into the district and campus planning process, identify in their district and campus improvement plans the designated funding source, the amount of SCE funds budgeted and the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff funded by SCE appropriations. These changes were effective at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year.

Funds are distributed on the basis of the number of economically disadvantaged students, but students served do not need to be economically disadvantaged. The students served by the state compensatory program are designated as at-risk. TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* lists criteria for identifying at-risk students. These definitions do not imply that state compensatory education programs are restricted to these students. According to Senate Bill 702, a student is at-risk of dropping out if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Pre-K through grade 3 students who did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or an assessment instrument administered during the current school year;
- did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument (TAAS);
- is a student of limited English proficiency;
- students in grades 7 through 12 who did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 out of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the current or preceding school year;
- was not advanced from one grade level to the next for two or more school years;
- has been placed in an alternative education program during the preceding or current school year;
- has been expelled during the preceding or current school year;
- is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution or other conditional releases;
- was previously reported through the Public Education Information System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school;
- is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court or a law enforcement official;
- is pregnant or is a parent;
- is homeless; or
- resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district

In 2001-02 DISD had 7,469 students classified at-risk, more than 70 percent of its student population (**Exhibit 2-30**). DISD's percent of at-risk students is 1.8 times the state average.

Exhibit 2-30
Number and Percentage of At-Risk Students
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	Number of At-Risk Students	Percent of At-Risk Students
Edgewood	9,129	55.6%
Mission	8,324	56.9%
Eagle Pass	7,788	58.5%
Donna	**7,469**	**71.5%**
Rio Grande City	6,832	83.9%
San Benito	4,965	82.1%
State	**1,664,473**	**40.1%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 2-31 provides the number and percentage of economically disadvantaged and at-risk students in DISD by school in 2001-02. DISD received $5.1 million in state compensatory education funds in 2001-02 or $683 per economically disadvantaged student.

Exhibit 2-31
DISD Economically Disadvantaged Students
Compensatory Education Expenditures
2001-02

School	Enrollment	Number of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Number of At-Risk Students	Percent of At-Risk Students
Munoz Elementary	786	634	80.7%	670	85.2%
P.S. Garza Elementary	843	826	98.0%	758	89.9%
Salinas Elementary	684	677	99.0%	587	85.8%
M. Rivas Elementary	475	471	99.2%	446	93.9%
Caceres Elementary	505	478	94.7%	322	63.8%
J.P. Lenoir Elementary	470	424	90.2%	325	69.1%

C. Stainke Elementary	366	351	95.6%	257	70.0%
Runn Elementary	358	350	98.3%	347	97.5%
T. Price Elementary	488	438	89.8%	372	76.2%
A.M. Ochoa Elem.	514	491	95.5%	384	74.7%
Guzman Elementary	442	411	92.8%	335	75.8%
Veterans MS	1,127	995	88.3%	622	55.2%
Solis Middle School	1,139	1,111	97.5%	646	56.7%
Todd 9th Grade Center	736	635	86.3%	533	72.4%
Donna High School	1,519	1,119	73.7%	864	56.9%
Alternative Education Program/JJEP	*	*	*	0	0%
District	**10,451**	**9,410**	**90.0%**	**7,468**	**71.5%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
* Fewer than five students.

DISD funds a number of programs through SCE funds. These programs are listed in **Exhibit 2-32**.

Exhibit 2-32
SCE Funded Program

- Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) - reading, writing and math
- Compass Learning - reading, writing and math
- Content Mastery (CM)
- Expressways to Reading (ETR)
- Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS)
- Quality Equals Students Together (QUEST)
- Reading For Success
- Sing, Spell, Read, and Write

- Summer School
- After school and Saturday tutorials
- Latchkey

Source: DISD, Federal/SCE Programs Office, 2002.

DISD has three GED programs. The Todd 9th Grade campus offers a GED program funded through the Workforce Investment Act for 9th grade dropouts. Donna High School offers a GED program that serves migrant youth, 17 or older, who withdrew from high school. The program, funded by Texas A&M University, provides academic, social and financial support to enable these students to complete a high school equivalency program. The program offers instruction four times a week - Monday through Thursday - in the evening for four hours each day. The program has a coordinator and three instructors and serves between 70 and 100 students a year. The Adult Basic GED program, administered through Region 1, offers instruction in ESL, pre-GED and GED. The program has three instructors and offers classes twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday, four hours a day. It serves about 100 people a year.

The *Improving America's Schools Act* of 1994 authorizes state education agencies to coordinate education programs for migrant students. Section 1301 of Title I, Part C of the Act (Public Law 103-382) states that migrant funds must support education programs to help reduce education disruptions that occur with repeated moving and ensures that migrant students receive the education that fits their needs. The Office of Migrant Education in the U.S. Department of Education provides grants through the TEA to districts based on the enrollment of migrant students in the district.

Exhibit 2-33 shows the distribution of migrant students in DISD schools. In 2001-02, 20.9 percent of DISD students are migrant students.

Exhibit 2-33
Student Enrollment by School: Total and Migrant Students
2001-02

Campus	2000-01 Enrollment	Migrant Students	Percent of Migrant Students
Munoz Elementary	786	147	18.7%
Garza Elementary	843	146	17.3%
Salinas Elementary	684	129	18.9%

Rivas Elementary	475	124	26.1%
Caceres Elementary	505	60	11.9%
LeNoir Elementary	470	58	12.3%
Stainke Elementary	367	101	27.5%
Runn Elementary	356	103	28.9%
Price Elementary	488	59	12.1%
Ochoa Elementary	514	95	18.5%
Guzman Elementary	442	104	23.5%
Veterans Middle School	1,127	268	23.8%
Solis Middle School	1,139	264	23.2%
Donna High School*	**2,254**	**522**	**23.1%**
District	**10,451**	**2,180**	**20.9%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
*Includes Todd 9th Grade campus.

DISD received $1,309,353 in Title I Part C funds in 2001-02. DISD fully or partially funds several programs through Title I Part C funds. The programs for supplemental or accelerated instruction or credit retrieval are listed in the DISD district improvement plan. These programs include reading programs for acceleration or credit retrieval such as Expressways to Reading, Reading for Success, Compass Learning, Invest Learning computer courseware, Help One Student to Succeed, Summer Migrants Access Resources Through Technology, a distance learning summer program, and TAAS tutorials. DISD offers Migrant TAAS tutorials to migrant students who have not passed the exit-level TAAS, who are failing a course or who have to make up academic work that they missed while out of the school district. Other programs include an early childhood program for three-year olds and the Pregnancy Education and Parenting program. This program is offered at the Donna High School campus in a separate building and serves middle school, the Todd Ninth Grade campus and Donna High School students who are pregnant or who are parents. The program has a staff of 10, which includes a coordinator, a caseworker, a home instruction teacher, six caregivers and a secretary. In 2001-02 the program assisted 81 students and cared for 35 infants and toddlers. The program cares for children from six weeks to three years old. The program also offers services to enrolled students such as early pre-natal care, counseling, social services, parenting and child development classes, vocational skill classes, peer group sessions and on-site child care. The

home instruction teacher goes to the student's home to bring instructional assignments and materials and provide individual instruction for up to four hours a week.

Exhibit 2-34 shows the percent of migrant and non-migrant students who passed TAAS by grade level and TAAS section. DISD's district improvement plan objective for migrant students is that at least 60 percent of students pass each section of the TAAS at all grade levels. DISD's Migrant Education program received a certificate from TEA for achieving the state goal for migrant students in math. The Donna High School class of 2001 valedictorian was a migrant student.

Exhibit 2-34
Migrant and Non-Migrant Students TAAS Performance
2000-01

	Migrant Students	Non-Migrant Students
Grade 3		
Reading	51	70
Math	64	75
All Tests	44	63
Grade 4		
Reading	70	73
Math	82	81
Writing	67	73
All Tests	56	62
Grade 5		
Reading	64	80
Math	88	90
All Tests	63	78
Grade 6		
Reading	43	57
Math	56	65
All Tests	38	51
Grade 7		

Reading	65	68
Math	70	71
All Tests	55	60
Grade 8		
Reading	68	78
Math	69	78
Writing	64	74
Science	73	81
Social Studies	48	65
All Tests	**34**	**51**

Source: DISD TAAS Summary Report, 2000-01.

DISD has a migrant student tracking system. The district has a list of all migrant students, checks students off the list and gives each migrant student a Red Bag when the student leaves. The bag contains the student's TAAS scores, report card, a list of medical needs and a list of instructional needs. The bag also contains a letter to the receiving school asking them to return the bag with the current information and any new information when the student will leave that school.

FINDING

DISD's economically disadvantaged students performed below similar students in the region and the state. DISD economically disadvantaged students scored lower on TAAS than economically disadvantaged students in Region 1 and statewide from 1996-97 through 2000-01 (**Exhibit 2-35**). In 2000-01, DISD's economically disadvantaged students scored 1.8 (grade 10) to 26.4 (grade 6) percentage points below the regional average. TAAS performance of DISD economically disadvantaged students was lower in 2000-01 than it was in 1998-99 for grades 3, 4 and 6.

Exhibit 2-35
Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students Passing All TAAS Tests
By Grade
1996-97 to 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Grade 3					

DISD	63.2%	72.8%	74.9%	49.1%	58.6%
Region 1	70.4%	67.0%	76.0%	71.5%	72.9%
State	62.8%	66.2%	69.3%	68.0%	69.3%
Grade 4					
DISD	64.4%	71.3%	67.1%	55.3%	60.6%
Region 1	68.2%	69.7%	75.5%	75.2%	77.2%
State	59.8%	68.9%	69.2%	71.4%	74.2%
Grade 5					
DISD	69.8%	73.6%	69.7%	60.3%	73.4%
Region 1	73.1%	72.8%	75.4%	79.8%	84.1%
State	68.2%	75.3%	73.0%	77.4%	82.1%
Grade 6					
DISD	50.9%	53.3%	52.4%	52.9%	46.9%
Region 1	64.1%	62.5%	70.3%	70.6%	73.3%
State	63.8%	68.2%	69.3%	71.7%	73.6%
Grade 7					
DISD	55.3%	52.5%	55.0%	52.7%	57.9%
Region 1	60.7%	61.6%	66.6%	69.0%	76.8%
State	61.4%	65.5%	66.0%	68.1%	75.7%
Grade 8					
DISD	33.3%	34.4%	37.2%	39.0%	45.3%
Region 1	36.05	37.8%	47.0%	47.4%	54.5%
State	38.2%	43.5%	46.6%	48.0%	54.3%
Grade 10					
DISD	47.0%	51.3%	56.5%	65.4%	72.7%
Region 1	53.1%	60.2%	67.1%	71.5%	74.5%
State	50.3%	58.2%	63.0%	68.4%	68.9%

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

Although DISD provides multiple programs to supplement instruction for students at risk of dropping out after school, on Saturdays and during

summer school and the district evaluation found that these programs met the objectives they set in a considerable number of grade levels and campuses, these have not been effective in improving the performance of economically disadvantaged students on TAAS. Interviews with district administrators and staff did not offer evidence that the district has a well-integrated compensatory education program where programs and tutorial services are aligned with the regular education curriculum of participating students and address their areas of weakness.

Many districts ensure that their tutorial and supplementary programs are aligned with the TAKS and address the TAKS and TAAS objectives in which students who receive the tutorial and supplementary services are weak. In these districts, the regular teachers develop the tutorial programs or work with the tutors to ensure that they address the areas in which students need help. These districts also frequently monitor all compensatory funded programs and positions for effectiveness and in an effort to make needed adjustments and changes to positively affect the academic success of students at risk of failure.

Bastrop ISD designed a comprehensive compensatory education program to improve and enhance the regular education program for its at-risk student population. Bastrop ISD designed the program based on a needs assessment and involved district and campus staff in the program development. In 1999-2000 Bastrop implemented a reading program in all elementary schools based on one-on-one instruction with a teacher trained in the program. The district also implemented a literacy program involving small groups. The district offers a Compensatory Math/Reading Improvement Class at the middle school level for students who have not mastered TAAS. These students take an additional math and language arts class. The district's Optional Extended Year serves students not likely to be promoted and gives them additional instructional time. The district also uses the "Send In" teacher strategy in all its elementary schools, which sends in an additional teacher to team teach with the regular classroom teacher for specified amounts of time to lower the student-teacher ratio.

Recommendation 18:

Align compensatory education programs with the regular curriculum to address TAKS and TAAS objectives in which students need assistance.

DISD should develop with the assistance of external consultants from successful districts, Region 1 or experts in the area of compensatory education a comprehensive compensatory education program to improve the academic performance of its low performing students. In developing the program, the district should establish a team of administrators, teachers

and staff dealing with compensatory education programs. The team and consultants should review its current programs and their alignment with the new TAKS standards, TAAS objectives and regular curriculum to ensure that they are aligned with the regular curriculum that that its tests are correlated with the TAAS.

DISD should also develop procedures requiring its teachers to develop or have input into the development of its tutorials and other compensatory programs. The procedures should also require teachers to coordinate and communicate on a regular basis with the staff providing these services. The program should incorporate successful strategies that other districts such as Bastrop and Robstown have used to work with economically disadvantaged and at-risk students, including migrant students. The district should also develop procedures for monitoring staff and student performance. The district should first pilot the programs in a small number of schools to ensure that the programs actually improve student performance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs identify and hire consultants to assist DISD in the development of a comprehensive compensatory education program.	October 2002
2.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs establishes a district team to work with the consultants.	October 2002
3.	The consultants meet with the district team, review existing programs and their alignment with the regular curriculum and develop the program.	November 2002
4.	The consultants and team prepare a detailed plan including implementation steps and a schedule and submit it to the superintendent and board for review and approval.	November - December 2002
5.	The superintendent reviews the plan with district and campus administrators.	January 2003
6.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs selects schools to pilot the program.	January 2003
7.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs monitors program implementation and student progress in the pilot schools.	February - May 2003
8.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs reviews student performance and prepares a report jointly with the consultants to the superintendent and board with	June 2003

	recommendations for program modifications and implementation in all schools.	
9.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs implements the program in all district schools.	August 2003
10.	The deputy superintendent for Federal/SCE Programs monitors the program in all schools, evaluates its effectiveness and reports to the superintendent and board.	August 2003 - June 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact during the first year of implementation is based on the assumptions that the district will hire a team of two consultants who will spend 55 days on this project: 15 days in meetings with the district team (3 weeks x 5 days = 15 days) established for this purpose, 30 days not in the district to prepare a detailed plan and refine it and 10 days of follow-up consultation (2 weeks x 5 days = 10 days), including the review of pilot program results and refinement of the program. Consultants will receive $400 per day plus the state rate currently set in 2002 to $80 per day for lodging and $25 per day for meals at a total cost of $505 per day each. Cost for the first year will be $49,250 [(15 days x $505 per day = $7,575) x 2 consultants = $15,150] + [(30 days x $400 per day = $12,000) x 2 consultants = $24,000] + [(10 days x $505 per day = $5,050) x 2 consultants = $10,100] = $49,250].

The fiscal impact during the second year of implementation will be $10,100 for training and expenses assuming the same daily rate for meals and lodging. Consultants should be available to the district for 10 days at the above rates [10 days x $505 per day for 2 consultants = $10,100).

The consultants will only be used in the first two years of implementation.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Align compensatory education programs with the regular curriculum to address TAKS and TAAS objectives in which students need assistance.	($49,250)	($10,100)	$0	$0	$0

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

D. SPECIAL EDUCATION

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), districts must provide appropriate public education for all children with disabilities regardless of their severity. The act requires districts to provide educational services in the "least restrictive environment," and to include students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs. Districts also are required to develop an individual education plan (IEP) for each of these children with input from regular education teachers. The IEP has to provide special education students with curricula that is related to those of children in regular education classrooms.

The 1997 amendments to the IDEA define an effective special education program as having the following elements:

1. *Pre-referral intervention in regular education*: When a student has an academic problem in the regular education program, the teacher should intervene to solve the problems. If steps taken to solve the problem by the regular education teacher don't produce results, the problem should be referred to special education staff.
2. *Referral to special education for evaluation*: Referring a student to special education means writing an official request supported by documentation. The referral information must include an explanation of steps that have been taken in regular education to solve the student's problem before the referral.
3. *Comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation*; Once a student has been referred, the district must provide a comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation, commonly referred to as an assessment, within a prescribed amount of time.
4. *Initial placement through an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee:* After the evaluation is complete, regular and special educators, administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals and parents meet to discuss the results, decide if the student qualifies for special education services in one of 12 federal special education categories, and, if so, write a plan for the student's education.
5. *Provision of educational services and supports according to a written Individualized Education Plan:* The individualized education plan (IEP) developed by the ARD committee includes information about the classes, subject areas, developmental areas and/or life skills courses in which the student will be instructed,

      how much time will be spent in regular education and related
      needs like speech therapy or counseling.

6. *Annual program review*: Each year after a student's initial
   qualification and placement, an ARD committee conducts a review
   to ensure the student's program is appropriate.

7. *Three-year re-evaluation*: Every three years, the student undergoes
   a comprehensive individual assessment. Another ARD committee
   meeting is held to discuss the results of the re-evaluation and
   determine if the student still qualifies for special education services
   in the same category.

8. *Dismissal from the special education program*: If and when a
   student no longer meets the eligibility criteria, the student is
   dismissed from special education. The ARD committee must make
   this decision.

The DISD Special Education Department has 72.75 FTEs. These include a
director, two supervisors, five diagnosticians, five speech therapists (one
of whom is .75 FTE), one occupational therapist, one physical therapist,
two counselors, two social workers, 44 teachers and 10 clerical staff. In
addition, DISD contracts with nine diagnosticians, two on an as-needed
basis for a minimum of two days a week; five for Saturday testing and two
to help with ARD meetings. DISD also contracts for an occupational
therapist through Easter Seals in McAllen, Texas. Ten of DISD's special
education teachers have alternative certifications or permits.

Exhibit 2-36 shows an organization chart of DISD Special Education
Department.

Exhibit 2-36
DISD Special Education Department

Organizational Chart


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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │      Superintendent      │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ Assistant Superintendent for │
                    │  Curriculum and Instruction  │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │       Director of        │
                    │    Special Education     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘

 ┌────────────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────────┐
 │  Elementary Supervisor  │        │  Secondary Supervisor   │
 └────────────────────────┘        └────────────────────────┘

 ┌────────────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────────┐
 │ Speech Therapists (4.75)│        │     Counselors (2)      │
 │ Occupational Therapists(1)│      └────────────────────────┘
 │  Physical Therapist (1) │
 └────────────────────────┘

 ┌────────────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────────┐
 │      Teachers (44)      │        │    Social Workers (2)   │
 └────────────────────────┘        └────────────────────────┘

 ┌────────────────────────┐        ┌────────────────────────┐
 │   Clerical Staff (10)   │        │    Diagnosticians (5)   │
 └────────────────────────┘        └────────────────────────┘
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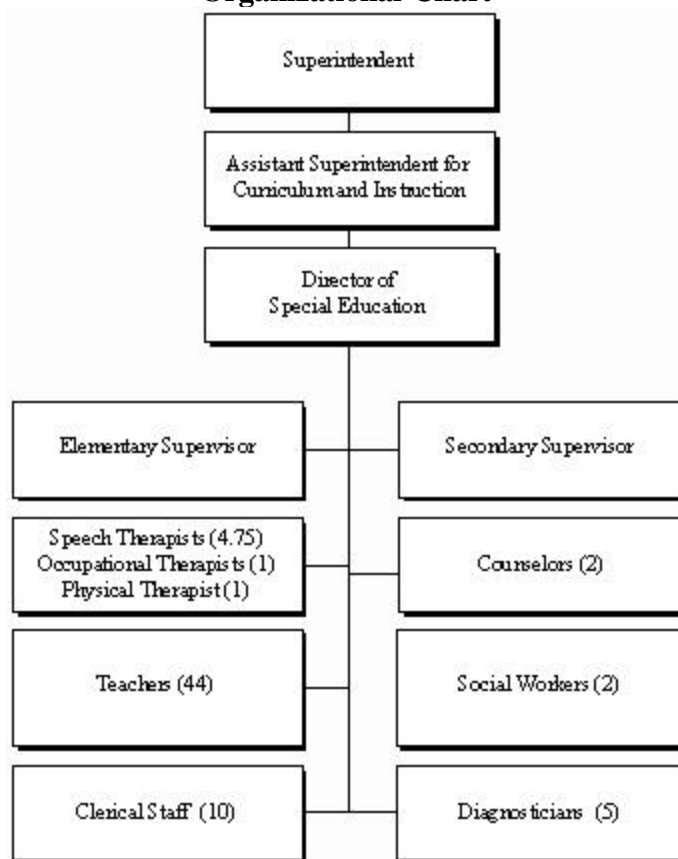
Source: DISD Organizational Chart, 2001-02.

DISD offers the full continuum of instructional arrangements for special education students at its schools including the DISD Adjustment Guidance Alternative Education Program (AEP) and the juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP). DISD provides special education services through the following instructional arrangements.

Mainstream - To ensure the least restrictive environment appropriate for each student, district personnel first consider providing services in regular education classrooms with supplementary aids or services. Students with disabilities who spend all of their classroom hours in a regular classroom are called "mainstreamed." Content mastery services are available at all schools to all students with disabilities. Each school has one content mastery teacher. These classes provide support and reinforcement to special education students who are mainstreamed.

Resource - Students are assigned to the resource classroom based on the ARD committee's recommendation. The district offers resource classes in the four core subjects on all campuses in reading language arts and math.

Students may be placed in one or more of these classes based on their educational needs. Resource classes follow the student's IEP, which is correlated to TEKS, and stays in sequence with the regular classes. These students have a combination of regular classes and resource classes. The majority of students identified for the program are served through this instructional setting.

Vocational Adjustment class (VAC) - This setting provides educational and vocational services to eligible secondary students. Students are instructed in job readiness skills and are monitored in on-the-job placements.

Self-Contained classes - Students with severe disabilities, who cannot be appropriately served in a regular classroom, will be served in a separate "self-contained" classroom. The self-contained classrooms, called life skills rooms, assure that the needs of educable mentally retarded and severely and profoundly disabled students are met and that life skills training takes place within a functionally basedcurriculum. Self-contained classes are available at five elementary schools, two middle schools, the Todd 9th Grade Center and Donna High School.

Adaptive Physical Education - These classes provide specialized physical education curriculum for students who are unable to benefit from the regular physical education program. The adaptive physical education teacher on each campus, with the support of a special education teacher, provides these classes following an initial evaluation by the physical or occupational therapists or the adaptive physical education teacher.

Homebound - This program provides at-home services for students at all grade levels that cannot attend school because of illness, injury or expulsion. In 2001-02, one special education teacher provided services to 19 students.

Pre-school - DISD provides a pre-school program for children with disabilities who are three to five years old. The special education and regular education teachers coordinate the program to have the children participate in regular education. The Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) is located on three elementary campuses: Salinas, Guzman and Perez-Munoz.

Students with auditory impairments who cannot be served in DISD are sent to the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf in McAllen. In 2001-02, 15 students from Donna attend the Regional School for the Deaf in McAllen at a cost of $79,135. These students are enrolled in McAllen ISD but DISD provides transportation for them to and from McAllen. An itinerant teacher from the Regional School for the Deaf serves students with auditory impairments attending DISD. The district also has a visual

impairment teacher (VI teacher) who serves the students with visual disabilities.

In each of these settings, appropriate curriculum modifications and services are provided to all students. ARD committees, composed of parents and professional staff, determine program eligibility and participation, individual educational plans (IEPs) and placement in and dismissal from the special education program.

In 2001-02 DISD has 910 special education students. **Exhibit 2-37** shows the number of special education students by grade level. The largest percent of special education students are in grades 5, 7, and 6 respectively.

Exhibit 2-37
DISD Students Enrolled Special Education
Number of Students by Grade Level
2001-02

Grade Level	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Early Education	27	3.0%
Pre-kindergarten	17	1.9%
Kindergarten	37	4.1%
Grade 1	62	6.8%
Grade 2	73	8.0%
Grade 3	74	8.1%
Grade 4	75	8.2%
Grade 5	108	11.9%
Grade 6	87	9.6%
Grade 7	99	10.9%
Grade 8	78	8.6%
Grade 9	74	8.1%
Grade 10	39	4.3%
Grade 11	33	3.6%
Grade 12	27	3.0%
Total	**910**	**100.0%**

Exhibit 2-38 describes the percent of students by disability. Of the total DISD special education students served, 63.4 percent have learning disabilities, 18.0 percent have speech impairments and 9.1 percent have mental retardation.

Exhibit 2-38
DISD Students Enrolled Special Education
Percent of Students by Disability
2001-02

Disability	Percent of Students
Orthopedic Impairment	1.6%
Auditory Impairment	0.9%
Visual Impairment	0.9%
Mental Retardation	9.1%
Emotional Disturbance	1.3%
Learning Disability	63.4%
Speech Impairment	18.0%
Autism	0.9%
Other Health Impairment	3.6%
Non-categorical early childhood	0.2%
Total	**100.0%**

Exhibit 2-39 shows the number of students enrolled in special education and special education expenditures in DISD, peer districts and the state.

Exhibit 2-39
Special Education Enrollment and Expenditures
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	Number of Students	Budgeted Special	Percent of Budgeted	Per Student

	Enrolled	Education Expenditures	Instructional Expenditures	Expenditure
Edgewood	1,946	$5,063,157	11.6%	$2,602
Rio Grande City	1,208	$2,938,487	10.5%	$2,433
San Benito	1,129	$2,445,448	8.3%	$2,166
Eagle Pass	979	$3,576,267	9.1%	$3,653
Donna	**910**	**$2,670,992**	**7.7%**	**$2,935**
Mission	786	$2,716,841	6.1%	$3,457
State	**486,725**	**$2,753,628,704**	**9.6%**	**$5,657**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

FINDING

DISD participates in School Health and Related Services (SHARS) and Medicaid Administrative Claims (MAC) programs. The state's Medicaid program was amended in September 1992, allowing school districts to enroll as Medicaid providers and apply for Medicaid reimbursement for services they are providing to students with disabilities. This program, known as SHARS, provides reimbursement for services determined to be medically necessary and reasonable to ensure that a disabled child under the age of 21 receives the benefits of a free and appropriate public education. Services include assessment, audiology, counseling, medical services, school health services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, physiological services and associated transportation. DISD received SHARS reimbursements totaling $408,322 since 1997-98 (**Exhibit 2-40**).

Exhibit 2-40
DISD SHARS Funds
1997-98 through 2001-02

Year	SHARS Funds
1997-98	$109,642
1998-99	$116,018
1999-2000	$101,858
2000-01	$ 56,908
2001-02*	$ 23,896

Total	$408,322

Medicaid Administrative Claims (MAC) is another reimbursement program that is available to school districts in Texas. MAC reimburses districts for health-related administrative services that cannot be billed through SHARS. School districts can get reimbursed for administrative services such as referral, outreach and coordination. DISD has participated in the MAC program since 1997. DISD participates in MAC through the Sandia Group as part of a 10 district cooperative, the Rio Grande City Valley Consortium. DISD is the lead district. Between July 1997 and September 2001, DISD received $749,899 in reimbursement from MAC, as shown in **Exhibit 2-41**.

Exhibit 2-41
DISD MAC Funds
1997-98 through 2001-02

Year	SHARS Funds
1997	$ 90,064
1998	$200,268
1999	$310,380
2000	$119,463
2001*	$29,725
Total	**$749,900**

COMMENDATION

DISD participates in SHARS and MAC and received more than $1.15 million in reimbursement for 1997 through 2001.

FINDING

DISD does not have an effective process for referring and identifying special education students. DISD's share (8.7 percent) of students enrolled

in special education is lower than the state's average of 11.7 percent in 2001-02. Between 1997-98 and 2000-01, DISD's percent of identified special education students was between 30 and 34 percent below the state average (**Exhibit 2-42**).

Exhibit 2-42
DISD Special Education Students and Teachers
1997-98 through 2001-02

Special Education	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
DISD's Percent of students	8.2%	8.5%	8.0%	8.2%	8.7%
State average	12.0%	12.1%	12.1%	11.9%	11.7%
DISD's Percent of teachers	5.1%	4.6%	5.3%	5.0%	8.0%
State average	9.4%	9.5%	9.6%	9.9%	10.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-98 through 2000-01 and TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

DISD's percent of special education students is also considerably lower than the percent of special education students in three of its peer districts and the state (**Exhibit 2-43**).

Exhibit 2-43
Number and Percentage of Special Education Students
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	Number of Students Enrolled	Percent of Special Education Students
Edgewood	1,946	14.5%
Rio Grande City	1,208	13.6%
San Benito	1,129	12.4%
Eagle Pass	979	7.8%
Donna	**910**	**8.7%**
Mission	786	6.0%
State	**486,725**	**11.7%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

DISD relies heavily on contractors for assessment. DISD has 14 diagnosticians, five are district employees and nine are contractors. DISD contracts for two diagnosticians on an as-needed basis for a minimum of two days a week. Five of the contractors come on Saturdays to conduct special education testing. DISD also contracts with two diagnosticians to help with ARD meetings.

DISD's identification of special education students was questioned by TEA in its January 2001 District Effectiveness and Compliance review. TEA's review found that 61.7 percent of students in special education are students also identified in the limited English proficiency program as compared to DISD's overall 48.1 percent of limited English proficient. TEA's District Effectiveness and Compliance review also cited DISD for non-compliance on four indicators. The review found DISD to be in non-compliance with an identification and referral indicator: "Is a full and individual evaluation conducted of each student's educational needs before the student begins receiving special education services?" The review also cited the district for non-compliance in regard to three other indicators. (1) The convenience of a special admission, review and dismissal committee with appropriate district/campus personnel and other required members to decide within federal timelines the student's educational program and to document placement and service decisions agreed upon in a meeting with that group, including the timely convenience of a second admission, review and dismissal/individualized education plan (IEP) meeting for students who transfer into the district and the provision to non-English speaking parents of written or audiotaped copies of the child's IEP. (2) The development and implementation of policies, procedures and operating guidelines that comply with state and federal laws for disciplinary removals of students with disabilities. (3) Accuracy of reporting annual child counts.

Although DISD has a pre-referral process, it is not consistently implemented in the district. DISD's pre-referral process is school-based. DISD provides each school with a pre-referral packet. DISD requires teachers to consider a range of support services for students having difficulties in the regular classroom prior to referring these students for special education assessments. DISD has a Student Assistance Committee at every school. The committee, composed of teachers, an administrator and a counselor, meets upon the request of a teacher to determine why a student is having difficulties and suggests intervention strategies, such as additional academic support including tutorials, counseling or classroom accommodations such as extra time for assignments, use of word processors to expedite writing assignments or calculators for math computation, seating in the front row or additional academic support. If these interventions are not successful the SAC meets with the parents to refer the student to special education.

DISD special education staff received training from Region 1 in the identification process, but the district used a TEA videotape to train regular education teachers. The principals have the responsibility of training regular educators about the identification process. The principals view the tape and train their regular education teachers. In 2001-02, DISD has experienced a 56 percent increase in referrals to special education: 435 referrals compared with 278 referrals in 2000-01. The Special Education director said that the district also sees a significant increase of referrals before the administration of TAAS.

Smithville ISD implemented in 1999-2000 a four-level pre-referral process called Student Success Team. In the first phase the teacher meets with the parent and also collaborates with a peer teacher and implements recommended classroom modifications. If unsuccessful, in the second phase the teacher asks the counselor to collect data on the student. The teacher also collects data from the parent and reviews with the peer the results of the classroom modifications. In the third phase the Student Success Team, a multi-disciplinary team, meets to review the information and develop strategies and supports to be used in the classroom in the next three to six weeks. If the student has not made sufficient progress, referral is initiated to dyslexia, Section 504 or special education.

Many districts with a high percent of students eligible for services through a limited English proficiency program ensure that all regular and special education teachers are particularly trained in language assessments to ensure that students referred for special education services have been prescreened to determine whether or not their needs are language based. These districts also monitor pre-referral and special education referral percentages paying particular attention to students eligible for limited English proficiency services to reduce the incidence of over identification for students with bilingual needs.

Recommendation 19:

Establish a multi-step pre-referral process and provide uniform training in the referral and identification of special education students.

DISD should establish a pre-referral process that specifies the different sequential steps that the school has to take before it can refer a student to special education. The procedures involved in each step should be explicitly described as well as the persons involved, as Smithville ISD does. DISD should train the principals, regular education teachers and SAC members in the process to ensure uniformity. DISD's special education supervisors should monitor on a regular basis the pre-referral process implemented on each campus and provide additional training, as

needed. DISD should also train all special assessment personnel, both those employed by the district and the contractors in the identification processes to promote uniformity in assessment and identification and ensure that all students in need of special education services are identified and served.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Special Education director and supervisors identify districts that have effective pre-referral processes and obtain information on their processes, procedures and implementation and monitoring strategies.	October 2002
2.	The Special Education director and supervisors modify the DISD pre-referral process and prepare information on the new process.	November 2002
3.	The Special Education director submits the modified pre-referral plan to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for review and approval.	November 2002
4.	The Special Education director and supervisors train principals, regular education teachers and special education staff in the new pre-referral process.	December 2002
5.	The Special Education director arranges for training of all diagnosticians through Region 1 or another organization to ensure uniformity in assessment and student identification.	December - January 2003
6.	The Special Education supervisors monitor implementation of the pre-referral process on each campus, prepare reports on each campus that include corrective actions and identify needs for additional training.	January - May 2003
7.	The Special Education supervisors monitor campuses to ensure that they have implemented the recommended changes, provide additional training as needed and report to the Special Education director.	February - May 2003
8.	The Special Education director monitors the diagnosticians and reviews student identification data.	February - May 2003
9.	The Special Education director prepares a report for the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction on the district's pre-referral and identification results.	May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

E. BILINGUAL EDUCATION/ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Texas Education Code Chapter 29 requires that every Texas student who is identified as limited English proficient be provided a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) program. Limited English proficiency students are defined as those whose primary language is something other than English and whose English language proficiency limits their participation in an English-language academic environment.

All school districts with 20 or more limited proficiency students in the same grade level are required to offer Bilingual/ESL or an alternative language program. Schools must provide bilingual education in pre-kindergarten through the elementary grades. Districts must provide bilingual education, ESL instruction or other transitional language instruction approved by TEA in the post-elementary grades through grade 8. For students in grades 9 through 12, schools are required only to provide instruction in ESL.

School districts are required to identify limited English proficiency students and provide bilingual or ESL programs as an integral part of their regular educational programs. They must hire certified teaching personnel to ensure that these students have full educational opportunities.

The education of limited English proficiency students is an important task for Texas public schools. Nearly 500,000 or 12.5 percent of Texas students were enrolled in bilingual or ESL programs in 1999-2000. According to the *Policy Research Report,* "Of the 666,961 students added to the Texas public education system between 1987-88 and 1997-98, more than 60 percent were students receiving bilingual education/English as a second language services." The *Report* notes that the number of Hispanic students rose by 45 percent in the last decade, more than double the growth rate of the total student population. The State Board of Education's *Long-Range Plan for Public Education 2001-06* states "enrollment in the state's bilingual education program is projected to increase by 22 percent over the next five years."

The purpose of the DISD Bilingual/ESL program is to provide a full opportunity to all students to become competent in speaking, reading, writing and understanding the English language. By meeting the language needs of these students, it is DISD's goal to facilitate their successful

integration into the regular school curriculum. DISD has moved in 2001-02 from the Early Transitional Bilingual Model to the Maintenance Model of Instruction to accomplish this goal. Under the Maintenance Model, identified students receive instruction in Spanish and English from pre-kindergarten through grade 5 in all core subject areas and in Spanish language arts. The model also emphasizes the importance of maintaining one's native culture while acquiring American culture. The ESL program at the secondary level is designed to provide special English instruction to these students through the study of English and ESL integration across all academic subjects. Recent immigrants participate at the high school level in English as a Second Oral Language for two to three hours a day.

Students are identified with a limited English proficiency based on the Home Language Survey that is completed for each student during registration. Any student whose home language is not English is assessed using the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey. The Language Proficiency Assessment Committee determines students' placement, monitors progress and oversees program exit. The elementary level committee consists of a campus administrator, two certified teachers assigned to bilingual education and a parent of a bilingual child who is not a district employee. The secondary committee consists of a campus administrator, one or more counselors, one or more ESL teachers and a parent of an ESL student who is not a district employee. These groups meet about eight times a year. Bilingual students at the elementary level do not exit the program until they complete grade 5. Students who exit the program are followed up for two years and may be returned to the program if their academic performance is not satisfactory. DISD has clearly defined identification, screening, review and monitoring and exit procedures. In addition to the Maintenance Model, two DISD schools use the dual-language model.

The Bilingual/ESL director coordinates Bilingual/ESL education. The district has a bilingual program at the elementary level (K-5) and an ESL program at the secondary level. The DISD Bilingual/ESL Department has 304.5 FTEs. The Bilingual/ESL Department includes, in addition to the director, a secretary and clerk, also a Bilingual/ESL strategist, 265 Bilingual/ESL teachers and 35.5 full-time aides. The Bilingual Taskforce that was established in 1999, whose membership consists of two Bilingual/ESL teachers from each campus, supports the program. The Bilingual Taskforce meets following TAAS to review results and develop districtwide strategies. The Taskforce can also meet as needed. The Bilingual/ESL strategist focuses on reading and pre-literacy skills, trains teachers and provides materials. The Bilingual/ESL strategist spends one week on each campus training and assisting teachers.

TAAS performance of limited English proficient (LEP) students and students in DISD Bilingual/ESL programs is lower than the performance

of students who are not members of these groups on all sections of TAAS and across all grade levels. Bilingual/ESL students' performance on the TAAS declined in 2000-01 from its levels in 1998-99.

DISD's percent of expenditures and per student expenditures for Bilingual/ESL are lower than the state average. DISD's per-student expenditures for Bilingual/ESL education are only 12.6 percent of the state's per-student expenditures (**Exhibit 2-44**). DISD has a large LEP and Bilingual/ESL student population. In 2001-02, DISD served 5,092 LEP students including 675, or 13.3 percent, recent immigrants. Of the 5,092 LEP students 93.7 percent are enrolled in Bilingual/ESL programs. In 2001-02, 45.7 percent of all DISD students participate in the Bilingual/ESL program. **Exhibit 2-44** compares Bilingual/ESL enrollment and expenditure data for DISD, its peer districts and the state.

Exhibit 2-44
Bilingual/ESL Student Enrollment, Budget and Expenditure
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
2001-02

District	Students Enrolled in Bilingual/ESL	Percentage of Total Enrollment	Total Budgeted Expenditures	Percentage of Budgeted Expenditure	Per Student Instructional Expenditure
Donna	**4,773**	**45.7%**	**$873,984**	**2.5%**	**$183**
Eagle Pass	3,556	27.8%	$808,792	2.0%	$227
Rio Grande City	3,129	35.1%	$318,740	1.1%	$102
Mission	2,722	20.7%	$613,739	1.4%	$225
Edgewood	1,811	13.5%	$560,913	1.3%	$310
San Benito	1,446	15.9%	$138,219	0.5%	$96
State	**542,609**	**13.1%**	**$790,531,036**	**2.8%**	**$1,457**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

In 2001-02, compared with peer districts, DISD has the highest percentage of students enrolled in Bilingual/ESL and the highest percentage of budgeted expenditures. The number of students served in the district's Bilingual/ESL program is from 10.6 to 32.2 percentage points more than the total program enrolment in all the peer districts.

The TAAS performance of limited English proficient (LEP) students and students in DISD Bilingual/ESL programs is also lower than the performance of students who are not members of these groups (**Exhibit 2-45**).

Exhibit 2-45
TAAS Performance Comparison
2000-01

	LEP		Bilingual	
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Grade 3				
Reading	56	79	54	77
Math	70	76	70	75
All Tests	52	68	52	66
Grade 4				
Reading	44	88	41	88
Math	66	90	66	89
Writing	45	87	44	85
All Tests	32	77	31	75
Grade 5				
Reading	39	90	39	88
Math	76	94	76	94
All Tests	39	88	39	86
Grade 6				
Reading	20	68	*	*
Math	32	76	*	*
All Tests	15	62	*	*
	LEP	**Bilingual**		
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**
Grade 7				
Reading	33	83	*	*
Math	39	87	*	*

All Tests	20	77	*	*
Grade 8				
Reading	48	87	*	*
Math	57	84	*	*
Writing	44	84	*	*
Science	59	87	*	*
Social Studies	35	71	*	*
All Tests	19	60	*	*

Source: TAAS Summary Report, 2000-01.
* Five or fewer.

The performance of LEP students declined considerably from 1998 to 2001 (**Exhibits 2-46** and **Exhibit 2-47**). The largest decline occurred in the lower grades 3, 4, and 5.

Exhibit 2-46
Percent of LEP Bilingual/ESL Students Passing
1998-2000

Year	All Tests Taken	Reading	Math	Writing
LEP Bilingual Students				
1998	61.5%	67.5%	79.3%	78.8%
1999	70.5%	80.8%	82.8%	73.2%
2000	34.8%	42.1%	54.1%	55.9%
LEP ESL Students				
1998	24.7%	34.6%	45.5%	42.2%
1999	31.9%	41.5%	52.4%	46.9%
2000	22.0%	34.1%	48.6%	40.7%

Source: TEA, District Effectiveness and Compliance Report, January 2001.

Exhibit 2-47
Academic Progress of LEP Students in Alternative Language Program
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Grade 3					
Reading	52	77	91	48	47
Math	68	73	86	51	63
Grade 4					
Reading	41	59	68	44	36
Math	60	66	75	51	56
Writing	57	64	66	55	40
Grade 5					
Reading	40	41	51	33	31
Math	68	63	72	61	65
Grade 6					
Reading	15	28	38	26	17
Math	29	43	44	37	27
Grade 7					
Reading	21	32	31	15	27
Math	28	46	43	36	32
Grade 8					
Reading	28	23	44	37	35
Math	34	35	55	53	42
Writing	31	36	43	27	38
Social Studies	15	18	28	42	*
Science	41	29	49	23	*
Grade 10					
Reading	45	45	54	54	39
Math	36	37	55	54	51
Writing	39	41	64	56	41

DISD attributes the decline in TAAS performance to the increase in the number of LEP students taking TAAS since 1999-2000 (**Exhibit 2-48**). In 1999-2000 all LEP students, exclusive of recent immigrants, were required to take TAAS. Prior to 1999-2000 DISD exempted a large percent of their LEP students from TAAS.

Exhibit 2-48
TAAS Participation Rates and TAAS Performance
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
All Tested	75.1%	82.4%	81.5%	90.4%	95.7%
Not Tested	24.9%	17.6%	18.5%	9.6%	4.3%
Limited English Proficient Exemption	17.1%	11.0%	10.5%	3.1%	2.1%
Percent of Students Passing All Tests Taken	57.7%	60.8%	61.9%	55.9%	61.3%

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

FINDING

TEA's District Effectiveness and Compliance review of the district's Bilingual/ESL program in January 2001 pointed out lack of or insufficient instructional materials or non-use of state-adopted textbooks for Bilingual/ESL students. The district lacked uniform instructional resources for the program until 2001-02. Bilingual staff developed curriculum with little coordination or input from regular education teachers and the district's curriculum directors. Bilingual/ESL staff at each school selected their own program materials and resources in the absence of district guidelines or in reference to state approved materials. The DISD Bilingual/ESL director said that the Bilingual/ESL Taskforce met in 2000-01 to promote uniformity and consistency of instruction by developing a list of recommended instructional materials. The Bilingual/ESL strategist now checks with teachers at each school to ensure that the teachers are using the recommended materials.

The review recommended that DISD review its Bilingual/ESL program to determine its effectiveness in improving the academic performance of students, especially at the elementary level. The District Effectiveness and Compliance review also recommended that DISD identify research-based Bilingual/ESL programs with promising practices and proven academic results and pilot those; that the district continue to promote consistency and continuity of instruction through the use of uniform instructional resources and curriculum and continue to improve the qualifications of its teaching staff through staff development and preparation of teachers for Bilingual/ESL endorsement and certification.

In 2001-02, not all of DISD's Bilingual/ESL teachers are either appropriately certified or have the required endorsement. DISD has 219 certified bilingual teachers, 46 certified ESL teachers, and 11 uncertified Bilingual/ESL teachers. The 11 uncertified teachers are at the elementary level in 2001-02 and, according to the director of Curriculum and Instruction, participated in team teaching instruction or partnered with a teacher with a Bilingual/ESL certification. DISD has implemented several strategies to train and certify teachers in an effort to alleviate a teacher shortage in this area. TEA's review cited the Bilingual/ESL program for the use of uncertified teachers in those classrooms. Certified teachers are teachers who completed a four-year program and passed the ExCET. Teachers with Bilingual/ESL endorsement are teachers who completed the additional training and passed the Bilingual/ESL test.

The district uses strategies such as teaming at the elementary level and having two certified teachers work with one non-certified teacher. The director of Bilingual/ESL trains teachers for the ExCET exam so they can get Bilingual/ESL endorsements. The district also pays the ExCET ($72), endorsement ($75) and certification ($150) fees for teachers. In 2001-02, 19 teachers became endorsed and 17 teachers on permit are preparing for the ExCET.

The district also requires all secondary English teachers to become ESL certified. To encourage this, the district gives stipends of $1,000 to teachers who become endorsed. These strategies have increased the number of teachers with Bilingual/ESL endorsements and certifications.

Eagle Pass ISD district administrators and the Austin Elementary School principal and staff use a series of strategies to improve student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) particularly for students in the Bilingual/ESL program. The strategies include providing staff development focused on English as a Second Language (ESL), math, reading and TAAS; using benchmark testing results to guide teaching; and increasing student expectations. In addition to the instructional focus, the principal created a family environment

within the school and included all staff members in the teaching-learning process. The principal is also visible in the classroom, monitoring and motivating staff and students.

The school increased its TAAS test scores in grades 3-5 in each area tested between 1996-97 and 1999-2000 by an average of more than 13 points. At least 90 percent of all students, including all students in each demographic group and those in Bilingual/ESL, passed each area tested. Based upon these scores as well as other criteria, Austin Elementary School achieved the highest accountability rating of Exemplary, in both 1998-99 and 1999-2000.

Many districts monitors students' language development through explicit procedures and benchmarks and often include staff development and curriculum development opportunities particularly for Bilingual/ESL programs. Some districts offer a full Bilingual Program to Pre-K through grade 3 students whose primary language is Spanish and a Modified Bilingual Program to students whose primary language is English but who are also fluent in Spanish. Other districts try new programs and assess their effectiveness through continual monitoring efforts and through analysis of student performance.

Recommendation 20:

Support bilingual teacher certification and training, material development and effective program delivery.

The district should use two teams of three teachers each to adapt program materials for one pilot bilingual and one ESL program. The district should also hire a knowledgeable consultant in each program to work with each team of teachers for training and material development. Piloting the programs will give DISD the opportunity to adapt them to DISD needs and determine their effectiveness. It will also help the district implement them more smoothly districtwide.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Bilingual/ESL director identifies research-based Bilingual/ESL programs with proven effective strategies, high academic results and associated costs.	October - December 2002
2.	The Bilingual/ESL director identifies uncertified teachers and ensures they are enrolled in the appropriate certification courses.	October 2002
3.	The Bilingual/ESL director jointly with the Bilingual/ESL Taskforce select schools to pilot the programs, develop a plan	January - March 2003

	and present the plan and budget requirements to the superintendent for review and approval.	
4.	The Bilingual/ESL director identifies and hires consultants to help the district adapt the programs and train teachers and administrators.	April 2003
5.	The Bilingual/ESL director and the Taskforce select teachers to adapt pilot program materials.	April - May 2003
6.	The consultants work with the teachers in preparing program materials.	June 2003
7.	The consultants train administrators and teachers in program implementation.	July 2003
8.	The Bilingual/ESL director monitors pilot program implementation and students' academic performance and prepares a report for the Bilingual/ESL Taskforce.	August 2003 - May 2004
9.	The Bilingual/ESL Taskforce makes recommendations for districtwide program changes based on the results of the pilot programs and sends the recommendations to the superintendent for review and approval.	June 2004
10.	The consultants train administrators in teachers.	July 2004
11.	The Bilingual/ESL director implements the programs districtwide and monitors implementation and student performance.	August 2004 - May 2005

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact is based on the assumption that the district will conservatively increase total program expenditures by 2 percent of 2000-01 program expenditures ($873,984 x 2 percent = $17,480 annually for 2003-04 through 2006-07) and will pilot two new programs, one Bilingual and one ESL, in two schools in 2003-04.

Two teams of three teachers each will spend seven days (five in development and two assisting consultants with training) $200/day ($37,233/187 days = $199 rounded to $200 per day) developing two pilot programs for a total of $8,400 (two teams x three teachers/team x seven days x $200 day).

A consultant for each program will conduct a five-day program overview, training on materials preparation and program development, a two-day training to teachers and administrators in the pilot schools and five days of technical assistance for a total of 12 days, all at $400/day plus the state's

2002 rate of $80 per day for lodging and $25 per day for meals for a total of $505 per day per consultant. The consultant fees during the first year of program development are based upon (12 days x $505 = $6,060) x 2 consultants = $12,120.

In 2003-04, the total costs will be $38,000 ($17,480 increase in expenditures + $8,400 program development + $12,120 consultants).

In 2004-05, as programs are implemented districtwide, the consultants will each train administrators and teachers for two days and offer technical assistance for 10 days for a total of 12 days per consultant assuming the same rates as the prior year. Two consultants for 12 days x $505/day is $12,120. Teaching teams will each spend two days at the beginning of the year and end of the year providing peer training and performing program evaluations at a cost of (two teams x three teachers/team x 4 days x $200/day per teacher = $4,800. The $17,480 increase in Bilingual/ESL expenditures is also included for a 2004-05 total of $34,400 ($12,120 + $4,800 + $17,480).

During 2005-06 and 2006-07, two consultants will provide technical services for three days each at a cost of $3,030 (2 consultants x 3 days x $505 per day). Total costs for years three and four are $20,510 ($3,030 + $17,480).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Support bilingual teacher certification and training, material development and effective program delivery.	$0	($38,000)	($34,409)	($20,510)	($20,510)

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

F. CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

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

DISD's Career and Technology Education (CATE) program is housed primarily at the Donna High School in its own facility. CATE also offers several courses at the Todd 9th Grade Center including Career Connections, Family and Consumer Science, Agricultural Science and Keyboarding. At the middle school level there are CATE courses in Career Investigations and Keyboarding. A director heads the DISD CATE program consisting of 31.75 full-time employees, including 25 teachers, one counselor, two teaching assistants (one in Agricultural Sciences and one in Cosmetology) and three part-time teaching assistants working one day week, a PEIMS clerk and a secretary (**Exhibit 2-49**). CATE's budget for 2001-02 was $1.1 million. The DISD CATE Department has articulation agreements with three colleges: South Texas Community College in McAllen, Texas State Technical College in Harlingen and Coastal Bend College in Beeville. An articulation agreement is a formal written contract between a district and a postsecondary institution that coordinates occupational training to eliminate unnecessary duplication of course work. The classes are taught at the high school. Upon completion and meeting all required technical competencies, the courses will be accepted for college credit. The credit hours are transferable to these colleges and any other college or university that accepts such courses.

Exhibit 2-49
DISD Career and Technology Education Organization

```
          ┌─────────────────┐
          │  Superintendent │
          └────────┬────────┘
                   │
    ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
    │  Assistant Superintendent   │
    │     of Special Programs     │
    └──────────────┬──────────────┘
                   │
          ┌────────┴────────┐
          │  CATE Director  │
          └────────┬────────┘
                   │
     ┌─────────────┴───────────────┐
┌──────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Counselor│              │   Teachers (25)      │
│          │              │ Educational Aides    │
│          │              │      (2.75)          │
└──────────┘              └──────────────────────┘
          │
    ┌─────┴─────┐
    │ Secretary │
    │PEIMS Clerk│
    └───────────┘
```
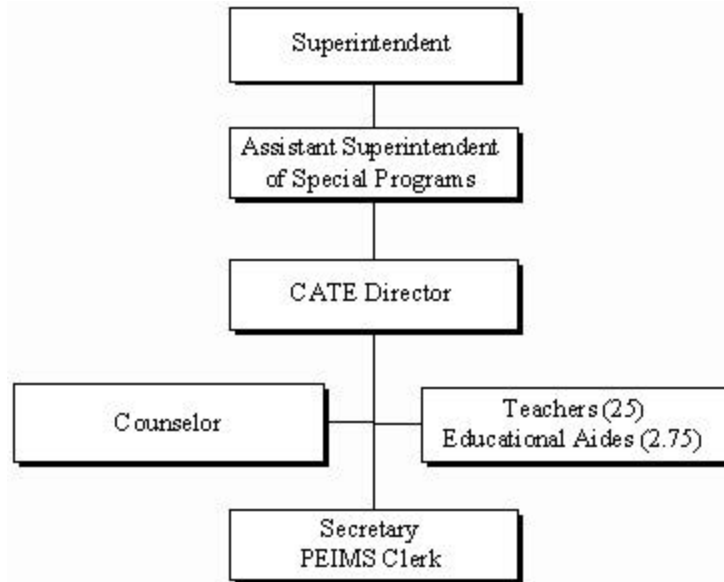
Source: DISD director of Career and Technology Education Department.

The DISD CATE director has been nominated for CATE Administrator of the Year. One of the CATE teachers has been selected as Teacher of the Year in 2002.

DISD offers more than 60 career and technology classes representing six career clusters, as shown in **Exhibit 2-50**. The clusters include: agricultural science and technology, business technology education, family and consumer science, health science technology education, marketing education and trade and industrial education. Using interest and aptitude inventories in grade 8, students select a career major with input from parents and counselors. Based on their selected career major students develop a four-year high school plan that will prepare them for different careers.

Exhibit 2-50
DISD School to Career Program Offerings by Career Clusters
2001-02

Career and Technology Classes
Agricultural Science and Technology
Introduction to Agricultural Mechanics   Introduction to Horticulture Sciences   Introduction to World Agriculture Science and Technology   Agricultural Mechanics

Agricultural Metal Fabrication Technology
Animal Science
Applied Agricultural Science and Technology
Energy and Environmental Technology
Equine Science
Landscape Design, Construction and maintenance
Plant and Animal Production
Wildlife and Recreation Management

Business Technology Education

Pre-employment Laboratory I and II
Accounting I
Banking and Financial Systems
Business Computer Information Systems Comprehensive
Economics with Emphasis on the Free Enterprise System and Its Benefits
International Business
Introduction to Business
Keyboarding

Marketing Education

Marketing Management
Marketing Yourself
Marketing Dynamics

Health Science Technology Education

Introduction to Health Science Technology
Health Science Technology I
Health Science Technology II
Health Science Technology III
Medical Terminology

Family and Consumer Science

Individual and Family Life
Family Health Needs
Preparation for Parenting
Child Development
Personal and Family Development
Apparel
Textile and Apparel Design
Housing
Interior Design
Food Production, Management and Services
Nutrition and Food Science
Food Science and Technology

Trade and Industrial Education

| Automotive Collision Repair and Refinishing Technology |
| Automotive Technician I and II |
| Introduction to Transportation Service Careers |
| Introduction to Construction Careers |
| Building Trades I, II and III |
| Cosmetology I and II |
| Introduction to Graphic Communications Careers |
| Drafting I and II |
| Electronics I, II and III |
| Introduction to Electrical/Electronics Careers |
| Technical Introduction to Criminal Justice |
| Basic County Corrections Officer |
| Crime in America |
| Emergency Communications |
| Fundamentals of Criminal Law |

Source: DISD, Career and Technology Department, 2001-02.

In 2000-01, 56.2 percent of DISD high school students participated in CATE, compared with 54.2 for the AEIS campus comparison group of 40 similar high schools and spent 11.9 percent on CATE at the high school level. **Exhibit 2-51** presents DISD, peer district and state CATE enrollment and expenditure information for 2001-02. Using the district as a whole in 2001-02, DISD has a lower percent of student enrollment, student-teacher ratio and percent of CATE expenditures than the state average. Compared with its peer districts DISD has the second lowest student enrollment and the lowest student-teacher ratio in CATE. DISD has the second highest percent of CATE expenditures among its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-51
DISD Student Enrollment, Nurses and Nurse Assistants
2001-02

Campus	2001-02 Enrollment	Number of Nurses
Caceres Elementary	505	1 (RN)
Garza Elementary	843	1 (RN)
Guzman Elementary	442	1 (RN)
LeNoir Elementary	470	1 (RN)
Munoz Elementary	786	1*
Ochoa Elementary	514	1 (RN)

Price Elementary	488	1 (RN)
Rivas Elementary	475	1 (LVN)
Runn Elementary	358	1 (RN)
Salinas Elementary	684	1 (RN)
Stainke Elementary	366	1 (LVN)
Solis Middle School	1,139	1 (LVN)
Veterans Middle School	1,127	1 (LVN)
Todd 9th Grade	736	1 (RN)
Donna High School	1,518	2 (RN)
District**	10,451	**16**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02 and DISD Personnel Roster, 2001-02.
* Open position.
** District total includes the Donna Adjustment and Guidance Center.

The DISD CATE program went through a District Effectiveness and Compliance (DEC) review in January 2001. The program was reviewed on 12 CATE indicators and was found in compliance with state requirements. The review recommended that the district develop a long-range plan that incorporates all aspects of student performance, including TAAS and grade-level performance. DISD responded to the DEC recommendation in its 2001-02 District improvement Plan (DIP) through the incorporation of CATE-specific strategies. These strategies include integrating career and technology classes with core area subjects, using team teaching of CATE and core area subject teachers, increasing communication and articulation activities with post-secondary educational institutions to expand opportunities for student participation and increasing CATE students' TAAS performance by three to five percentage points in grades seven, eight, and 10 in all subject areas. Prior DIPS and CIPS did not address CATE goals and objectives. CATE and academic teachers team-teach at least once a semester: for example, the cosmetology and chemistry teachers team-teach.

FINDING

DISD effectively involves its CATE Advisory Council in program planning and evaluation. DISD has a General Advisory Council for Career and Technology Education. The Advisory Council addresses training needs, curriculum and public relations. The CATE Advisory Council

consists of 24 members. CATE Advisory Council members include community members, business, industry and labor representatives, parents of CATE students who are members of special populations and persons knowledgeable about at-risk students and student representatives.

The Advisory Council has three committees. The Projects Committee is involved in special CATE-related events at the Donna High School. The School/Community Relations Committee raises funds for CATE scholarships, organizes student recognition awards and increases community awareness and support of CATE. The Planning Committee assists with CATE planning and provides input into expanding and redirecting programs for specific occupations.

The Committee uses demographic and employment data prepared by the University of Texas Pan American for the Rio Grande City Valley Counties and Cities to determine occupational demand and need for new courses. The *General Advisory Council Career and Technology Education Department 2000-2001* describes the Council's composition and role and responsibilities. Council members team up with CATE teachers to review program operations including the curriculum and update teachers on technology that industry and business is using. The Council also participates in CATE program evaluation. Each council member teams up with a CATE teacher and each team checks all labs and shops for safety and security.

COMMENDATION

DISD involves its CATE Advisory Council in program planning and guidance and generating community and business support.

FINDING

The DISD CATE program prepares students for postsecondary employment as well as certified technology and traditional trade programs. The DISD CATE program gives students opportunities to gain work experience through the Career Majors program, articulation agreements with three colleges and the coop programs. DISD offers the Career Majors program to all grade nine students. Through interest and aptitude tests and career exploration in grade eight students decide on a career major and develop a four-year sequenced course plan. Students choose electives based on their projected career major interests.

The technology programs cover the areas of engineering, industrial and business technology. The engineering and industrial technology programs include course work in computer assisted drafting, electronics and electronics career development. The business technology course work

includes classes in business computer information systems, general business practices and marketing.

CATE participants are offered A+ certification courses. The A+ designation certifies that an individual has achieved entry-level knowledge as a computer service technician. Major technology vendors like IBM, Microsoft and Compaq recognize A+ certification as an important selection criterion when hiring technicians.

In addition to A+ certification, the CATE program and district administrators are reviewing certification programs in:

- Network design and administration
- Web design and management
- Database administration and
- Server management.

The CATE programs integrate real-life job experiences into the classroom and prepare students with relevant training making them better able to meet employer expectations.

Exhibit 2-52 lists the technology related courses offered through the CATE center.

Exhibit 2-52
Career and Technology Education Classes
May 2002

Courses	Grade Level
Business Education Career Preparation Training	9 - 12
Business Computer Information Systems	9 - 12
Keyboarding	9 - 12
Introduction to Electrical/Electronics Careers	9 - 12
Telecommunication and Networking	10 - 12
Drafting I and II	10 - 12
Electronics I, II and III	10 - 12
Food Science and Technology	10 - 12
Food Production, Management and Sciences	11 - 12

Source: DISD "Career and Technology 2001."

The DISD CATE program has articulation agreements with three area colleges: South Texas Community College, Coastal Bend College and Texas State Technical College. The articulation agreement with South Texas Community College is for 14 courses in automotive technology, business administration, childcare and development, business computer systems, electronic equipment and computer maintenance technology, health information technology, computer-aided drafting and design technology and precision manufacturing technology. The articulation agreement with Coastal Bend College is for seven courses in Law Enforcement. The articulation agreement with Texas State Technical College is in eight areas and includes 12 courses. DISD has an articulation agreement with Texas State Technical College in the areas of agricultural technology, auto collision technology, building construction technology, computer maintenance technology, environmental technology, culinary arts, health information technology and network information management technology. The CATE director said that 92 graduating seniors have met all articulation requirements.

DISD also offers career preparation programs in marketing education and in business education through CATE. The major objective of the career preparation program is to teach students about the world of work and work ethics. Students study health and safety on the job, resume development and interviewing skills, taxes and insurance and human relations and receive training in the specific program areas. Local businesses that participate in this program include First National Bank, Alamo Bank, Knapp Hospital, H.E.B., Blockbuster Video, Academy Sports, McDonald's, Peter Piper Pizza and Donna ISD Accounting Department and the MARS program. In 2001-02, 71 DISD students are participating in these programs.

DISD, in conjunction with the Workforce Investment Act Agency, provides year-round work experience programs in the area of Career Education for students who want to enroll in a career training course. These students have an opportunity to earn money while learning entry-level concepts in the various career pathways offered in the CATE Department at Donna High School. CATE also gives students opportunities to develop leadership skills and positive work values by becoming members of vocational student organizations such as Distributive Education Clubs of America, Business Professionals of America, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Future Farmers of America, Health Occupations Students of America and Vocational Industrial Clubs of America.

These organizations offer students the opportunity to become involved with other students who have similar interests and compete in local, district, state and national events. Students who meet the criteria can also

become members of the National Vocational Technical Society, an organization that parallels the National Honors Society. To be elected to NVTS, a student must have a 90 average for three semesters in CATE courses. Students elected to NVTS receive special recognition at graduation.

COMMENDATION

The DISD CATE program prepares students for employment through several programs that offer students opportunities to gain work experience and specialized technology certification.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

G. LIBRARY/MEDIA SERVICES

In May 1997, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission adopted a series of recommended standards published as *School Library Program Standards: Guidelines and Standards*. The goal of school library programs, as outlined in the *Guidelines and Standards,* is to ensure that students and staff alike effectively use ideas and information and become literate, life-long learners. To accomplish this task, the library program should provide instruction in research and the evaluation of resources, individual guidance and access to materials in multiple formats. The guidelines offer criteria that identify library programs as exemplary, recognized, acceptable or below standard in the areas of the library learning environment, curriculum integration, resources, library program management and facilities.

DISD has 15 libraries, one at each school. The libraries at Runn and LeNoir Elementary Schools are being renovated and will be completed at the end of June 2002. Caceres and Guzman Elementary Schools have new libraries. Todd 9th Grade campus has a small resource library and its students use the Donna High School library, located across the street.

DISD has a coordinator of Library Services who reports to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. The coordinator uses her experience with elementary curriculum to train librarians to help students improve their reading and performance on TAAS. The coordinator spends 50 percent of her time on library-related issues and 50 percent on curriculum. DISD's 2001-02 library budget is $154,899. The coordinator of Library Services said that the superintendent asked the principals to allocate 10 percent of their budgets to their school libraries; 11 of the 15 principals allocated 10 to 25 percent of their campus budget to their libraries (**Exhibit 2-53**) in 2001-02.

Exhibit 2-53
DISD Library Budgets
2001-02

School	Library Budget	Percent of Campus Budget Allocated to Library
Caceres Elementary	$9,435	25%

Garza Elementary	$7,813	13%
Guzman Elementary	$4,388	12%
LeNoir Elementary	$5,318	14%
Munoz Elementary	$10,700	18%
Ochoa Elementary	$4,010	8%
Price Elementary	$8,943	23%
Rivas Elementary	$8,354	22%
Runn Elementary	$5,943	18%
Stainke Elementary	$1,933	6%
Salinas Elementary	$9,308	15%
Solis Middle School	$28,224	25%
Veterans Middle School	$8,173	7%
Donna High School	$27,357	10%
Todd 9th Grade	$15,000	8%

Source: DISD coordinator of Library Services.

DISD's spending on library items, including books, software and other electronic resources per students varied greatly across campuses and by year as shown in **Exhibit 2-54**.

Exhibit 2-54
Amount Spent on Library Items per Student
2000-01 through 2001-02

School	2000-01	2001-02
Caceres Elementary	$0.67	$171.60
Garza Elementary	$6.99	$3.00
Guzman Elementary	$2.15	$2.79
LeNoir Elementary	$2.05	$1.70
Munoz Elementary	$0.43	$2.94
Ochoa Elementary	$0.00	$1.82
Price Elementary	$5.65	$7.85
Rivas Elementary	$9.96	$3.95

Runn Elementary	$0.00	$5.22
Stainke Elementary	$0.00	$0.00
Salinas Elementary	$2.60	$3.78
Solis Middle School	$4.41	$4.11
Veterans Middle School	$7.90	$3.32
Donna High School	$2.38	$1.70
Todd 9th Grade	N/A	$10.34

Source: DISD coordinator of Library Services.

Donna ISD is a member of the Texas Library Collection (TLC), a statewide resource sharing system administered by the TEA that facilitates libraries' technical services and local collection development and provides access to electronic full-text resources.

FINDING

DISD's libraries meet *the Texas School Library Programs Standards* for staff at the Acceptable and Recognized levels. The state guidelines for "Acceptable" libraries require at least one certified librarian and one half-time library aide in schools with 351 to 700 students. In schools with 1,051 to 1,400 students "Acceptable" library staffing includes one certified librarian and two aides. The state guidelines for "Recognized" libraries require one certified librarian and one aide for schools with 351-700 students; in schools with 701-1,050 students, the standards require one certified librarian and 1.5 aides. In schools with 1,401 to 2,100 students, "Recognized" library staffing consists of two certified librarians and three aides.

Exhibit 2-55 shows library staffing for each DISD school, school enrollment and whether or not each location met library standards. All but two DISD librarians are endorsed. The two librarians who are not endorsed are certified teachers and in the process of receiving their appropriate library endorsements.

Exhibit 2-55
Library Staffing Standards and DISD Library Staffing
2000-01

School	Number of Students	Number of Staff	Meets/ Exceeds Standard

Caceres Elementary	481	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Garza Elementary	643	1 certified librarian + 2 aide	Exceeds
Guzman Elementary	470	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
LeNoir Elementary	446	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Munoz Elementary	723	1 certified librarian + 2 aides	Exceeds
Ochoa Elementary	520	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Price Elementary	492	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Rivas Elementary	476	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Runn Elementary	393	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Salinas Elementary	771	1 certified librarian + 2 aides	Exceeds
Stainke Elementary	373	1 certified librarian + 1 aide	Exceeds
Solis Middle School	1,166	1 certified librarian + 2 aides	Meets
Veterans Middle School	1,113	1 certified librarian + 2 aides	Meets
Donna High School	2,259	2 certified librarians + 3.5 aides	Exceeds

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01; DISD coordinator of Library Services.

Teachers, students and parents expressed satisfaction with DISD library services: 76.7 percent of the teachers, 70.8 percent of the students and 75.0 percent of the parents who responded to the survey indicated that DISD has effective library services (**Exhibit 2-56**).

Exhibit 2-56
Teacher, Student and Parent Opinion of DISD Library Services

Teachers					
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Library services are effective	16.7%	60.0%	10.0%	10.0%	3.3%
Students					
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Library services are effective	22.3%	48.5%	11.7%	13.6%	3.9%
Parents					

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Library services are effective	19.5%	55.5%	12.0%	9.0%	4.0%

Source: TSPR Survey, 2002.

COMMENDATION

DISD ensures all librarians are appropriately endorsed in an effort to ensure all libraries meet or exceed state guidelines for staffing.

FINDING

Not all DISD libraries meet the Acceptable requirements of the *School Library Programs Standards* in the area of library collection size. The *School Library Standards* define an "Acceptable" collection as a balanced collection of at least 9,000 books, software**,** as well as electronic resources such as Internet access, at schools with fewer than 600 students and 15 items per student for schools with 600 or more students. A "Recognized" collection is defined as a balanced collection of at least 10,800 items for schools with fewer than 600 students and 18 items per student in schools with 600 or more students.

Exhibit 2-57 shows the library collection size in each campus, the number of students, the number of items per student, and whether the collection meets the Acceptable standard. Five of the 14 libraries do not meet the Acceptable standard for collection size; that is, their library items per student is less than 15. Two of the schools (Caceres and Todd) share libraries with other schools. The coordinator of Library Services said that the district is looking for state funds or other types of grants to fund an increase in the collection of its libraries.

Exhibit 2-57
DISD Library Collection by School
2001-02

School	Collection Size	Number of Students	Collection Per Students	Meet Standards
Caceres Elementary*	6,681	505	13.20	No
Garza Elementary	9,345	843	11.06	No
Guzman Elementary	11,972	442	26.96	Yes
LeNoir Elementary	10,480	470	22.25	Yes

Munoz Elementary	10,053	786	12.79	No
Ochoa Elementary	13,107	514	25.45	Yes
Price Elementary	12,609	488	25.78	Yes
Rivas Elementary	20,524	475	43.21	Yes
Runn Elementary	11,480	356	32.07	Yes
Salinas Elementary	11,428	684	16.71	Yes
Stainke Elementary	12,654	367	34.38	Yes
Solis Middle School	15,785	1,139	13.86	No
Veterans Middle School	17,767	1,127	15.76	Yes
Todd 9th Grade**	1,033	736	1.40	No
Donna High School	37,836	1,519	24.91	Yes

Source: DISD coordinator of Library Services.
* Rivas and Caceres share a library.
** Todd 9th Grade uses the Donna High School Library.

School libraries that need to replenish their collections to a large extent often phase in money to help fund the increase in library collection size.

Recommendation 21:

Increase library collection size to meet acceptable standards.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Library Services and librarians determine the number of books that need to be added and develop appropriate lists and a budget.	October 2002
2.	The coordinator of Library Services and the district's grant writer research grant opportunities for expanding library collections.	October 2002
3.	The coordinator of Library Services prepares a plan and estimated budget, including grant applications and a schedule for increasing the collections and submits it to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the superintendent for review and approval.	November 2002

4.	The coordinator of Library Services and the grant writer prepare and submit grant proposals.	November 2002
5.	The coordinator of Library Services obtains funds through a grant and/or the district to expand the libraries' collections.	February 2003
6.	The coordinator of Library Services, jointly with librarians, finalizes the lists of books and other materials to be purchased.	March 2003
7.	The coordinator of Library Services oversees the purchasing.	March - April 2003
8.	The librarians integrate the new books and other materials into their collection.	May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact is based on the assumption that the district will purchase 6,337 books at an
average cost of $16 per book over a four-year period. Garza Elementary needs to purchase 3,300 books to reach the 15 items per student standard; Munoz Elementary needs to purchase 1,737 books to meet the standard and Solis Elementary needs to purchase 1,300 books. The purchase of 6,337 books at $16 a book is $101,392 or $25,348 a year for four years (6,337 x $16 = $101,392 / 4 years
= $25,348), beginning in 2003-04.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Increase library collection size to meet acceptable standards.	$0	($25,348)	($25,348)	($25,348)	($25,348)

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

H. HEALTH SERVICES

A commitment to health services ultimately supports academic goals and objectives. Children cannot perform well academically if they are unhealthy, undernourished, have vision or hearing problems, have serious emotional problems, or abuse drugs or alcohol. To the extent that school health programs prevent or alleviate health problems, they further the schools' primary mission. Healthy children have fewer absences, are less likely to drop out and are prepared to learn. A 1994 Gallop Poll showed that 82 percent of parents believe health education is either more important or as important as other school subjects.

Schools historically have played a critical role in improving the health of Americans. They have coordinated mass immunization efforts that dramatically decreased communicable diseases, conducted health screenings and referred students with vision, hearing and other health problems for treatment. An estimated 24 percent of Texas children are uninsured, so a school nurse is sometimes the only health professional they see.

Before 1991, TEA played a significant role in monitoring school health programs. With the repeal of Texas Administrative Code Chapter 19, Sec.84.41, TEA's involvement has declined, while Texas Department of Health (TDH) involvement has grown. TDH established a School Health Program in 1992, and the Texas Year 2000 Health Objectives called for comprehensive school health education programs in all Texas school districts in grades K-12 by the year 2000.

Even so, many districts do not have school nurses or school health programs. Local property tax revenues and state and federal grants do not provide dedicated funding for school nurses. Chapter 38, Section 38.011 of the Education Code sets up a grant fund, allocated through a competitive application process, for school health centers.

FINDING

DISD provides health services at each district campus through the use of compensatory education funds for nurses and nursing assistants. DISD has 16 nursing positions, one of which is unfilled. DISD has one nurse per campus with the exception of Donna High School, which has two nurses; one of the high school nurses is also the Nurse coordinator for the district.

Eleven of the district's nurses are registered nurses (RNs) and four are licensed vocational nurses (LVNs). In addition, DISD has 15 nurse assistants, 13 of whom are certified nurse assistants. The Texas Department of Health and the Texas Association of School Nurses have a goal of 750 regular students per school nurse, regardless of students' age group and size of the district. DISD's ratio of students to nurses is lower: 653 students per nurse. However, the district values the presence of health professionals in each school and made a districtwide decision to partially fund the nursing staff with compensatory education funds in an effort to enhance health services provided to students. **Exhibit 2-58** shows student enrollment by campus and number and type of nurses.

Exhibit 2-58
DISD Student Enrollment, Nurses and Nurse Assistants
2000-01

Campus	2000-01 Enrollment	Number of Nurses
Caceres Elementary	505	1 (RN)
Garza Elementary	843	1 (RN)
Guzman Elementary	442	1 (RN)
LeNoir Elementary	470	1 (RN)
Munoz Elementary	786	1*
Ochoa Elementary	514	1 (RN)
Price Elementary	488	1 (RN)
Rivas Elementary	475	1 (LVN)
Runn Elementary	356	1 (RN)
Salinas Elementary	684	1 (RN)
Stainke Elementary	367	1 (LVN)
Solis Middle School	1,139	1 (LVN)
Veterans Middle School	1,127	1 (LVN)
Todd 9th Grade	736	1 (RN)
Donna High School	1,518	2 (RN)
District**	10,451	**16**

DISD uses SCE money to fund 40 percent of nurses' salaries and 100 percent of nurse assistants' salaries. DISD has 11 elementary schools with an enrollment of 5,930 students. At the elementary level, the student-nurse ratio is 539:1 where the incidence of accidents and illness is typically greater. DISD has two middle schools with a student enrollment of 2,266. DISD has two nurses assigned to middle schools, yielding a student-nurse ratio of 1,133:1. DISD has two high school campuses with an enrollment of 2,254. Three nurses serve the ninth grade center and the high school campuses yielding a student-nurse ratio of 751:1.

COMMENDATION

Donna ISD dedicates compensatory education funds to provide at least one nurse per campus.

Chapter 3
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This chapter discusses the community involvement and communications functions within the Donna Independent School District (DISD) in the following sections:

A. Organization and Management
B. Parental and Community Involvement
C. Business Partnerships and Scholarships
D. Internal and External Communications

Community involvement activities enable parents, local businesses, community leaders, non-parent taxpayers, employees and students to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing a school district. Media communication with all school district stakeholders on a regular basis builds positive relationships and vital support from the local community. Strong community involvement programs can enhance the quality of an educational program and expand the resources of a school district.

BACKGROUND

The City of Donna has a population of 12,978 residents with a community primarily employed in agriculture. DISD's student population is 98.6 percent Hispanic, and 90 percent of students are economically disadvantaged. DISD's large percent of economically disadvantaged students qualifies the district for federal funding granted by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's (ESEA) Title Iprogram. School districts receiving Title I funds are mandated to follow federal regulations requiring a comprehensive parental involvement program including services such as literacy training and volunteer opportunities that help parents support the education of their children.

In 2001-02 DISD budgeted a total of $574,880 for community involvement programs. Budgeted funding comes from Title I grant monies and district general fund allocations.

In 2001-02, the district allocated more than 13 percent, or $367,130, of Title I funding for parental and community involvement functions. **Exhibit 3-1** details DISD's Title I budgeted amounts for community involvement during 2000-01 and 2001-02.

Exhibit 3-1
Community Involvement Budget

Title I Fund
2000-01 and 2001-02

Description	2000-01	2001-02
Salaries and Benefits	$326,439	$341,460
Purchased and Contracted Services	$2,466	$525
Materials and Supplies	$8,132	$5,700
Other Operating Expenses	$18,389	$19,445
Total Community Involvement	**$355,426**	**$367,130**
Total Title I Fund	**$3,074,672**	**$2,710,457**
Percent Title I allocated for Community Involvement	11.6%	13.5%

Source: DISD Department of Federal Programs, 2000-01 and 2001-02.

The district's general fund allocation for community involvement is $207,750 for 2001-02, more than most of its peers on a per student basis. **Exhibit 3-2** shows DISD's actual and budgeted community services expenditures compared to its peers for 2000-01 and budgeted expenditures per student for 2001-02.

Exhibit 3-2
General Fund
Actual and Budgeted Community Services Expenditures
2000-01 and 2001-02

District	Actual 2000-01	Budget 2001-02	Enrollment 2001-02	Budget per Student 2001-02
Rio Grande City	$164,869	$209,050	8,906	$23
Donna	**$161,059**	**$207,750**	**10,451**	**$20**
San Benito	$166,041	$192,875	9,102	$21
Eagle Pass	$105,083	$153,542	12,778	$12
Edgewood	$100,065	$148,006	13,435	$11
Mission	$277,208	$99,595	13,122	$8

Approximately 20 percent of DISD's student population are children of migrant workers. The constant movement of migrant families often leads to educational disruptions for the children. To ensure these migrant students are provided the necessary educational services to reach their full academic potential, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Migrant Education (OME) provides federal funding to state education agencies. In Texas, the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Migrant Education Program (MEP) receives a federal grant from the OME on an annual basis based on the number of identified migrant students in Texas.

Texas school districts with migrant programs must report data on identified migrant students to receive distributions of the state grant. DISD uses an electronic system called the New Generations System (NGS) to fulfill this requirement. The NGS system is designed to capture educational and health data on migrant students, allowing educators to record the movement of migrant students through the educational process. NGS generates documents to facilitate the identification and academic placement of migrant students as the student transfers schools. To facilitate this process, the community and parental involvement department of DISD has three full-time employees involved in identifying and recruiting migrant students, one program secretary and four full-time employees processing documentation through the NGS system.

Chapter 3
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

DISD's community involvement efforts encompass five general areas:

- parent involvement: each campus host's parent-teachers meetings, recruits parent volunteers and seek parent input into the campus improvement plan (CIP);
- parent education: the district operates Parent Education Centers (PECs) in all 15 district schools that, among many other things, teach literacy classes and parenting skills;
- media: the district writes and submits weekly newspaper articles that inform the public about DISD activities;
- community liaison: the district identifies community resources and enlists their support to strengthen and assist families. It also enlists the support of local businesses to provide student scholarships and support for school programs; and
- migrant student education programs: the district identifies and assists migrant families to maximize student success.

Some of these functions and programs exist at the district level, some at the campus level.

At the district level, DISD employs a coordinator of Title I Migrant/Parental Involvement to direct parental involvement and administer Title I Migrant education programs. Although the coordinator spends equal time managing the two functions, all references to the position, including the job description, label the employee as the Parental Involvement coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for ensuring parental and community involvement and promoting positive public relations throughout the district. Parental involvement duties outlined in the job description of the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement include:

- implementing parental involvement programs in compliance with state and federal guidelines;
- providing information to the public about the activities, goals and policies of the district's parental and community involvement program;
- assisting principals in the supervision of campus-based Parent Education Centers;
- evaluating parent education classes;

- identifying and providing access to assistance for students and families experiencing school and home related problems;
- soliciting support from the community; and
- serving as a liaison between the school district and the community.

The focus of DISD's parental and community involvement program is "to help children succeed academically through a partnership with the home, community and the schools."

The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement directly supervises 11 district staff members. Eight of these employees conduct migrant program initiatives, identifying and recruiting migrant students and entering their data into the NGS system. Three full-time migrant recruiters strive to identify as many migrant families as possible, since the number of identified migrant students is the basis for Title I Migrant Program funding. Two full-time community liaisons and one department secretary also report to the coordinator. Their duties include developing invitations for parent meetings, assisting parents with completion of various district forms and applications and arranging for transportation of parents to parent meetings. The staff identifies and helps families in need of clothing, food, rent and utility bill assistance. They work closely with neighborhood churches, the Salvation Army, the Hidalgo County Health Department and occasionally make referrals to Legal Aid.

At the campus level, each of the 15 DISD schools has a PEC that is staffed with a full-time parent center educator. Parent center educators teach literacy classes, parenting skills, survival skills (such as cooking and baking), and provide information on immigration, citizenship and social security. Some invite community professionals to speak on important topics like health care and nutrition; others may provide drug and gang awareness information to parents.

All parent center educators report to the principal and are paid by Title I funding per the grant's parental involvement program requirement.

Each school has a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) that meets monthly to discuss programs at the school and develop school/parent compacts. Compacts are agreements between the school and the parents to work together to implement programs for improving student achievement. The PAC includes the campus parent educator, the principal and Title I parents at the school. A District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) meets at least monthly to provide suggestions/recommendations on the planning of the Title I Migrant programs. The DPAC includes all parent educators, one parent from each campus and the principal from each school in the district.

Exhibit 3-3 shows the community and parental involvement positions within the district's organizational structure.

Exhibit 3-3
DISD Community and Parental Involvement
2001-02


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                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  Superintendent │
                          └─────────────────┘
                                   │
                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │ Deputy Superintendent│
                          │ Federal/SCE Programs │
                          └─────────────────────┘

┌──────────────┐                                              ┌──────────────┐
│  Attendance  │          ┌─────────────────────┐             │  Principals  │
│ Coordinator  │          │ Coordinator of Title I│            └──────────────┘
└──────────────┘          │ Migrant/Parental      │
┌──────────────┐          │ Involvement           │            ┌──────────────┐
│Public Relations│        └─────────────────────┘              │ Parent Center│
│ Assistant (2)│                                                │ Educator (15)│
└──────────────┘                                                └──────────────┘

┌──────────────┐          ┌─────────────────┐
│Community Liaison│        │ Migrant Recruiter│
└──────────────┘          │      (3)         │
                          └─────────────────┘
┌──────────────┐          ┌─────────────────┐
│  Bilingual   │          │New Generations   │
│Community Liaison│       │Systems (NGS)     │
└──────────────┘          │Clerk (4)         │
                          └─────────────────┘
┌──────────────┐          ┌─────────────────┐
│ Department   │          │Title I Migrant   │
│ Secretary    │          │Programs Secretary│
└──────────────┘          └─────────────────┘
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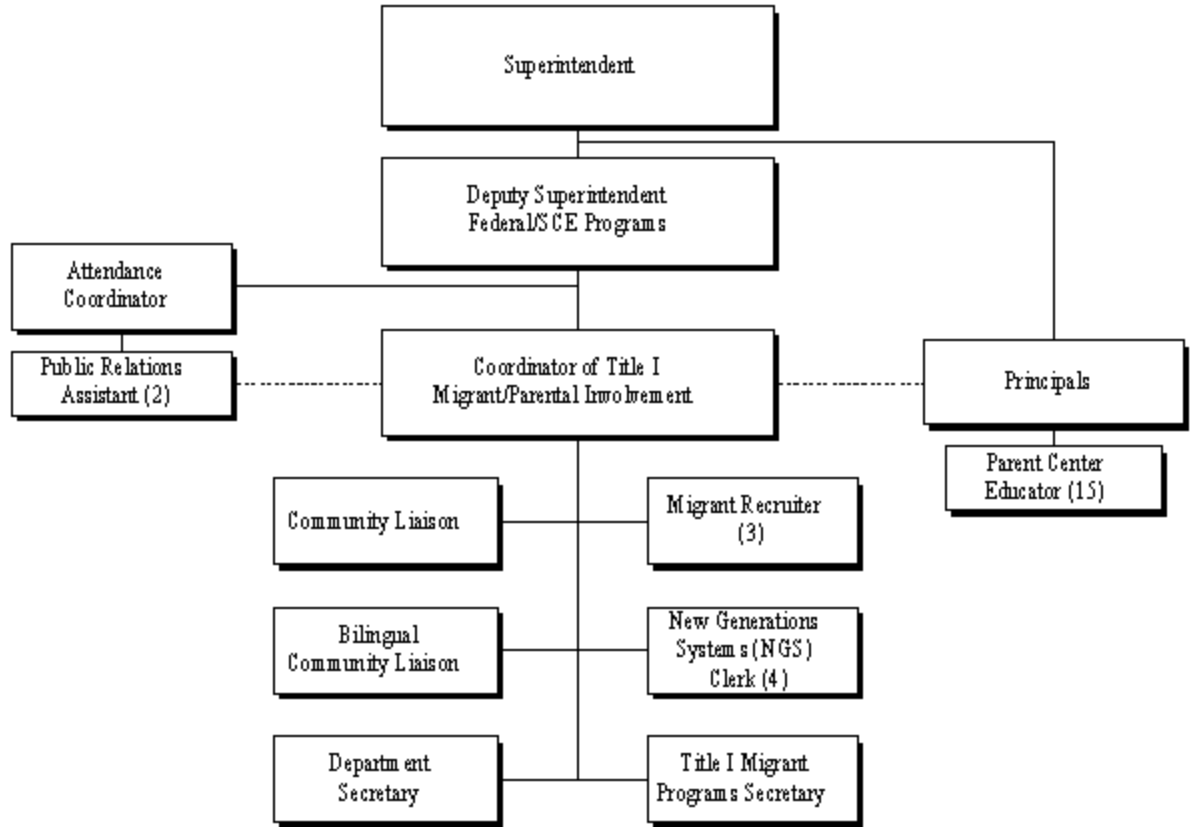
Source: DISD Department of Special Programs and Services, 2001-02.

FINDING

DISD has targeted parental and community involvement as a necessary initiative for the district's ongoing success. The district included parental and community involvement goals, objectives and strategies as one of four imperatives outlined in the 2001-02 district improvement plan (DIP). The superintendent states in the plan that it is important for DISD to develop education partners through open lines of communication among the district, parents and the community. In 2000-01 DISD established the District Level Planning and Advisory Committee (DLPAC) composed of business and community representatives, district administrators, teaching staff and parents to develop the DIP. The DLPAC members are elected to serve three-year terms. The committee's function is to monitor and annually revise the DIP's goals and objectives.

Exhibit 3-4 details the parental and community involvement goal, objectives and strategies outlined in the 2001-02 DIP.

Exhibit 3-4
DISD District Improvement Plan
2001-02

Parental and Community Involvement **GOAL:** **A comprehensive parental involvement program will be provided to maximize and strengthen parental and community involvement.**	
OBJECTIVE: **The district will strengthen families through education to raise strong, self-confident and educated children.**	

Strategy	Timeline
Continue providing literacy and parent training sessions through the Parent Education Centers and community sites.	Weekly
Schedule parental involvement meetings to disseminate information on: • student achievement/school performance profiles • curriculum and instructional programs • special ed programs/services • 504/dyslexia services • transition awareness • federal program requirements: law and parents' rights, needs assessment for Title I programs information communicated in the language spoken at home.	Quarterly
Involve district/campus PACs in implementing and revising the district parental involvement policy.	May
Revise and implement school/parent compacts.	Fall Semester
Implement a districtwide parental involvement evaluation system that will measure the effectiveness of the program.	Pre: Fall Post: Spring
Extend, support and coordinate educational services through school/community involvement: • Latchkey Program • GED Program • Adult Basic Education Program	August - October

• Headstart Program • Partners in Education Program	
Recruit and involve parent/community volunteers to assist in schoolwide activities.	Ongoing
Recognize parent/community volunteers for their contributions.	Spring Semester
Provide parents an opportunity to attend state/national conferences/workshops/school visits to neighboring districts to increase awareness and knowledge in the area of parental involvement.	Fall/Spring Semester
Revise, recommend and assess needs of Title I Programs to enhance effective community/school partnerships.	Fall Semester
Announce district/campus PAC meetings through school notices and invitations/press releases and other forms of communication for the improvement of home/school partnerships.	Fall/Spring Semester

Source: DISD District Improvement Plan (DIP), 2001-02.

COMMENDATION

DISD has established districtwide parental and community involvement goals, objectives and strategies.

FINDING

DISD community and parental involvement organizational structure lacks communication. Although the district has a coordinator with parental involvement duties at the central office, the parental and community involvement initiatives are primarily implemented at the 15 Parent Education Centers. Each school has a Parent Education Center at its campus staffed by one full-time parent center educator who is paid with Title I funds. Building business partnerships and recruiting volunteers for each school is the shared responsibility of the parent center educator and the principal. The principal reports directly to the superintendent and is supposed to work in conjunction with the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement to support and strengthen parental programs.

When the review team met with a focus group of principals and assistant principals, the focus group indicated that not all principals work as closely with the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement as others. Communication appeared to be lacking, in some cases, between the

coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement and the principal/parent center educators, although some campuses appear to have better communication than others.

Two other programs that involve DISD parents are the Career and Technology Education (CATE) program, headed by a director who reports to the superintendent, and the Pregnancy Education Program (PEP), whose director reports to the assistant superintendent for Curriculum. These programs also offer educational classes and community services that are not part of the parental involvement program but target some of the same participants as the parental involvement program. Classes and community services offered through CATE and PEP are free to parents and community members. Most of the educational classes are held in the evenings to be convenient for community members with full-time jobs.

Exhibit 3-5 liststhe community service programs offered through PEP and CATE.

Exhibit 3-5
DISD's Community Service Programs
2001-02

Program	Function	Target	Department
Latchkey Program	After school program offered at each school to supervise children with working parents.	Parents	PEP
GED Program	Evening classes to acquire a high school degree. Open to parents and dropout students.	Students and Parents	CATE
Adult Basic Education	Evening classes for adults that qualify a sixth-grade level student to acquire a high school diploma.	Adults in the community	CATE
HELP Program	Assistance program for pregnant mothers attending school.	Students	PEP
Career and Technology Education (CATE) Program	Programs and classes that prepare students and parents for careers in auto bodywork, construction, computers, and mechanical technology.	Students and Parents	CATE

Source: Interviews with various DISD departments, April 2002.

Some evening classes offered in computers and adult basic literacy are also being offered in the PECs during the day.

Although external communications are a vital part of keeping the community informed and involved, the district responsibility for communications and public relations is not centralized. The community involvement department, the Attendance coordinator and the superintendent all have public relation duties. The community involvement department employs two public relations assistants at the central office who are supervised by the Attendance coordinator. The two full-time assistants write and design the district's weekly newsletter called the *Drumbeat*. The newsletter is a one-page article published in a local newspaper, *The Mid-Valley Town Crier*. The Attendance coordinator, who reports to the deputy superintendent, Federal/SCE Programs, supervises the public relations assistants on a voluntary basis and is not paid for public relations duties. The district eliminated the district public relations officer in 1998-99 and was reassigned as the district's Attendance coordinator. The superintendent directs all internal communications and external media issues.

Functions of a community and parental involvement department include:

- establishing effective lines of communications both internally and externally throughout the district;
- creating and distributing publications that provide information about the district's activities to community members, local businesses and parents;
- overseeing an active volunteer program that takes advantage of available free resources;
- organizing districtwide fundraising campaigns; and
- developing strong relationships with the local business community and establishing business partnerships that benefit the district.

Communication and coordination among all staff involved in a school district's community involvement program ensures that a district is not duplicating services and allows for efficient use of scarce resources.

Recommendation 22:

Open lines of communications among all divisions responsible for the Community and Parental Involvement Department and develop joint departmental goals.

DISD's Community and Parental Involvement functions should improve coordination and communication among program managers, principals, parents, volunteers, the business community and the community at large.

Most of the district's programs target the same audience and may create a duplication of services. In addition, the Community and Parental Involvement department should establish departmental goals that tie directly to the DIP objectives.

A sound community involvement planning process will address the following steps:

- list programs and activities; implementation prioritized in line with district-wide goals;
- identify target audiences for planned activities; input from target audiences;
- delegate staff responsibility to implement the programs;
- assess communication and media resources required to publicize the programs; and
- identify budget resources necessary to implement the programs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement programs meets with the principals, parent center educators, liaisons, public relations staff and the director for CATE to discuss how to open lines of communication between departments and ensure there is minimal duplication of services.	October 2002
2.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement works with principals, parent center educators, liaisons, public relations staff and the director for CATE to develop joint goals for the department, linking goals to the budget.	November 2002
3.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement presents the new goals to the deputy superintendent, Federal/SCE programs for approval.	December 2002
4.	The deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs approves the goals.	January 2003
5.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement implements the goals and begins meeting quarterly with the principals, parent center educators, liaisons, and public relations staff.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources

FINDING

The district does not centrally inventory, coordinate or evaluate community involvement programs.

Each DISD school provides education classes at its Parent Education Center. The parent center educators provide evaluation forms to all those attending parent education classes. The forms ask attendees to rate the presenter's attitude, motivation and coverage of the topic and to comment on the materials provided. Completed evaluation forms, provided by the district to the review team, showed a one to five rating on these variables. The forms did not include suggestions from the parents for future courses or convenient times to hold classes. No centralized coordination of information based on the forms exists to assess feedback from parents or compare the activities at each school.

The district provided the review team attendance sign-in sheets as a tool for evaluating community involvement programs. Attendance is important to consider when analyzing the parental interest in programs. The district does not inventory attendance for all programs; therefore, programs attracting a high level of attendance are not being identified and compared to programs with lower attendance. Attendees, in not providing feedback on evaluation forms, are not communicating the needs of parents, such as convenient times to hold classes or topics that are of interest to the community.

The review team requested representative documentation of the activities offered at PECs and attendance numbers for parent classes. The district provided all class sign-in sheets for 2001-02, as requested, from two elementary campuses; class attendance varied widely from zero to 31 parents per class. Attendance at one PEC school was totaled daily on a summary sheet. Times for these classes were not listed in the report; they were acquired for the review team by calling the school's parent center educator. Attendance numbers at the second school reviewed were not totaled, and the review team calculated them. The district does not have a procedure to analyze attendance without reviewing each sign-in sheet, making it difficult for the district to assess which classes are meeting the needs and interests of the parents.

A central assessment tool is necessary to implement a districtwide parental involvement evaluation system that will measure the effectiveness of the program and to assess the district's performance in achieving the community involvement goals outlined in the DIP.

Districts that have a procedure for gathering and evaluating feedback from community programs have improved their programs. Activities with a high level of community participation or that elicit positive feedback were identified and replicated at other schools in these districts. Central

management in these districts provides an efficient use of resources and overall enhanced community involvement programs.

Recommendation 23:

Centrally inventory and evaluate all community involvement programs.

The district should develop a report to be used as a central evaluation instrument of DISD's community involvement program. The report should inventory all community involvement programs throughout the district and should be monitored by the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement. Report data should include the name of the school, class title, class objective, total attendance and a summary of the parent feedback forms, including a section for suggesting times and future course offerings. The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement should regularly assess and document reasons for any wide variance in attendance among the schools to determine if the district's offerings are meeting the needs of the parents and the community.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement directs the two community liaisons, with assistance from the parent center educators at each school, to prepare an inventory of community involvement programs and campus attendance statistics.	October 2002
2.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement compiles the inventory into a spreadsheet to be analyzed by the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement and the superintendent.	October 2002
3.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement develops a standardized form to facilitate the evaluation of feedback and assess the district's community involvement goals and objectives as outlined in the DIP.	November 2002
4.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement presents the evaluation form to the superintendent for approval.	December 2002
5.	Upon approval, the parent center educators begin using the revised evaluation form to be completed for all community involvement programs. The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement, on a monthly basis, reviews completed forms.	January 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources

Chapter 3
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

B. PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Realizing that parental involvement is a critical element in improving student achievement, Federal Title I grants are awarded to districts to provide comprehensive parental involvement programs. Grant regulations require that school districts provide educational classes and volunteer opportunities that allow parents to support, assist and become involved in the education of their children.

DISD sends an annual survey to parents to identify their needs and knowledge of Title I offerings. The PAC and DPAC are forums for the district's parents, parent educators and principals to meet and discuss Title I programs and the means by which the school and parents can work together to improve student achievement. Parents have an opportunity to receive explanations and to offer suggestions on the planning of DISD's Title I programs.

Although the district has a coordinator with parental involvement duties at the central office, parental and community involvement initiatives are primarily implemented at the schools through the Parent Education Centers. The district has 15 Parent Education Centers and 15 full-time parent center educators who report to the principals. Parent center educators are available during school hours and are paid with Title I funding.

FINDING

DISD reaches parents and community members through a number of activities. These activities include:

- health and science fairs;
- cultural programs and fiestas;
- plays; Christmas and Spring musical presentations;
- Veterans recognition and Memorial Day programs;
- El Dia Del Nino Community celebration;
- Eggtravaganza Community Easter celebration;
- drug-free community festival;
- reading fairs (Community members volunteer to read at schools); and
- technology course offerings for adults.

In addition, the district participates in Helping One Student To Succeed (HOSTS) Reading Program, co-hosted by PECs. Winter Texans South Texas Academy students, and community members participate as volunteers once a week. Although PECs are designed for parents, all campus-based programs allow non-parent community members to participate. Career and Technology programs are available to any interested adult 18 years and older (out of school) from within DISD. Community liaisons are used to ensure participation and assistance.

COMMENDATION

DISD offers educational opportunities for many non-parents and parents in the community to participate in activities to benefit the district, students and community.

FINDING

The Parent Education Centers have limited hours of operation. Most classes are offered between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The district provides educational and volunteer opportunities for parents at the Parent Education Centers; attendance and participation, however, is low. Parent center educators said that many of the same parents participate every day.

The duty of the PEC is to motivate parents to become more involved in the school, to communicate with parents through newsletters and phone calls, to provide resource materials, to schedule education presentations, to provide literacy training and to instruct parents and children in activities designed to promote positive social interaction, physical and mental health, good nutrition and intellectual growth. Each parent center educator has at least one computer with Internet access and resource materials such as *Ingles Sin Barreras*, a self-paced class for learning to speak English.

The review team visited seven Parent Education Centers; no more than six parents were participating in volunteer activities at any one facility during the observation. Parent volunteers were observed performing administrative duties for the parent center educator and the principal, such as making copies, filing papers and tallying parent surveys.

Although the district offers educational and community services such as Adult Basic Education and the GED program in the evenings, the Parent Education Center's hours and offerings are not conducive to working parents. The review team requested a copy of all parent session sign-in sheets and class descriptions during 2001-02 from two elementary schools and a random sample from two additional schools. The district indicated that they do hold some parent community-based classes in the evenings; except for *Junta Del Distrito* (District Meeting for Migrant Parents),

however, all classes in the sample were scheduled at 9:00 a.m. or 9:30 a.m. A sample of this review of PEC classes at the four schools during 2001-02 is listed in **Exhibit 3-6**.

Exhibit 3-6
Sample of Parent Education Center Classes, Class Times and Attendance
2001-02

	Class	Date	Class Time	Attendance
Munoz Elementary	Union de Campesinos Los Mamogramas Ingles Sin Barreras	12/13/01 02/20/02 04/15/02	9:30 a.m. 9:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m.	8 6 8
Ochoa Elementary	Junta Del Distrito (District Meeting for Migrant Parents) Self-esteem, Affection, Trust	09/26/01 02/05/02	6:00 p.m. 9:30 a.m.	N/A N/A
Todd 9th Grade Campus	Criminal Enforcement A Prisoner's Testimony	01/16/02 01/23/02	9:00 a.m. 9:00 a.m.	N/A N/A
Truman Elementary	School Transportation Drug Awareness Student Behavior Nutrition Family Reading	09/19/01 10/24/01 12/05/01 02/13/02 04/30/02	9:30 a.m. 9:30 a.m. 9:30 a.m. 9:30 a.m. 9:30 a.m.	11 10 4 6 6

Source: Department of Parental Involvement, 2001-02.

Through surveys of parents, the review team heard many comments about their perception of the district's parental and community involvement efforts. **Exhibit 3-7** presents some of the comments received.

Exhibit 3-7
Public Input Comments Regarding
DISD Parental Involvement

Survey Comments
• "All parent meetings are at 9:00 a.m. If you work you are left out."   • "The district needs to be more proactive with parental involvement. Often, we attend meetings and it is sad to see that not enough parents show up. The solution may be as simple as sending the notes with sufficient time - instead of last minute notice."   • "Some centers have one or two parents per week and do not make the effort to recruit more parents or change programs that are not working."   • "Get more communication with the people, the parent, and students. Schools, activities should get more involved with the City. For example, fliers should be all over the city about our schools activities and also in the newspaper."

Source: TSPR Survey results, May 2002.

Other school districts, like Grand Prairie ISD, use innovative outreach techniques to increase parental involvement. Community involvement staff members in Grand Prairie walked door-to-door through selected neighborhoods to promote district activities available to the community. Tyler ISD provides free breakfast along with Spanish lessons to recruit many parents into the community involvement program. Some Texas districts offer evening and weekend classes at their parent education facilities. District efforts to schedule classes convenient for working parents; including services such as babysitting often results in a positive increase in parental involvement.

Recommendation 24:

Adjust the Parent Education Centers' schedules and hours of operation to promote parent participation.

All Parent Education Centers should adjust the hours of operation to include at least one evening class a week. The Community liaisons should establish goals for attracting a larger number of parents by aggressively promoting the centers activities and conducting innovative outreach activities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement analyzes the 2001-02 survey of Title I, parents and students to identify needs and interest.	November 2002
2.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement meets with the Community liaisons to discuss methods for increasing the level of attendance at the PECs.	November 2002
3.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement meets with principals to determine the best delivery approach to meet those needs and interests at the schools.	November 2002
4.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement develops and implements innovative initiatives for reaching a larger and more diverse group of parents.	December 2002
5.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement delegates the Community liaisons to develop the implementation of new initiatives and the statistical documentation of the results.	January 2003
6.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement modifies PEC program offerings, times and outreach methods to meet needs and increase overall participation.	February 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

C. BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Collaborative partnerships with businesses and organizations can expand the resources of a district and encourage the community to become involved in the schools. At DISD, each school is responsible for creating relationships with local businesses and organizations to gain benefits and services for the students.

FINDING

The district identifies many opportunities for high school students to acquire financial aid and scholarships. There is a full-time Financial Aid/Scholarship specialist in the counselor's office at the high school who seeks academic (merit) and economic-based (need) scholarships and financial assistance for college-bound students. This specialist publicizes scholarship availabilities in the school newsletter throughout the school year and is available to schedule meetings with students and parents to discuss application procedures. The Financial Aid/Scholarship specialist hosts at least three open meetings for parents and students each year to present opportunities available to high school students.

Exhibit 3-8 lists the merit and need-based scholarships awarded to DISD students from 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 3-8
DISD Scholarship Summary
1997-98 through 2001-02

Type	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Merit-Based	$625,989	$913,633	$1,207,688	$1,329,658	$2,076,326
Need-Based	$926,606	$1,027,332	$1,463,247	$2,589,430	$2,336,357
Total	**$1,552,595**	**$1,940,965**	**$2,670,935**	**$3,919,088**	**$4,412,683**

Source: Donna High School, June 2002.

COMMENDATION

The district has successfully identified scholarships and financial assistance for college-bound students.

FINDING

The district does not track business partnerships or financial and in-kind contributions made to schools. Principals are responsible for tracking this information, but the procedures are informal and not documented or reported to a district position.

There is no method for the district to calculate or monitor contributions without requiring each school to manually gather the data. The review team asked several schools for a report of business partnerships. Only Truman Price elementary provided the requested information. Truman Price elementary received donations of money, school supplies, clothes, food and many other items from the community. The remaining schools responded that they did not have documented lists of partnerships, but could compile them for the review team.

The lack of a formal procedure for reporting and monitoring benefits acquired by the district makes it difficult to recognize businesses and other contributors supporting DISD. A number of schools ask the same businesses for support. Tracking business partnerships might reduce duplication and donor fatigue.

El Paso ISD tracks monetary and in-kind contributions of businesses on a monthly basis. The system produces a summary report at the end of the year that is used to recognize individual contributors as well as schools soliciting high levels of business participation.

Recommendation 25:

Develop a central tracking list of business partnerships.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement directs the Community liaisons to compile a list of business partnerships and financial and in-kind contributions from each school.	September 2002
2.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement prepares a report form to be used by the principals to track partnerships and contributions.	September 2002
3.	The principals report quarterly all partnerships and contributions to the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement.	October 2002
4.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement and the Community liaisons develop and promote a program to recognize schools that attain their quarterly business partnership	November 2002

	and contribution goals.	
5.	The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement updates the tracking list.	Monthly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

D. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal and external communication involves exchanging information between the district and all community members. Internal communication concerns the distribution of information within the district; external communication concerns the interaction of the district with parents, local businesses and the community as a whole. Effective interactive communication methods provide information to the community about district programs, events and student performance as well as allowing for community members to voice their issues and concerns to district administrators.

The office of the superintendent coordinates an internal communication memo from the schools to the board listing upcoming events, student achievements and enrollment at each school. The *Board Update* is distributed to the board on a weekly basis

The district disseminates information externally through school newsletters, a district newsletter in a local newspaper, the DISD web site and brochures. School newsletters notify parents of upcoming parent sessions, important student test dates, fundraisers and cafeteria menus at each school; newsletters are the responsibility of the principals. Two full-time public relations assistants, employed by the Community and Parental Involvement Department, write and design a district newsletter called the *Drumbeat*, a full-page article published weekly in a local newspaper, *The Mid-Valley Town Crier*. Articles highlight student achievements, DISD events and volunteer programs. Information about board meetings is not included in the newsletter.

Responsibility for the Web site is assigned to the Software specialist/Web master in the Technology Department. The site includes an overview of district job postings, a profile and map of each campus, names of district administration and board members, phone numbers for district departments and staff development information for employees.

Brochures, produced by the Community and Parental Involvement Department and school principals, publicize Title I Migrant programs, school administration policies and other services available at the schools.

DISD communicates internally and externally through the methods listed in **Exhibit 3-9**.

Exhibit 3-9
DISD Internal and External Communications
2001-02

Publication	Description	Issued By	Targeted Audience
Newsletters (at each school)	Event calendar; monthly cafeteria menus; upcoming parent workshops/meetings	Principals and Teachers	Parents
The Drumbeat	District newsletter published in the local newspaper with pictures and articles publicizing student achievements and districtwide events	Public Relations Assistants	Parents and community members
DISD Web site (http://www.esconett.org/donnaisd/index.htm)	Campus and department contact information; job postings; maps to schools; past board meeting agendas; staff development opportunities	Technology Department and Office of the Superintendent	Community members and district/campus staff
Board Update	Upcoming events, student achievements and weekly enrollment	Office of the superintendent	Board
Brochures	Various publications available for parents at each school listing the school's administrative staff, Title I parent and migrant programs, and services available at the school	Parental Involvement Department and Principals	Parents

FINDING

The coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement does not have input on the DISD Web page. There is a link to Migrant/Parental Involvement page on the Web site; the only content in this page, however, is the name and phone number of the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement and the two secretaries who work with the coordinator. There is no content dedicated to parental or community involvement activities on the Web site. The Web site address is not publicized in the district newsletter. The site includes an overview of district job postings, a profile and map of each campus, names of district administration and board members, phone numbers for district departments and staff development information for employees. Community members communicated to the review team dissatisfaction with the efforts the district makes to keep them informed about issues and events.

Responsibility for Web site management is assigned to the software specialist/Web master in the Technology Department.

Many districts with user-friendly Web sites reduce time spent by district employees providing information by phone and mail. In addition, timely updates on a Web site are an excellent way to provide interested citizens information about upcoming events, including school activities, class schedules, outreach programs, board meetings and public quarterly forums.

Some school districts use Web sites to provide electronic district newsletters, district facts and figures, e-mail addresses for employees in the district, information on the district's performance, event calendars for each school, school menus, links to educational resource sites and bond program information. A weekly meeting between each district department and the Web site administrator has been an effective way for these districts to disseminate current information to community members with access to the Internet.

Recommendation 26:

Develop a system to allow and/or require all departments and divisions to update content and link to pertinent information for the community involvement programs.

The link to the community involvement Web page should be on the district's home page so the page is easy to access. The community

involvement Web page should include schedules of classes being held at the PECs, contact information for parent center educators and community liaisons, links to community resources and information about organizations that offer benefits and services to migrant parents. The Software specialist/Web master should designate a weekly appointment with the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement to update the new community involvement Web page.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Software specialist/Web master and the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement propose a content-rich community involvement page to the Web site.	October 2002
2.	The Software specialist/Web master links the comments involvement Web page to the Web site's home page.	October 2002
3.	The superintendent approves the new page on the Web site.	November 2002
4.	The Software specialist/Web master implements the new addition to the Web site.	November 2002 - December 2002
5.	The Software specialist/Web master and the coordinator of Title I, Migrant/Parental Involvement meet weekly to update information for the public on the community involvement Web page.	January 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Attempts by the board to involve the community in the district's activities and issues are not effectively reaching all constituents in the community.

The district includes an open forum at all regular board meetings to enable the community to present their needs and concerns directly to the board; it is scheduled, however, at the end of the board meeting, which at times may last very late in the evening. Until March 2002, the open forum was held at the beginning of the board meeting.

Although the district provides an open forum at board meetings, teachers, principals and community members commented at focus groups that they feel the open forums and board meeting times regularly change and are designed to prevent the community from presenting their issues to the board. Other comments included that meetings and agendas are not well

publicized. The district responded that board meeting agendas are posted at the superintendent's office and on the district's Web site.

Many districts publicize board meeting times and agendas in local newspapers to allow community members to easily access information about upcoming meetings. Some districts use public forums outside of the board meetings as an excellent way to open lines of communication with citizens. A board that encourages citizens to attend open forums and provide public input sends a message that it values the opinions of its community.

Recommendation 27:

Conduct a series of public forums to provide parents, staff and the community an additional method for communicating with the superintendent and board members.

Quarterly public forums should be scheduled each year and held separately from regular board meetings. Each quarter's forum should be well publicized through local newspapers, school newsletters and on the Web site. The forums should be held at different times and in various locations in the district to allow all citizens an opportunity to attend.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops a policy and format for quarterly public forum meetings.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent presents the policy to the board for approval.	November 2002
3.	The superintendent ensures that the forums are publicized in all district and campus newsletters and publications well in advance of the event.	December 2002
4.	DISD begins to hold quarterly public forums.	January 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

This chapter discusses the Donna Independent School District's (DISD's) personnel management in the following sections:

A. Organization and Management
B. Staffing Patterns, Salaries and Benefits
C. Recruiting and Hiring
D. Employee Management and Staff Development

School districts are often one of the largest employers in their communities and personnel costs including salaries are typically the single largest expenditure of any school district. On average, these expenditures make up 80 percent of a district's expenditures. As a result, efficient management of personnel is critical to the district's effectiveness.

BACKGROUND

The personnel department is generally responsible for:

- recruiting employees;
- overseeing the interviewing, selection and processing of new employees;
- retaining employees;
- processing promotions, transfers and resignations;
- determining and maintaining compensation schedules;
- planning and forecasting personnel needs;
- maintaining complete employee records;
- developing and maintaining job descriptions;
- managing the employee evaluation process;
- handling employee complaints and grievances;
- developing personnel policies; and
- ensuring related laws and regulations are followed.

Some districts consolidate payroll, staff development and employee benefit departments within the personnel department, others separate these responsibilities and some districts coordinate these duties with other departments.

Chapter 4
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

DISD's Personnel Department is made up of a Personnel director and seven support staff, including the central office receptionist. The director is relatively new to this position, having accepted it less than a year before TSPR's visit; however, he is not new to the district. Former positions include business manager, principal and personnel director, although he held the last position about 15 years ago.

In DISD, human resource responsibilities are shared with a number of departments. The Personnel Department recruits and hires employees; processes employment status changes; maintains employee records including certification information for professional staff; develops job descriptions; oversees employee evaluations; and handles employee complaints and grievances and employment-related lawsuits. Benefits enrollment and administration are coordinated through the Employee Services Department, which manages all insurance for the district. The Payroll Unit of DISD's Finance Department tracks all employee leave. **Exhibit 4-1** displays the organization chart of the Personnel and Employee Services Departments.

Exhibit 4-1
Personnel and Employee Services Department Organization Chart
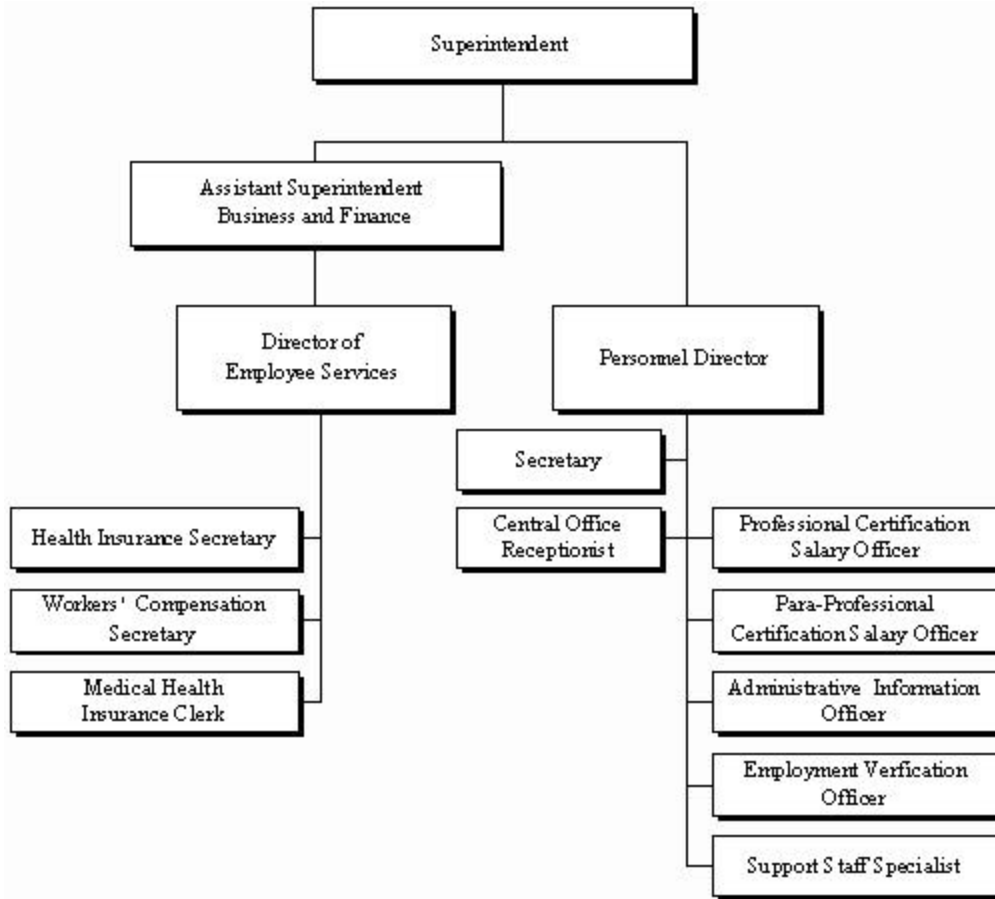
Source: Interviews with DISD Personnel and Employee Services Departments' staff, April 2002.

DISD spends more than $55 million, or 75.9 percent of its total budget, on payroll. **Exhibit 4-2** details payroll costs compared with other expenditures.

Exhibit 4-2
DISD Budgeted Expenditures by Object Group
2001-02

Expenditure Category	Budgeted Amount	Percent of Total
Payroll Costs	$55,114,614	75.9%
Contracted Services	4,224,747	5.8%
Supplies and Materials	4,456,070	6.1%

Capital Outlay Expenses	509,715	0.7%
Other Operating Expenses	1,948,098	2.7%
Debt Service	6,384,637	8.8%
Total	**$72,637,881**	**100.0%**

In 2001-02, the Personnel Department supported 1,865.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, with a ratio of 266.5 FTE district employees for each Personnel Department employee. The central office receptionist was not included in this calculation because she does not perform personnel-related tasks. General industry staffing standards are 200 to 300 employees per personnel department employee.

Exhibit 4-3 presents the number and percentage of total staff for each staffing category from 1998-99 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-3
DISD Number of FTE Employees and Percentage of Total Staff
1998-99 through 2001-02

Classification of Staff	1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Teachers	640.4	37.3%	660.7	37.4%	692.9	38.4%	719.1	38.5%
Professional Support	105.3	6.1%	113.0	6.4%	124.1	6.9%	115.2	6.2%
Campus Administrators	28.5	1.7%	29.0	1.6%	31.0	1.7%	30.2	1.6%
Central Administrators	17.5	1.0%	13.0	0.7%	9.8	0.5%	16.0	0.9%
Educational Aides	256.1	14.9%	248.6	14.1%	245.9	13.6%	245.8	13.2%
Auxiliary Staff	669.6	39.0%	702.1	39.7%	700.3	38.8%	739.4	39.6%
Total Staff	**1,717.4**	**100.0%**	**1,766.4**	**99.9%**	**1,804.0**	**99.9%**	**1,865.7**	**100.0%**

Exhibit 4-4 shows the ethnic composition of the district's teaching staff, which is 81.4 percent Hispanic. The high percentage of Hispanic teachers is consistent with the high percentage of Hispanic students in the district-98.6 percent.

Exhibit 4-4
Ethnicity of DISD Teachers
1998-99 to 2001-02

Ethnicity	1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
African American	6.0	0.9%	5.0	0.8%	6.0	0.9%	5.0	0.7%
Hispanic	489.9	76.5%	501.1	75.8%	550.0	79.4%	585.2	81.4%
Anglo	128.6	20.1%	135.6	20.5%	121.0	17.5%	111.1	15.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15.9	2.5%	19.0	2.9%	15.9	2.3%	17.8	2.5%
Native American	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%
Total	**640.4**	**100%**	**660.7**	**100%**	**692.9**	**100%**	**719.1**	**100.0%**

FINDING

The district's personnel and human resources services are decentralized and several critical duties are not performed by anyone or are performed in multiple departments with insufficient coordination.

Exhibit 4-5 presents DISD's current human resource services by department.

Exhibit 4-5
Current DISD Personnel and Human Resources Functional
Responsibilities by Department

Department	Personnel Responsibility
Board of Trustees	• Approve staffing assignments, new hires, salaries for all personnel

	• Approve employment contracts • Approve compensation plans and classifications • Approve staffing levels • Hear employee grievances and complaints (third hearing)
Superintendent's Office	• Process and approve Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requests • Recommend staffing assignments, hires, salaries to the board • Recommend employment contracts to the board • Recommend compensation plans and classifications to the board • Recommend staffing levels to the board
Personnel Department	• Process employee changes (new hires, reassignments, separations) • Conduct criminal history checks (all employees) • Conduct reference checks (teachers only) • Verify and track teacher certification • Calculate salaries • Maintain personnel records • Hear employee grievances and complaints (second hearing) • Verify employment • Process employment contracts • Act as liaison to attorney on employment matters, grievances and lawsuits
Finance Department	• Determine staffing levels • Process payroll • Administer state and local personal and sick leave • Administer compensatory time • Administer extended sick leave • Administer FMLA leave once approved by superintendent's office
Employee Services Department	• Complete health insurance enrollment and administration • Complete additional insurance benefits enrollment and administration

	• Administer workers' compensation • Risk management • Safety and safety training
Campuses and Departments	• Submit leave information to payroll • Track and deliver staff development and training • Hear Employee grievances and complaints (first hearing)

Source: Interviews with DISD Personnel, Payroll and Employee Services and Superintendent's Office staff, April 2002.

As shown in the chart, the board approves staffing levels, employment contracts and the creation of all at-will positions as well as the hiring and dismissal of all at-will employees. At-will employees do not have a written contract with the district and are subject to termination at the will of the district.

The superintendent is responsible for hiring employees and determining the salaries of at-will employees as well as the dismissal of all at-will employees. The superintendent's office also approves and processes FMLA requests.

The Personnel Department receives job applications, processes criminal background checks, tracks professional employee certifications, calculates salaries and handles requests for employment verification. The department also helps employees complete personnel-related paperwork and is responsible for maintaining all personnel files.

The Finance Department's Payroll unit handles payroll, tracks all employee leave time, administers FMLA once approved by the Superintendent's office and determines staffing levels.

The Employee Services Department oversees employee benefits including health insurance and worker's compensation. Unemployment Tax Consulting Services, a private firm, processes all unemployment compensation claims for the district.

While dividing responsibilities with other departments and agencies is not uncommon in Texas school districts, this fragmentation of duties requires a considerable amount of coordination and diligent oversight. Under the current organizational structure, several important human resource duties

are not receiving adequate attention or are not performed at all. For example:

- no one performs reference checks on non-teaching personnel who have routine contact with children;
- no single department administers FMLA;
- no one ensures the district adheres to the board-approved employee compensation plan;
- no one adequately monitors and prevents violations of state and district nepotism policies;
- no one adequately monitors the staff-to-student ratio or ensures the most efficient use of staff resources; and
- no one monitors and reports district trends regarding staff absenteeism or turnover.

Also, the Personnel Department does not track staffing information, such as non-teaching employee turnover rates and absenteeism, nor does it collect and report demographic information on staffing patterns other than what it compiles for teachers in the district. Such information could prove valuable in identifying and addressing potential concerns before they become serious issues.

In recent years, human resources management-and personnel departments in particular-has evolved to include a broader spectrum of responsibilities and services. A human resources department is often responsible for recruiting, hiring and retaining employees, compensation determination and staff planning, position control, leave and benefits administration and employee relations. Additionally, human resources departments typically ensure compliance with all local, state and federal laws and policies governing personnel issues. By centralizing many of these duties, oversight and accountability can be improved and operations simplified.

Recommendation 28:

Centralize personnel and human resources under a single Human Resources Department and provide appropriate staff training.

The Employee Services Department should be moved to the Personnel Department and renamed Human Resources to reflect the expansion of its duties. **Exhibit 4-6** shows the proposed realignment of human resources responsibilities.

Exhibit 4-6
Proposed DISD Personnel and Human Resource Responsibilities by Department

Department	Personnel Responsibility
Human Resources Department	• Process employee changes (new hires, reassignments, separations) • Conduct criminal history checks (all employees) • Perform reference checks on all employees • Verify and track teacher certification • Calculate salaries and ensure compliance with the board-approved compensation plan • Maintain personnel records • Verify employment • Process employment contracts • Act as liaison to attorney on employment matters, grievances and lawsuits • Process and approve FMLA requests • Determine staffing levels using staffing allocation formulas
	• Administer state and local personal and sick leave • Administer compensatory time • Administer extended sick leave • Administer FMLA leave • Complete health insurance enrollment and administration • Complete additional insurance benefits enrollment and administration • Administer workers' compensation • Risk management • Safety and safety training • Staff development and training coordination and tracking-Track turnover and absenteeism to identify trends • Monitor for cases of nepotism

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., June 2002.

Exhibit 4-7 presents a proposed staffing reorganization. New job descriptions will be needed.

Exhibit 4-7
Proposed Organization of the Human Resources Department
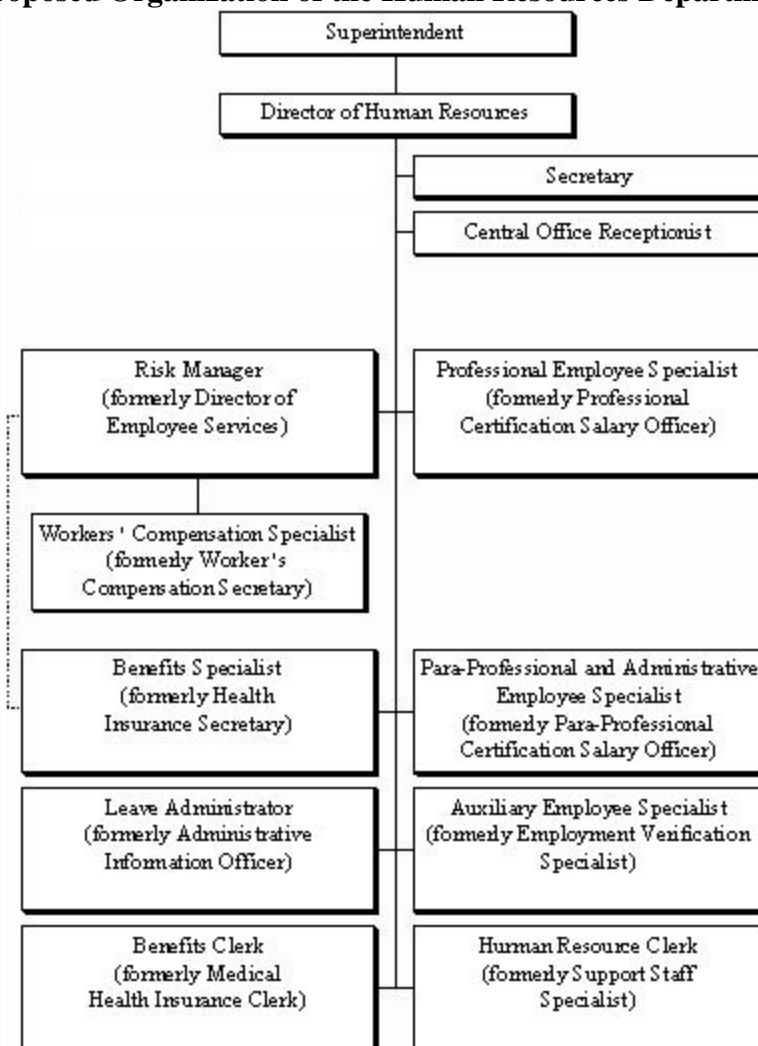
Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., June 2002

Because the duties of staff will be modified and expanded, training will be necessary for all staff members. The director of Human Resources (HR) will need comprehensive training to manage the expanded duties of the new department. The director of Human Resources should ensure that critical HR responsibilities not currently performed by any department, such as reference checks, FMLA and nepotism charts, are assigned to existing personnel.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent accepts or modifies the proposed staffing and reorganization plan for personnel and human resources	October 2002

2.	The Personnel director creates a job description for all proposed Human Resource Department employees using the TASB models for experience and education.	November 2002
3.	The superintendent submits the reorganization plan, job descriptions and staffing recommendations to the board for approval.	December 2002
4.	The board approves the plan, job descriptions and staffing recommendations.	December 2002
5.	The superintendent changes the title of the department from Personnel Department to Human Resources Department and changes the title of the Personnel director to director of Human Resources and the title of Employee Services director to risk manager.	January 2003
6.	The director of Human Resources carries out the remaining parts of the reorganization plan.	January 2003 and Ongoing
7.	The director of Human Resources attends training workshops to acquire the skills to administer his expanded responsibilities.	February 2003
8.	Staff attends workshops to upgrade knowledge and skills.	January 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

There will be a one-time cost of $635 for training the director of Human Resources, assuming he attends a professional development course sponsored by a professional organization such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) or the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). SHRM offers courses locally through the continuing education department of the University of Texas at Brownsville and TASB offers courses in Austin and throughout the state at various Regional Educational Service Centers.

The annual cost for training Human Resource Department staff is estimated at $2,700. This is based on one training program or workshop for each of the nine department employees at a cost of $300 per class. Many human resource workshops, especially those offered by Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1), can be attended for less; however, the average cost per workshop provided by a national training firm is $300. ($300 x 9 = $2,700).

In the first year, this reorganization would cost the district $3,335, which includes the one-time charge of $635 for comprehensive training for the

director of Human Resources and $2,700 for training nine staff members. Annual training costs of $2,700 will continue in subsequent years.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
One-time cost of training for the director of Human Resources.	($635)	$0	$0	$0	$0
Annual cost of Human Resource Department staff training.	($2,700)	($2,700)	($2,700)	($2,700)	($2,700)
Net (Costs)/Savings	**($3,335)**	**($2,700)**	**($2,700)**	**($2,700)**	**($2,700)**

FINDING

DISD does not adequately monitor employment litigation. The Personnel director serves as the liaison and record keeper for employment litigation. However, the review team found no detailed information on historical, outstanding or pending litigation during the on-site review.

The Personnel Department was unable to provide the review team with a list of pending or settled litigation that contained the legal cause of action, the filing date or the current status of cases filed over the past three years. Though requested several times, the Personnel director felt compiling the information would require considerable research; however, he agreed it would be helpful in the future. In April 2002, the Personnel director requested a list of the district's outstanding employment litigation from the district's attorney.

In May 2002, DISD submitted a summary of pending litigation to the review team that showed DISD was the defendant in eight employment-related lawsuits dating from 1995 to 2002. **Exhibit 4-8** presents a summary of that litigation. The district was unable to provide the cause of action, filing date and status of Lawsuit H. The review team determined the cause of action by asking the plaintiff. Lawsuit G was settled out of court in May 2002 for $10,000.

Exhibit 4-8
DISD Summary of Employment Related Litigation, 1995-2002

Case	Cause of Action	Date Filed	Current Status
Lawsuit A	Wrongful suspension; breach of contract	09/13/1995	On the dismissal for want of prosecution (DWOP)docket, case

			retained per plaintiff's request
Lawsuit B	Violation of Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Equal Pay Act of 1995	11/29/1999	Mediation scheduled for 5/29/2002
Lawsuit C (five plaintiffs)	Adverse employment action due to political retaliation, violation of due process under statute and contract, violation of free speech and Texas Open Meetings Act.	05/02/2000	Status hearing set for 7/17/2002
Lawsuit D	Wrongful suspension	09/14/2000	Case is still on docket
Lawsuit E	Violation of due process rights	01/01/2001	Second amended response to claim filed by plaintiffs. No pending hearings.
Lawsuit F	Retaliatory discharge for filing Worker's Compensation claim	04/25/2001	Docket control conference scheduled for 09/12/2002
Lawsuit G	Age and gender discrimination	07/20/1999	Settled for $10,000
Lawsuit H	Breach of Contract	04/24/2002	Before the commissioner of education

Source: DISD Personnel Department, April 2002.

The fact that the district could not readily provide information on the litigation against it, and the missing information contained in the summaries that were provided, indicate that DISD is not effectively managing and monitoring this information. In addition, it appears that suits may have been filed before the employee exhausted the internal grievance process. Of the four cases where grievances were included in the summary, only one clearly showed that all grievance procedures had been exhausted prior to the filing of the lawsuit. In an employee lawsuit, it could strengthen the district's case to show that an employee did not complete the grievance process before initiating legal action.

Exhibit 4-9 shows a national statistic on the median compensatory damages awarded by juries and through settlements. The average jury award is at least twice as high as the average settlement.

Exhibit 4-9
National Median Compensatory Damages Awarded between
1994 and 2000

Cause of Action	Awarded by Juries	Settlements
Discrimination, overall	$150,000	$60,000
Constructive discharge	$112,500	$32,000
Hostile work environment	$155,000	$60,000
Retaliation	$139,800	$32,500
Wrongful termination (not based on discrimination)	$157,380	$44,000
Employment cases, overall	$150,000	$62,000

Source: Jury Verdict Research, HR Magazine, May 2002.

While no policy, procedure or practice can eliminate all employee litigation, several steps can be taken to minimize the likelihood of a suit and the financial impact of such suits. Centrally tracking employee litigation and grievances and examining each case to identify reasons for the grievance and opportunities for reducing the district's risk of employee lawsuits is an important step. According to the SHRM, others include:

- having an internal complaint resolution process in place;
- documenting disciplinary actions;
- completing an annual evaluation of all employees based on job performance, skills and productivity;
- obtaining legally valid waivers and releases;
- following disciplinary and termination procedures; and
- conducting exit interviews and signing and dating notes from interviews. It is important to preserve the dignity of the employee- the way an employee is treated at the time of termination may determine whether litigation results.

Recommendation 29:

Maintain files for all litigation and formal employee complaints and monitor them closely to try and resolve grievance issues before they become litigated disputes.

When a formal complaint is filed against the district, the Personnel director should create a file to track all activity related to that complaint. A standardized check list should be kept in the file that tracks the status and

nature of the complaint. The check list should contain the following information:

- date filed;
- name of claimant;
- nature of complaint:
- summary of level 1 grievance hearing;
- summary of Level 2 grievance hearing;
- date lawsuit filed;
- name of attorney;
- date of mediation;
- settlement offer:
- trial date; and
- resolution.

In addition, the Personnel director should keep a master list of all grievances. The list should include the filing date, the nature of complaint and the status. This will provide the district with accessible documentation and ensure that the grievance process has been completed before any litigation begins.

The Personnel director should evaluate pending and resolved grievances and identify any weaknesses in the grievance process. The Personnel director should then work with the superintendent, Region 1, the Texas Association of School Boards, the school attorney and mediation and arbitration organizations to develop a strategy addressing any weaknesses in the process. By making a concerted effort to ensure employee complaints are heard and dealt with at the grievance level, the district may avoid employment litigation. The district should be informed of the status of all pending employment litigation by each attorney. By keeping a status sheet for each complaint, the district may be able to reduce legal expenditures by minimizing follow-up calls to attorneys. As noted in Chapter 1, *District Organization and Management,* in 2000-01, the district paid over $500,000 for legal services, which amounts to about $57 per pupil.

If the district monitors all complaints carefully, problems may be resolved prior to any court action. If, however, court action cannot be avoided, the Personnel director must have complete knowledge of the facts of each case.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director develops a check list for tracking all employee complaints.	October 2002

2.	The Personnel director sets up a filing system for all employee complaints.	October 2002
3.	The Personnel director creates a master list of all employee complaints to help track the status of all litigation.	November 2002
4.	The Personnel director reviews all incoming employment litigation to ensure the grievance process has been exhausted.	Ongoing
5.	The Personnel director examines available data on grievances and identifies weaknesses in the process.	December 2002
6.	The Personnel director consults the superintendent, Region 1, TASB, the attorney and other resources to identify possible strategies for addressing the weaknesses in the process.	January 2003
7.	The Personnel director submits the strategies to the superintendent for approval.	January 2003
8.	The superintendent reviews the strategies, makes any necessary modifications, then approves the strategies.	February 2003
9.	The Personnel director trains all supervisors to use the grievance process to resolve employee disputes.	March 2003 and annually in August
10.	The Personnel director informs all employees about the grievance process each year.	March 2003 and Annually in August
11.	The Personnel director reviews the grievance list to determine its effectiveness.	June 2003
12.	The Personnel director updates the strategies as necessary.	As necessary
13.	The Personnel director repeats the supervisory training on the grievance process as necessary.	As necessary

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not have accurate job descriptions for each position in the district. Some positions lack any job description and others do not specify pay grades or revision dates. The review team was unable to locate a job description for a records clerk or board secretary.

A job description is a summary of job responsibilities and an analysis of the work performed in a given position. It provides comparison

information for determining appropriate levels of pay and specifies whether an employee is exempt from the overtime pay and minimum wage requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Accurate job descriptions reduce the risk of employment lawsuits by clearly specifying the duties and responsibilities of each position and any equal pay, workplace safety, equal employment and overtime eligibility conditions associated with each job.

Since job descriptions are a key element in compensation studies and performance evaluations, out-of-date or generic job descriptions compromise the effectiveness these activities. Inaccurate job descriptions hinder efforts to perform job analysis and compare positions across pay scale classifications.

In DISD, job titles do not always match duties performed. Many clerical employees with varying job titles and responsibilities are evaluated using the same job description. Nine of 10 paraprofessional staff members in the Personnel and Employee Services Departments are evaluated using the department secretary job description although their duties vary considerably. In the Transportation Department, several position titles did not reflect actual job duties.

Positions should be reviewed and updated at least every three years to ensure work performed matches the duties specified in the job description and to ensure employees are evaluated and compensated fairly. TASB offers sample job descriptions for most positions in the district online. Updating job descriptions on a regular basis can also strengthen the district's position should an employee dispute occur over an employee's responsibilities or the employer's expectations.

Recommendation 30:

Develop new job descriptions for each position in the district and update them regularly, especially when job duties change.

The district should immediately begin creating accurate and specific job descriptions for all positions. Pay grades should be added to each job description and updated as duties change. Any changes to employee duties and pay grades should trigger a corresponding change to the job description.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director identifies all positions lacking accurate job descriptions.	November 2002

2.	The Personnel director or designee, using available Texas Association of School Boards resources, works with employees and supervisors to create specific job descriptions.	November 2002
3.	The Personnel director submits the job descriptions to the superintendent and board for approval.	December 2002
4.	The superintendent and board approve the job descriptions.	January 2003
5.	The Personnel director creates a schedule for updating job descriptions.	February 2003
6.	The Personnel director ensures that job descriptions are updated according to the schedule.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

B. STAFFING PATTERNS, SALARIES AND BENEFITS (Part 1)

The DISD's single largest expenditure is payroll. Staff salaries and benefits have a profound effect on the amount of money available for other programs; the better payroll costs are controlled, the more flexibility a district has in distributing funds to other programs.

Exhibit 4-10 shows staffing trends in the district from 1997-98 through 2001-02. The number of central administrators and educational aides decreased, while all other categories of staff increased. The largest increases, in both percentage and number, are found in the staffing of campus administrators, teachers and auxiliary staff. PEIMS reporting numbers show that in 2001-02, DISD employed one staff person for every 5.6 students while the state average is one staff person for every 7.4 students.

Exhibit 4-10
DISD Staffing Trends
1997-98 through 2001-02

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	Percentage Change	Numerical Change
Teachers	638.2	640.4	660.7	692.9	719.1	12.7%	80.9
Professional Support	111.9	105.3	113.0	124.1	115.2	2.9%	3.3
Campus Administrators	25.0	28.5	29.0	31.0	30.2	20.8%	5.2
Central Administration	17.0	17.5	13.0	9.8	16.0	(5.9%)	(1.0)
Educational Aides	270.4	256.1	248.6	245.9	245.8	(9.1%)	(24.6)
Auxiliary Staff	666.6	669.6	702.1	700.3	739.4	10.9%	72.8
Total Staff	**1,729.1**	**1,717.4**	**1,766.5**	**1,804.0**	**1,865.7**	**7.9%**	**136.6**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-98 through 2000-01 and PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-11 presents the percentage of staff by category for DISD, peer districts and the state for 2001-02. The chart shows that DISD had the

second-lowest percentage of teachers and the second-highest percentage of auxiliary personnel when compared with peer districts. The percentage of teachers, 38.4 percent, is well below the state average of 50.5 percent and the percentage of auxiliary staff, 39.6 percent, is significantly higher than the state average of 26.5 percent.

Exhibit 4-11
DISD, Peer Districts and the State
Percentage of Staff by Category
2001-02

District	Teachers	Prof. Support	Campus Administra-tion	Central Administra-tion	Education Aides	Auxiliary Staff	Students per Teacher
Donna	**38.5%**	**6.2%**	**1.6%**	**0.9%**	**13.2%**	**39.6%**	**14.5**
Eagle Pass	42.8%	5.5%	1.8%	0.3%	15.5%	34.0%	17.5
Edgewood	42.6%	10.3%	2.4%	1.4%	11.9%	31.5%	16.3
Mission	43.5%	6.5%	1.6%	1.1%	12.9%	34.4%	15.7
Rio Grande City	37.3%	6.0%	1.6%	0.6%	12.6%	42.0%	14.9
San Benito	41.9%	9.5%	2.4%	0.9%	13.6%	31.6%	16.0
State	**50.5%**	**8.9%**	**1.0%**	**2.7%**	**10.3%**	**26.5%**	**14.7**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-12 compares DISD to peer districts, the region and the state in average salaries for certain groups of employees.

Exhibit 4-12
Staff Average Salary Comparison
DISD, Region, State and Peer Districts
2001-02

District	Teachers	Professional Support	Campus Administration	Central Administration
Donna	**$37,233**	**$45,878**	**$56,432**	**$76,917**
Eagle Pass	$39,643	$48,236	$57,012	$79,285

District				
Edgewood	$38,529	$43,317	$52,830	$51,257
Mission	$41,590	$51,650	$66,202	$88,830
Rio Grande City	$42,908	$48,843	$57,433	$83,713
San Benito	$38,957	$42,993	$55,147	$85,317
Region 1	**$38,795**	**$46,374**	**$59,652**	**$78,695**
State	**$39,230**	**$42,306**	**$59,873**	**$77,527**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-13 compares DISD teacher salaries to peer districts, the region and the state and displays the comparison according to years of teaching experience.

Exhibit 4-13
Teacher Salary Comparison
DISD, Region, State and Peer Districts
2001-02

District	Beginning	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	Over 20 Years
Donna	**$29,761**	**$31,769**	**$36,656**	**$43,624**	**$46,509**
Eagle Pass	$31,063	$32,382	$35,223	$42,429	$50,449
Edgewood	$30,372	$32,594	$36,502	$42,337	$47,425
Mission	$28,970	$33,219	$37,752	$44,547	$50,973
Rio Grande City	$28,095	$31,714	$35,685	$43,754	$49,780
San Benito	$29,431	$31,401	$34,977	$42,429	$48,433
Region 1	**$29,170**	**$30,722**	**$35,266**	**$41,153**	**$46,276**
State	**$28,020**	**$29,147**	**$33,934**	**$39,957**	**$43,916**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibits 4-14 through **4-17** provide a detailed salary schedule for teachers, administrators, paraprofessional and auxiliary personnel in the district.

Exhibit 4-14
DISD Teacher Salary Schedule
2001-02

Years Experience	Salary Bachelor's Degree
0	$30,000
1	$30,293
2	$30,620
3	$31,087
4	$31,490
5	$32,493
6	$33,259
7	$34,406
8	$35,512
9	$36,698
10	$37,844
11	$38,529
12	$39,054
13	$39,939
14	$40,944
15	$42,148
16	$42,352
17	$42,556
18	$42,760
19	$42,963
20+	$43,616
Selected Stipend	**Amount**
Master's Degree	$500
Certified/Endorsed Bilingual/ESL	$1,000
Certified/Endorsed Special Education	$1,500
Speech Therapist	$1,500

Exhibit 4-15
DISD Administrative and Professional Job Classification Salary
Schedule
2001-02

Pay Grade	Annual Pay Rates 12 Months		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
Pay Grade 1 • PEIMS Coordinator • Physical Therapist • Supervisor, Tax Office • Technical Support Supervisor • Youth Liaison Officer	$33,180	$42,000	$50,820
Pay Grade 2 • Migrant Specialist • Public Relations Office • Speech Therapist	$36,540	$45,675	$54,810
Pay Grade 3 • Coordinators: Curriculum, Fine Arts-Elementary • Curriculum Specialist • Director, Food Service • Internal Auditor • Occupational Therapist • Speech Pathologist-fully licensed • Supervisors: Payroll, Secondary Math	$39,738	$49,672	$59,606
Pay Grade 4 • Assistant Principal: Elementary, Middle School Chief Accountant	$43,755	$54,018	$64,281

• Coordinators: Attendance, Bilingual/Title VII, Dyslexia/504, Library, Migrant/Parent Involvement, Proposal Writing/DLDMC, SCE • School Psychologist • Supervisors: Elementary Curriculum, Special Education			
Pay Grade 5 • Assistant Principal: High School, Ninth Grade Campus • Directors: AAS, Athletic Programs, Career and Technology, Library Services, Employee Services and Risk Management, Student Support Services, Technology and Evaluation • Principal, Alternative School	$47,583	$58,744	$69,905
Pay Grade 6 • Directors: Bilingual/Title VII, Compliance, Elementary, Curriculum, Secondary Curriculum, Federal/SCE Programs, Personnel, Special Education • Principals: Elementary, Middle School	$51,747	$63,885	$76,023
Pay Grade 7 • Director, Maintenance and Transportation • Principals: High School, Ninth Grade	$58,358	$69,474	$80,590
Pay Grade 8 • Assistant Superintendents: Business and Finance, Curriculum and Instruction, Federal Programs, Special Programs	$63,465	$75,553	$87,641

Pay Grade 9			
• Deputy Superintendent, Administration/Personnel	$70,661	$82,164	$93,667

Exhibit 4-16
DISD Clerical/Technical Job Classification Salary Schedule
2001-02

Pay Grade	Hourly Rates		
	Minimum	**Midpoint**	**Maximum**
Pay Grade 1 • Aides: Classroom, PE, Special Education (Resource/Content Mastery) • Caregiver, PEP • Level 1 Employees	$5.81	$8.60	$11.91
Pay Grade 2 • Aides: Computer Lab, Life Skills-Special Education self-contained, Classroom/Security Guard • Assistants: Registrar, Textbooks Custodian, Audio-Visual Technician, Physical Therapist (Non-licensed) • Clerks: Assistant Principal, PEIMS, Special Education, PEIMS/Attendance • Community Liaison • Level 2 Employees • Parent Educator • Recruiter, Migrant • Receptionist, Campus/Department • Security Guard, Campus	$6.62	$9.20	$12.33
Pay Grade 3 • Aide, Cosmetology	$7.58	$9.84	$12.69

• Assistants: Attendance Officer, JROTC, Nurse • Clerks: New Generation Systems, Purchasing • Level 3 Employees • Textbook Custodian • Parts Manager • Receptionist, Main Office/Moye Complex • Secretary, JROTC • Security, Campus Assistant Supervisor			
Pay Grade 4 • Assistant Director, Food Services • Assistant, Public Relations • Bookkeeper, High School • Caseworker, PEP • Clerks: Data Entry-High School. Lead NGS • Level 4 Employees • Registrar, High School • Secretary, Campus Alternative • Security, Campus Supervisor • Warehouse, Assistant Manager	$8.42	$10.53	$13.27
Pay Grade 5 • Clerks: Fixed Assets, Payroll • MARS Liaison • Officers: Administrative Information, Paraprofessional Salary and Certification • Secretaries: Personnel, Elementary and Middle School Principal • Specialists: Computer Helpdesk, Employment Verification, Support Staff	$8.74	$11.06	$13.38
Pay Grade 6 • Audio-Visual Technician • Licensed Vocational Nurse	$9.17	$11.61	$14.05

Pay Grade			
• Certification and Professional Salary Officer • Physical Therapist Assistant • Secretaries: Asst. Supt., HS Principal, Supt.'s Office • Specialist, Hardware [PC Technician 1] • Specialist, Hardware [PC Technician 2] + $1,000 • Specialist, Hardware [PC Technician 3] + $2,000 • Specialist, Hardware [PC Technician 4] + $3,000 • Specialist, Software/Webmaster • Supervisor, Data			
Pay Grade 7 • Bookkeepers: Central Office, Federal Programs • Coordinator, PEP • Drill Instructor • Purchasing Agent	$9.87	$12.19	$14.51
Pay Grade 8 • Assistant PEIMS Coordinator • Secretaries: Executive, Superintendent • Supervisors: Security, Technical Support • Warehouse Manager	$10.37	$12.80	$15.99

Source: DISD Compensation Policy 2001-02, August 20, 2001.

Exhibit 4-17
DISD Manual Trades Job Classification Salary Schedule
2001-02

Pay Grade	Hourly Pay Rates		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
Pay Grade 1	$5.66	$7.30	$10.40

• Transportation Aide • Level 1 Cafeteria • Level 1 Maintenance • Custodian • Materials Handler • Security Guard, Bus Barn • Security Guard, Night • Security Guard, Substitute			
Pay Grade 2 • Clerk, Maintenance • Crew Leader (Supervisor PG1 employees) • Level 2 Cafeteria • Level 2 Maintenance • Custodian, Head 1 (Supervises 10 or less) • Locksmith	$6.23	$7.88	$11.11
Pay Grade 3 • Assistant Manager, Parts • Carpenter • Crew Leader (Supervises Pay Grade 2 employees) • Level 3 Cafeteria • Level 3 Maintenance • Custodian, Head 2 (Supervises 11 or more)	$6.72	$8.51	$11.57
Pay Grade 4 • Bus Driver • Level 4 Cafeteria • Mechanic 1 (General Mechanic) • Mechanic 2 (Specialized in specific area) + $1/hour • Mechanic 1 (ASE Certified) + $2/hour	$7.26	$9.19	$12.04
Pay Grade 5	$7.75	$9.93	$12.11

• Level 5 Cafeteria • Transportation Dispatcher • Transportation Service Foreman			
Pay Grade 6 • Electrician, Journeyman • Plumber, Journeyman • Waste Water Technician	$8.68	$10.72	$12.76
Pay Grade 7 • Air Conditioning Technician (Certified) • Master Electrician • Master Plumber	$9.38	$11.58	$13.78
Pay Grade 8 • Custodial Supervisor • Maintenance Supervisor • Transportation Supervisor	$10.13	$12.51	$14.89

Source: DISD Compensation Policy 2001-02, August 20, 2001.

FINDING

The district does not use staffing allocation formulas to determine staffing needs for employees other than teachers. The district currently uses the state mandated 22:1 student-to-teacher ratio for kindergarten through grade 4 as a guideline. For middle and high schools, the district uses a ratio of 25-30:1, depending on program needs.

However, for employees other than teachers, the district relies on attendance zones and enrollment reports to determine staffing levels. The district provided a methodology for determining the number of custodians needed to TSPR; however, it has not applied the methodology because, as discussed in Chapter 5 of this report, *Facilities Use and Maintenance*, the district employs 60 percent more custodians than the regional averages.

The district did provide TSPR with copies of 2002-03 staffing projection worksheets for elementary schools that were completed by principals in

May 2002. According to the worksheets, the district will need to add 13 elementary teachers to accommodate enrollment growth. No other personnel were included on the worksheet.

Exhibit 4-18 shows district staffing ratios for all classes of employees for DISD and peer districts. DISD has the fourth-largest enrollment, the largest number of auxiliary staff and the third-largest number of central administrators and educational aides of its peer group. The ratio of students to auxiliary staffers is lower than the ratio of students to teachers and the second-lowest among the peer districts. DISD has the fourth-lowest ratio of students per professional support staff and the lowest number of students per educational aide. Generally, having low student-to-teacher ratio and high student-to-support staff ratios is preferred.

Exhibit 4-18
DISD and Peer Districts Staff and Student Enrollment
2001-02

Professional Staff	Donna	Eagle Pass	Edgewood	Mission	Rio Grande City	San Benito
Student Enrollment	**10,451**	12,778	13,435	13,122	8,906	9,102
Teachers	719.1	729.3	826.7	838.0	598.5	569.2
Professional Support	**115.2**	93.9	199.1	124.9	95.7	129.7
Educational Aides	**245.8**	265.0	230.5	249.7	202.3	185.2
School Administration	**30.2**	30.8	46.9	31.0	26.0	33.0
Central Administration	**16.0**	5.0	26.9	22.0	9.0	12.0
Auxiliary Staff	**739.4**	580.0	610.5	662.5	674.2	429.3
Students per Staff Comparisons						
Students per Teacher	14.5	17.5	16.3	15.7	14.9	16.0
Students per Prof. Support	**90.7**	136.1	67.5	105.0	93.0	70.2
Students per Educational Aide	**42.5**	48.2	58.3	52.6	44.0	49.1
Students per School Administration	**345.8**	414.9	286.5	423.3	342.5	275.8
Students Per Central	**653.2**	2,555.6	499.4	596.5	989.6	758.5

Administration						
Students per Auxiliary Staffer	**14.1**	22.0	22.0	19.8	13.2	21.2

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

The district has 20 director-level or higher positions in central administration with 28 secretary positions. Secretary positions are considered auxiliary personnel for PEIMS reporting purposes.

The district is considerably overstaffed in auxiliary personnel, which includes custodial, maintenance, transportation, food service and clerical staff. In 2001-02, this category of employees comprised 39.6 percent of total staff compared with the state average of 26.5 percent. The district is also overstaffed in educational aides, although it has reduced educational aides by 9.1 percent, or 24.6 positions, since 1997-98 (see **Exhibit 4-10**). However, educational aides still comprise 13.2 percent of total staff compared with the state average of 10.3 percent.

The superintendent agrees that the district is overstaffed in custodial and maintenance and food services employees.

Additionally, the data shows that campus clerical staff far exceeds the standards established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), an organization that sets industry standards. SACS accredits more than 12,000 public and private institutions, from pre-kindergarten through the university level, in 11 states in the Southeastern United States, including Texas. SACS is one of only six regional accrediting organizations in the U.S. recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. Member institutions are accredited through one of SACS' three commissions, the Commission on Colleges, the Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools and the Commission on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Chapter 4
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

B. STAFFING PATTERNS, SALARIES AND BENEFITS (Part 2)

An industry standard, such as SACS, uses quantifiable criteria such as student enrollment, square footage of space and meals per labor hour to assess and project staffing needs. They also allow districts to project payroll and benefits costs over a number of years and predict budgetary needs. Industry standards are useful aids for ensuring the district does not overstaff positions.

Exhibits 4-19, **4-20** and **4-21** present the SACS accreditation staffing standards for elementary, middle and high schools.

Exhibit 4-19
SACS Accreditation Standards for
Elementary Schools

Enrollment	Librarians or Media Specialists	Library or Media Aide	Secretaries/ Clerks	Enrollment	Guidance Counselors
1 - 263	0.5	0.0	0.5	1 - 499	0.5
264 - 439	1.0	0.0	1.0	500 - 749	1.0
440 - 659	1.0	0.5	1.0	750 - 999	1.5
660 - 879	1.0	1.0	1.5	1000 - 1249	2.0
880 - 1099	1.0	1.0	1.5	1250 - 1499	2.5
1100 - 1319	1.0	1.0	2.0	1500 - up	3.0
1320 - up	1.0	1.0	2.0		

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

Exhibit 4-20
SACS Accreditation Standards for
Middle Schools

Enrollment	Library or	Library or	Secretaries or	Guidance

	Media Specialists	Media Aides	Clerks	Counselors
1 - 249	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.5
250 - 499	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0
500 - 749	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0
750 - 999	1.0	1.0	1.5	2.0
1000 - 1249	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.5
1250 - 1499	1.0	1.0	2.0	3.0
1500 - up	*	1.0	2.0	*

Source: SACS Additional Standards Unique to Middle Schools, 2001-02.
*Plus one FTE where needed for each 250 students over 1,500.

Exhibit 4-21
SACS Accreditation Standards
High Schools

Enrollment	Library or Media Specialists	Library or Media Aides	Secretaries or Clerks	Guidance Professionals
1 - 249	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
250 - 499	1.0	0.5	2.0	1.0
500 - 749	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.5
750 - 999	1.0	1.0	3.5	2.0
1000 - 1249	2.0	1.0	4.0	2.5
1250 - 1499	2.0	1.0	4.5	3.0
1500 - up	*	1.0	4.5	*

Source: SACS High School Accreditation Standards, 2000.
*Plus one FTE where needed for each 250 students over 1,500.

Exhibit 4-22 presents DISD clerical staffing by campus compared with SACS standards. The number of clerical staff per campus is significantly higher than the industry standard.

Exhibit 4-22
Campus Clerical Staffing
DISD versus SACS standards

Campus	Enrollment*	Secretaries or Clerks			Library Aide or Media Clerk			Total
		DISD	SACS	Over (Under) Standards	DISD	SACS	Over (Under) Standards	Over (Under) Standards
Donna High School (High School)	1,519	33.0	4.5	28.5	4.0	1.0	3.0	**31.5**
Todd 9th Grade	736	10.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	**8.0**
Solis Middle School (MS)	1,139	9.0	2.0	7.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	**8.0**
Veterans Middle School	1,127	9.0	2.0	7.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	**8.0**
C. Stainke Elementary	367	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	**5.0**
Runn Elementary	356	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	**5.0**
J.P. Lenoir Elementary	470	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	**4.5**
B.G. Guzman Elementary	442	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	**4.5**
M. Rivas Elementary	475	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	**4.5**
Caceres Elementary	505	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	**4.5**
T. Price Elementary	488	5.0	1.0	4.0	1.0	0.5	0.5	**4.5**
A.M.	514	5.0	1.0	4.0	2.0	0.5	1.5	**5.5**

Ochoa Elementary								
P.S. Garza Elementary	843	5.0	1.5	3.5	2.0	1.0	1.0	**4.5**
Munoz Elementary	786	5.0	1.5	3.5	2.0	1.0	1.0	**4.5**
Salinas Elementary	684	5.0	1.5	3.5	2.0	1.0	1.0	**4.5**
Total	**10,451**	**116.0**	**24.0**	**92.0**	**25.0**	**10.0**	**15.0**	**107.0**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
*SACS Accreditation Standards; DISD Directory, 2001-02.

Recommendation 31:

Use staffing allocation formulas to determine the number of positions within in each department and eliminate excess positions.

The district should adopt staffing allocation formulas that are in line with industry standards for each class of employee. Positions should be created and filled only when staffing allocation formulas indicate the need for additional employees exists.

According to SACS, the district is overstaffed by 107 campus clerical positions. However, the review team recommends reducing this number by 40 percent to allow for PEIMS reporting and other special needs of the district. That would mean eliminating 64 positions (107 positions X 60 percent = 64.2 positions). In addition, the district should eliminate seven secretarial positions in the central office and reduce the total number of secretaries from 28 to 21. This would leave one secretary for each director-level or higher position and one secretary for the board, which would be an industry norm.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director identifies appropriate staffing allocation formulas for each class of position.	September 2002
2.	The Personnel director, superintendent and assistant superintendent of Business and Finance review the staffing allocation formulas and determine the specific campus and central office positions to eliminate.	October 2002

3.	The superintendent submits position elimination recommendations to the board for approval.	November 2002
4.	The board approves the position eliminations.	December 2002
5.	The superintendent, with the assistance of the Personnel director, eliminates the positions.	December 2002
6.	The Personnel director and superintendent use the staffing allocation formulas as a guide to determine staffing needs and create new positions.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

Eliminating 64 campus clerical positions will result in annual savings of $1,291,712. These savings are calculated by taking the average annual salary for employees on pay grade 2, paying them for 207 days, and adding annual benefits ([$15,242 annual salary x 1.16 variable benefits] + $2,502 fixed benefits x 64 positions = $1,291,712). This is a conservative calculation since pay grade 2 includes most clerical positions at the campus level. Some positions are paid on higher pay grades or work more days.

During the first year of implementation, the district will save $861,141 ([$1,291,712/12] x 8 months) for January through August 2003. The savings are calculated and explained below.

Campus Clerical Positions			
Average annual salary	$15,242		
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16		
	$17,681		
Fixed benefits	+ $2,502		
Total annual salary and benefits		$20,183	
Number of positions eliminated		x 64	
Total campus clerical positions annual savings			**$1,291,712**

Eliminating seven central administration secretary positions will save $197,407 annually. These savings are calculated by taking the average annual salary for central administration secretaries and adding annual benefits ([$22,154 annual salary x 1.16 variable benefits] + $2,502 fixed benefits x 7 positions = $197,407).

For the first year, the district will save $131,605 [$197,407/12] x 8 months) for January through August 2003. The savings are calculated below.

Secretarial Positions			
Average annual salary	$22,154		
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16		
	$25,699		
Fixed benefits	+ $2,502		
Total annual salary and benefits		$28,201	
Number of positions eliminated		x 7	
Total secretarial positions annual savings			$197,407

The district will save $992,746 ($861,141 + $131,605) the first year, and $1,489,119 ($1,291,712 + $197,407) annually thereafter.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Use staffing allocation formulas to determine the number of positions within each department and eliminate excess positions.	$992,746	$1,489,119	$1,489,119	$1,489,119	$1,489,119

FINDING

The district does not adhere to its compensation policy and does not pay employees equitably.

The review team found that the district, and notably the Personnel and Employee Services Departments, is not conforming with the board-approved compensation plan. Of the 12 staff in the Personnel and Employee Services Departments, seven are paid above the pay grade maximums. There are 10 paraprofessionals in the two departments and, according to the compensation plan, one is at pay grade 3, two are at pay grade 4, five are at pay grade 5, one is at pay grade 6 and one position is not included in the compensation plan. The one employee at pay grade six is paid less than all but two other paraprofessionals in the departments.

Exhibit 4-23 details the salaries of those employees and shows where the actual salary is on the pay scale.

Exhibit 4-23
Personnel and Employee Services Department
Clerical Employee Salaries and Pay Grade Maximums

Position	Pay Grade	Pay Grade Maximum	Actual Salary	Percent Above (Below) Maximum
Medical Insurance Clerk	Pay Grade 8/226 days*	$28,910	$31,525	9.0%
Support Staff Specialist	Pay Grade 5/226 days	$24,191	$28,117	16.2%
Certification and ParaprofessionalSalary Officer	Pay Grade 5/230 days	$24,619	$27,184	10.4%
Employment Verification Specialist	Pay Grade 5/230 days	$24,619	$26,720	8.5%
Secretary, Personnel	Pay Grade 5/230 days	$24,619	$25,835	4.9%
Main Office Receptionist	Pay Grade 3/226 days	$22,944	$25,381	10.6%
Worker's Compensation Secretary	Pay Grade 4/226 days	$23,992	$25,241	5.2%
Certification and Professional Salary Officer	Pay Grade 6/230 days	$25,852	$24,776	(4.2)%
Administrative Information Officer	Pay Grade 5/226 days	$24,191	$23,006	(4.9)%
Health Insurance Secretary	Pay Grade 4/226 days	$23,992	$21,673	(9.7)%

Source: DISD Compensation Policy and Staffing by Category Report, April 2002.

Denotes pay grade for the employee filling the position-the position could not be found in the Compensation Plan.

Another concern is that most central administration clerical workers are evaluated using the department secretary job description even though their job titles and responsibilities differ considerably. Specialized job descriptions do not exist and need to be created. TASB offers sample job descriptions for most positions in the district online.

The district had a salary study and compensation plan performed by TASB in December 1998 that was released in July 1999. The plan cost the district $21,000. The study recommended that DISD not increase any employee's salary currently over the maximum rate of the assigned pay grade. However, the district provided the review team with its *1999-2000 through 2001-2002 Percentage Salary Increase Plan,* which recommended across-the-board salary increases for DISD employees. For the 2001-02 school year, the plan prescribed a 5 percent above the mid-point salary increase for clerical and technical employees.

When pay inequities occur, corrective action often includes reassigning tasks and responsibilities so those with higher-than-average pay are assigned greater responsibilities to merit their higher rate of compensation. Also, TASB recommends that classification and compensation studies be performed every four to five years, and more frequently for districts with staffing or compensation issues to ensure fair and equitable pay.

Recommendation 32:

Request a classification audit and compensation study and reassign duties to equalize pay with performance.

Several consulting firms can perform this service. DISD completed an audit using TASB Human Resources Services' consulting division in 1999. Reassigning tasks so performance is closely tied to pay improves the district's credibility with employees and the public. Compensation plays a key role in attracting, motivating and retaining employees; pay inequities undermine each of these efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The Personnel director contacts three to five consulting firms and requests pricing for conducting a classification audit and compensation study.	October 2002
2.	The Personnel director and superintendent review the price quotes and select a firm.	October 2002

3.	The superintendent recommends the classification audit, compensation study and selected firm to the board.	December 2002
4.	The board approves classification audit, compensation study and selected firm.	January 2003
5.	The Personnel director contacts the selected firm and schedules the classification audit and study.	January 2003
6.	The Personnel director implements the recommendations upon board approval.	May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

Implementing this recommendation would have a one-year cost of $15,000. This amount is based on the cost of hiring a consulting firm for $150 an hour for 100 hours to perform the classification audit and compensation study.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Request a classification audit and compensation study and reassign duties to equalize pay with performance.	($15,000)	$0	$0	$0	$0

FINDING

No one employee or department in the district is responsible for administering the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. FMLA allows employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for: the birth or adoption or foster-care placement of a child; the serious health condition of a spouse, child or parent or the serious health condition of the employee. FMLA covers employers with 50 or more employees within 75 miles of a given workplace. An employee must have worked for the employer at least 12 months and 1,250 hours in the past year to be eligible.

FMLA allows the employer to substitute accrued paid leave for unpaid leave. Employers must continue the employee's health benefits while the employee is on leave. Employees are required to pay their portion of the cost of benefits; however, if the employee does not return to work at the expiration of the leave, the employer may seek reimbursement of health insurance premiums paid on behalf of the employee while on leave. In most cases, the employee must be returned to the same job or one with equivalent status, pay and benefits. Employees are required to give advance notice of the intent to take FMLA leave whenever possible, such

as the impending birth, adoption or foster-care placement of a child. The laws governing FMLA are complex and special training is recommended for personnel administering the program.

The review team could not identify an employee in the district who is responsible for tracking FMLA benefits and notifying employees or supervisors when FMLA leave is taken or available; but it was able to determine that parts of the process are administered by several departments and personnel.

Personnel Department staff said the board secretary, who works in the Superintendent's office, was responsible for FMLA. The board secretary said she processed FMLA requests but that the leave information was actually tracked by the Personnel Department. The Personnel Department said FMLA leave tracking was a Payroll responsibility; Payroll is a responsibility of the Finance Department. Payroll staff said they track employees on FMLA leave after they receive notification from the board secretary and keep a list of employees using FMLA, but they are not responsible for notifying employees or supervisors about FMLA leave time available or taken. The Health Insurance secretary also monitors employees on FMLA leave, as reported by Payroll, for benefits continuation duties. Although the Personnel Department does not monitor FMLA leave, they place copies of leave requests and approvals in employee files.

The district's FMLA policy states that the district may substitute any paid leave to which the employee is entitled for all or some portion of the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. Once the district has acquired knowledge that leave is being taken for an FMLA-required reason, the district must notify the employee within two business days if there are not extenuating circumstances that the paid leave will be counted as FMLA leave. The local policy requires employees to use family and medical leave concurrently with paid leave and with temporary disability leave, if it is applicable. The district also offers 20 days of extended leave to all professional employees who have completed one year of service and have exhausted all state and personal leave benefits.

No one at the district demonstrated a clear understanding of the law or what was necessary to comply in a manner beneficial to the district. For example, the board secretary informed the review team that FMLA is available after all other leave time has been exhausted and is only provided upon request.

The district does not follow its FMLA policy because the district is providing the leave only upon request and after all other leave has been exhausted. This being the case, an employee could conceivably use all

vacation and sick leave and still receive up to 12 additional weeks of unpaid leave for one FMLA event. By not proactively monitoring absences and notifying employees that paid leave is counted as FMLA leave, the district is potentially extending its obligation to continue health care coverage beyond what is necessary. In addition, the local policy defines the 12-month period within which employees shall be eligible for 12 weeks of FMLA as July 1 through June 30-allowing employees to take inappropriate advantage of the law. This definition permits an employee to take 12 weeks of job-protected leave that ended on June 30 and an additional 12 weeks of job-protected leave that begins on July 1, for a total of 24 weeks of job-protected leave, with health insurance benefits, for the same qualifying event.

Many school districts and private companies limit the financial obligations and risks of FMLA by implementing and strictly monitoring policies.

Recommendation 33:

Assign responsibility for notifying and tracking FMLA leave to a Personnel Department staff member.

The Personnel director and the employee designated to track FMLA leave should attend as much training as possible on FMLA offered by Region 1 and TASB.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director reviews the job duties of the staff in the department and decides which position should be responsible for FMLA tracking.	October2002
2.	The Personnel director, with the approval of the superintendent, assigns FMLA tracking to a Personnel Department employee.	October 2002
3.	The designated employee identifies FMLA training opportunities and submits a list to the Personnel director.	November2002
4.	The Personnel director submits the training plan to the superintendent.	November 2002
5.	The superintendent approves the training plan.	November 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The review team observed the Personnel Department using a student worker to assist in filing personnel files. The Personnel director said the duties of the student worker consist only of answering telephones, shredding, copying applications and forms and typing labels for folders; however, a Personnel Department staff member verified the student was filing personnel records. When asked if students filing personnel records might pose a problem, staff members said that student workers are carefully chosen and understand the confidentiality necessary to work in the department.

Personnel files contain confidential employee information including salary data and performance appraisals. Using a student worker to assist in filing gives the student access to this confidential information. Allowing students access to confidential information on teachers and other employees exposes the district to potential conflicts of interest and litigation and raises serious issues regarding the safeguarding of this confidential information.

The Texas Public Information Act requires school districts, among other entities, to protect the privacy of its employees. Social security numbers, home addresses and phone numbers, as well as family information must be safeguarded. Texas law also requires school districts to protect the privacy of employee performance evaluations and medical information.

Recommendation 34:

Limit access of personnel files and confidential information to Personnel Department employees and senior staff.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent instructs the Personnel director to limit access of personnel files to personnel department employees only.	September 2002
2.	The Personnel director ensures the student worker will not assist with handling personnel files.	September 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

C. RECRUITING AND HIRING

As student enrollment across the state increases and more teachers retire, Texas faces a critical teacher shortage. More than 1,040 Texas school districts are competing for teachers from an ever-shrinking pool.

Recruitment is becoming increasingly competitive and the supply of teachers is declining, both of which make retaining staff more important than ever. **Exhibit 4-24** presents five major reasons why employees leave and the five most effective initiatives for retaining employees, according to the Society for Human Resources Management.

Exhibit 4-24
Threats to Retention and Initiatives for Retaining Employees

Threats to Employee Retention *(in order of percentage offered and general effectiveness)*	**Most Effective Initiatives for Retaining Employees** *(in order of importance to employees)*
• Higher salaries of competitors • Dissatisfaction with career development • Not being appreciated • Job burnout • Conflicts with supervisors or co-workers	• Health care • New hire orientation • Open communications policy • Salary increases • Emphasis on career development

Source: Society for Human Resource Management, Retention Practice Mini-Survey, 1997.

When school districts are unable to fill teacher vacancies, substitute teachers are often used. Finding qualified substitute teachers is frequently a problem.

In 2000-01, DISD spent more than $1.1 million or 1.4 percent of its total expenditures on substitute teachers (**Exhibit 4-25**). DISD's use of substitute teachers decreased in 2001-02, but substitute teaching costs still exceeded $800,000.

Exhibit 4-25
DISD Substitute Teacher Expenditures
1996-97 through 2001-02

Year	Expenditures for Substitute Teachers
1996-97	$414,123
1997-98	$506,921
1998-99	$480,218
1999-2000	$945,657
2000-01	$1,170,784
2001-02	$873,885*

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1996-97 through 2001-02.
* DISD Business and Finance Department, June 2002.

FINDING

While the district keeps a log of recruiting trips, they do not consistently track the effectiveness or costs of specific recruiting initiatives. The recruiting and training budget for the Personnel Department for 2001-02 was $7,000. This amount includes all training fees, recruitment fair fees and associated travel expenses for the entire department. A detailed breakdown of expenditures was not provided. The Personnel director is the only member of the recruiting team.

Exhibit 4-26 details the recruiting calendar for 2001-02.

Exhibit 4-26
DISD Recruitment Trip Log, 2001-02

Date	Event	Location
August 7, 2001	Fourth Annual 15th Congressional District Job Fair	McAllen, TX
November 7, 2001	Teacher Job Fair	Kingsville, TX
November 15, 2001	University of Texas Pan American Job Fair	Edinburg, TX
March 5, 2002	University of Texas Pan American Career Day	Edinburg, TX

| April 4, 2002 | University of Texas Pan American-Job Fair | Edinburg, TX |
| May 24 - June 1, 2002 | Philippines Teacher Recruitment Trip | Philippines |

Source: Recruitment Trip Log for Abel Munoz, April 2002.

The district requests that applicants complete a sign-in sheet for each recruiting event that includes contact information, major/minor and graduation date. The sign in sheet does not track the number or ethnicity of interviewees, whether an alma mater recruiter attended, how many letters of intent were given, or the number of individuals who were hired from each event and at what cost.

For a district with a large minority student population, such as DISD, it is important to know which recruiting events are attended by qualified applicants and to track the number and ethnic composition of candidates per event. According to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, race and/or ethnicity are acceptable questions to ask and track at recruiting events. This information can also be made available to hiring managers; however, it must not be used as a basis for discriminating against qualified applicants.

The district did not provide any documentation that showed the hiring results of recruiting trips. Without tracking the results and costs of each trip, there is no way to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts or to determine where recruiting dollars are best spent.

Many districts keep a log of recruiting events that tracks the number of candidates contacted, how many were viable prospects and the number of candidates who were actually hired. By tracking cost information and the number of teachers hired from each event, a complete cost analysis can be performed and the recruiting schedule be made more efficient.

Recommendation 35:

Track the effectiveness of individual recruiting initiatives.

By evaluating the effectiveness of their recruiting activities, the district can determine where to focus resources to ensure the highest number of quality candidates. In some cases, the cost of a trip may be higher, but if the trip results in twice as many new hires as any other trip, the cost may be justified.The Personnel director should create a log for tracking the cost and effectiveness of each recruiting event.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director creates a log for tracking the cost and effectiveness of each recruiting event attended.	September 2002
2.	The Personnel director begins using the log.	October 2002
3.	The Personnel director analyzes results and adjusts recruiting trips as necessary.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

FINDING

DISD uses uncertified permanent substitute teachers excessively. DISD has two categories of substitute teachers. Category I, regular substitutes, includes those who substitute on an as-needed basis. Category II includes substitutes who fill vacant teaching positions on a permanent basis. As shown in **Exhibit 4-27**,DISD pays degreed and non-degreed substitutes differently.

Exhibit 4-27
DISD Substitute Qualifications and Pay

Substitute Category	Pay per Day
Category I - Degreed	$85.00
Category I - Non-degreed	$65.00
Category II - Degreed	$95.00
Category II - Non-degreed	$75.00

Source: DISD Business and Finance Department, April 2002.

DISD substitute lists for 1999-2002 show that the majority of the substitutes-78.3 to 86.3 percent-do not have college degrees and that only a very small percent of the substitutes-3 to 5 percent-are certified teachers (**Exhibit 4-28**).

Exhibit 4-28
DISD Substitute Teacher Qualifications
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Substitute Teachers	1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent

Degreed	32	13.7%	41	21.7%	44	17.1%
Non-degreed	202	86.3%	148	78.3%	213	82.9%
Total	**234**	**100%**	**189**	**100%**	**257**	**100%**
Certified	7	3.0%	7	3.7%	13	5.1%
Non-certified	227	97.0%	182	96.3%	244	95.9%
Total	**468**	**100%**	**378**	**100%**	**514**	**100%**

Source: DISD Substitute List, 1999-2000 through 2001-02.

DISD data also shows that the district used 53 permanent substitutes in 1999-2000, 98 in 2000-01 and 62 permanent substitutes in 2001-02 (**Exhibit 4-29**). DISD administrators said that they use permanent substitutes because they are unable to recruit and hire certified teachers. DISD decreased the use of its permanent substitute teachers by 36.7 percent from 2000-01 to 2001-02. However, 54.7 percent of the permanent substitutes in 1999-2000, 50 percent in 2000-01 and 63.6 percent in 2001-02 were non-degreed.

Exhibit 4-29
DISD Permanent Substitute Teachers Qualifications
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Permanent Substitutes	1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Degreed	24	45.3%	49	50.0%	24	36.4%
Non-degreed	29	54.7%	49	50.0%	42	63.6%
Total	**53**	**100.0%**	**98**	**100.0%**	**66**	**100.0%**

Source: DISD Business and Finance Department, June 2002.

This means that in DISD, almost two-thirds of substitute teachers who fill vacant teaching positions on a permanent basis do not have a college degree. When non-degreed, uncertified permanent substitute teachers are used excessively, the quality of education DISD students receive suffers.

DISD's teacher turnover rate contributes to the shortage of qualified teachers in the district and the excessive use of permanent substitutes. **Exhibit 4-30** compares DISD teacher turnover rates with peer districts, the region and the state. In 2000-01, DISD's teacher turnover rate was slightly

higher the state average, higher than the regional average and third-highest among its peer districts.

Exhibit 4-30
DISD and Peer Districts' Teacher Turnover Rates
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Eagle Pass	8.1%	9.9%	12.6%	11.6%	10.8%
Mission Cons.	9.8%	9.2%	10.7%	11.0%	12.0%
Rio Grande City	14.0%	14.6%	15.9%	15.6%	13.8%
Donna	**15.3%**	**13.5%**	**16.3%**	**17.7%**	**16.5%**
San Benito Cons.	13.6%	15.6%	14.1%	13.3%	17.8%
Edgewood	13.5%	14.9%	19.7%	16.5%	22.6%
Region 1	**10.7%**	**12.1%**	**12.7%**	**13.4%**	**13.6%**
State	**12.6%**	**13.3%**	**15.5%**	**15.0%**	**16.0%**

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

But a bigger problem is recruiting qualified teachers. DISD has not been able to recruit enough teachers to fill all vacant teaching positions. In 2001-02, the director of Personnel, who is responsible for teacher recruitment, attended job fairs at the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, a 15th Congressional District Job Fair in McAllen, a teacher job fair in Kingsville and made a teacher recruitment trip to the Philippines. However, the recruiting efforts did not fill all vacant teaching positions.

The Texas Association of School Boards' (TASB) *Going, Going, Gone: A Handbook of Practical Responses to the Texas Teacher Recruitment and Retention Problem,* lists several recruitment strategies that have been successful in other districts including: hiring bonuses, employee referral incentives, relocation or moving fees, tuition reimbursement or student loan assistance, reduced rate mortgages and low interest loans.

Recommendation 36:

Develop a plan that expands recruitment efforts to hire more certified teachers.

The district should consider each of the recruitment and retention incentives listed in the TASB handbook. Also, the district should expand

its teacher recruitment efforts to include the University of Texas at Brownsville, Texas A&M University and all colleges and universities in central and southern Texas.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director creates an expanded recruitment and retention plan that includes strategies, a calendar of recruiting events and estimated costs per strategy.	November 2002
2.	The Personnel director submits the plan to the superintendent for approval.	December 2002
3.	The superintendent approves the plan and submits it and associated funding requests to the board for approval.	December 2002
4.	The board approves the plan and funding for the plan.	December 2002
5.	The district implements the plan.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD's relatively high rate of teacher absenteeism has required DISD to use substitute teachers excessively. In 1999-2000, DISD used substitutes for 8.0 percent of all teaching days, for an average of 14.4 days per teacher. This calculation assumes a 180 day school year. (660.7 teachers x 180 day school year = 118,926 teaching days, divided by 9,492.3 substitute teaching days = .08). In 2000-01, DISD employed 692.9 teachers who taught 124,722 days and used substitutes for 7.3 percent of these days, or 13 days per teacher. In 2001-02, DISD employed 719.12 teachers who taught a total of 129,441.6 days and used substitutes for 7.5 percent of these days, for an average of 13.6 days per teacher.

DISD's use of regular substitutes, or those who fill in for absent teachers, has fluctuated but ultimately increased during the last three years. In 1999-2000, regular substitutes taught 9,492.3 days compared to 9,091.8 days in 2000-01 and 9,771.5 days in 2001-02 (**Exhibit 4-31**).

Exhibit 4-31
DISD Regular Substitute Teachers Pay and Number of Days
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Regular Substitutes	1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	Paid	Number of Days	Paid	Number of Days	Paid	Number of Days
Degreed*	$96,985	1,141.0	$89,975	1,058.5	$126,013	1,482.5
Non-degreed	$542,833	8,351.3	$522,168	8,033.3	$538,803	8,289.0
Total	**$639,818**	**9,492.3**	**$612,143**	**9,091.8**	**$664,816**	**9,771.5**

Source: DISD Substitute Report, June 2002.
* Paid at $85 a day.
** Paid at $65 a day.

Very few regular substitutes used by DISD from 1999-2000 through 2000-01 held college degrees. Only 13.2 percent of regular substitutes used in 1999-2000, 15.4 percent used in 2000-01 and 18.1 percent used in 2001-02 were degreed (**Exhibit 4-32**).

Exhibit 4-32
DISD Regular Substitute Teachers Qualifications
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Regular Substitutes	1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Degreed	30	13.2%	36	15.4%	49	18.1%
Non-degreed	197	86.8%	198	84.6%	221	81.9%
Total	**227**	**100.0%**	**234**	**100.0%**	**270**	**100.0%**

Source: DISD Business and Finance Department, June 2002.

DISD staff reported the use of regular substitutes is closely monitored and limited to teachers attending workshops or on sick leave. However, an agenda item for a April 5, 2001 Elementary Principal's Meeting states, "Teachers will not be allowed to attend staff development during [the] school year. Therefore, staff should be encouraged to attend staff development during the summer."

Nevertheless, elementary and secondary DISD officials both report that staff development does occur during the school year. The district approves five days of staff development each year. Consultants are sometimes brought in, a number of teachers receive training at Regional Educational

Service Center I, and some staff development is scheduled at the end of the school day, after the last class hour. For secondary school teachers, four of five staff development days are scheduled before school begins in 2002-03.

To reduce teacher absenteeism and the district's reliance on substitutes, DISD offers attendance awards and cash bonuses to teachers with perfect attendance records. However, the Texas Association of School Boards reports that attendance awards and cash bonuses have proven ineffective in reducing teacher absenteeism over the long run in most school districts that have tried them. Modest improvements may occur in the first year but are generally not sustained in subsequent years.

DISD also started using administrators as substitutes in 2001-01 in an effort to reduce costs. However, administrators interviewed by the TSPR team reported that this plan required them to spend between six and 19 days substituting. While they found it beneficial to be in the classroom, substituting affected their ability to do their own jobs.

Most Texas school districts try to limit the use of substitute teachers in an effort to provide consistent, quality instruction. When teacher absenteeism becomes an issue, many districts try to identify the causes by studying absenteeism patterns. By eliminating Family Medical Leave Act absences, as well as authorized leave and long-term disability leave, a more accurate picture emerges of the magnitude of the problem. When serious absenteeism problems occur due to the frequent use of personal or sick leave, some districts enforce medical certification policies that require a doctor's certificate if absent more than a certain number of days.

Recommendation 37:

Reduce the use of regular substitutes by improving teacher attendance.

DISD should research and analyze individual and campus teacher absentee data and try to identify telling patterns. Once reasons are identified, corrective action can be planned. Employees absent due to the Family Medical Leave Act or long-term disability should be separated for analysis purposes. DISD should also examine all policies and practices that might take teachers out of the classroom. For example, staff development or in-service training will likely require fewer substitutes if some, or all, is scheduled during the summer, after school or on weekends. DISD should also closely monitor the use of personal leave or sick leave to ensure that abuses to do not occur. Requiring a doctor's note if absent more than a certain number of days may help curb absences.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent, the Personnel director and the assistant superintendent of Business and Finance begin a comprehensive analysis of teacher absentee data.	September 2002
2.	The superintendent, the assistant superintendent of Business and Finance and the Personnel director prepare a summary statistical report that identifies absentee patterns and includes corrective recommendations. Corrective recommendations include requiring a doctor's note if absent more than a certain number of days.	November 2002
3.	The superintendent presents the statistical report, along with corrective recommendations and costs, to the board for approval.	November 2002
4.	The board approves the plan and the superintendent, the Personnel Director and the assistant superintendent of Business and Finance implement the plan.	November 2002
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and the Personnel director identify and contact districts with low use rates of substitute teachers to identify the reasons for their success.	October - November 2002
6.	The assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum directors prepare a staff development plan that minimizes the scheduling of staff development during school days.	October 2002
7.	The superintendent asks the Personnel director, the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the Elementary and Secondary Curriculum directors to review and examine all district policies that may contribute to teacher absenteeism.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Donna ISD does not perform routine reference checks for non-teaching positions or monitor current employees for criminal misconduct. The Personnel director reports that reference checks are performed on all new teachers. However, 60 percent of DISD staff are employed in non-teaching positions, and the district does not routinely perform reference checks for

these positions. Reference checks, especially for employees who work near children, help protect the safety of children while also improving the selection process by providing additional information about the prospective employee.

The district does conduct criminal conviction searches on all candidates selected for hire, for both teaching and non-teaching positions, which are using DPS online services at a cost of $1 per search. The search produces a record of all arrests and convictions that occurred in the state.

The TEC, Section 22.083, allows a school district to request criminal histories from any local law enforcement agency. However, no procedure exists in DISD to ensure convictions that occur after employment are reported to the district, nor are periodic reviews of criminal histories made for current employees.

It is important that the district perform reference checks and periodic reviews of criminal histories for all employees. Reference checks can provide valuable information that may not surface in an interview. They are also help districts avoid hiring employees who might pose a risk to others, and avoid litigation due to the negligent hiring or retention of these employees. Negligent retention is the retention of employees who engage in wrongful acts both during and after working hours. For example, school districts employing an employee who has a history of physical abuse of coworkers may be found liable for not providing a safe work environment. Performing and documenting reference and criminal history checks reduces an employer's likelihood of litigation and most importantly, they help protect students.

Recommendation 38:

Perform reference checks on all new employees and work with local law enforcement to ensure notification of pending criminal charges for current employees.

The hiring supervisor should ideally perform reference checks. Reference check forms should be created for all classes of employees and should be kept in their personnel file. If necessary, completed forms for teaching staff can be reviewed by the Personnel director before the superintendent recommends which teachers the board should hire. In addition, principals should be given the results of reference checks for all teachers coming to their campus.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Personnel director or designee creates reference check	November

	forms for all classes of employees.	2002
2.	The Personnel director conducts training for all hiring supervisors on how to conduct reference checks and complete the forms.	December 2002
3.	The superintendent instructs all hiring supervisors to complete reference checks before employees are recommended to the board.	January 2003
4.	The Personnel director contacts local law enforcement about a cooperative agreement for notification of pending criminal charges for current employees.	January 2003
5.	The superintendent and board approve the cooperative agreement and the board adopts any necessary policies.	February 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

D. EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

One of the district's most valuable resource is its employees. In order to be successful the district must effectively manage this resource. By applying the same performance standards throughout the district, employees understand what level of performance is acceptable. A well-managed district can attract and retain the best employees possible. The TEC sets standards for districts to follow in managing such issues as hiring and terminating contract staff.

Staff development and training exposes employees to new or better ways to complete tasks or tackle problems. Creating a more efficient work force has benefits to the employer, including increased productivity. Recognizing new ideas and encouraging development are also great ways to build loyalty among staff and retain the employees already on the payroll.

FINDING

The district does not track or coordinate staff development for all employees. Staff development, or employee training, is completed on a department and campus level and no one person in the district is responsible for tracking and ensuring that the staff development provided to all employees is consistent or is meeting district, departmental or individual needs.

The directors of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum coordinate school-based staff development for their respective departments. Each school must obtain approval from the Curriculum and Instruction Department before training classes can be offered. Teachers participating in focus groups said some required training is not useful. They also mentioned that the district does not allow attendance at staff development events during the school year. Documentation submitted by the district confirms this. Many school districts set aside days during the school year specifically for staff development. **Exhibit 4-33** presents a list of proposed elementary staff development from June 3, 2002 through June 13, 2002.

Exhibit 4-33
DISD Proposed Staff Development for 2002
Department of Elementary Curriculum

Name of Workshop	Date	Target	Number

		Audience	**of Slots**
Reading Strategies	June 3, 2002	Kindergarten - grade 2	30-50
Science Strategies using Hands-on	June 4, 2002	Grades 2 - 5	25-35
Curriculum Preparation (1st Six Weeks)	June 12, 2002	Kindergarten - grade 2 Bilingual teachers	20-25
ESL Methodologies	June 13, 2002	Kindergarten - grade 5 Bilingual teachers	25-35

Source: DISD Department of Elementary Curriculum, Proposed Staff Development, June 3, 2002 - June 13, 2002.

Each school is responsible for recruiting the consultants and presenters for their staff development sessions.

Most DISD departments and campuses provided information regarding the staff development taking place at their department or school. Some of the schools and departments also included detailed budget allocations, information on the classes available and examples of the tracking mechanisms used. The Student Nutrition Services Department provided a complete package that included the total staff development budget for the department for the school year, a list of completed courses and which agency provided them, completed sign-in sheets and training materials and records. Staff development for Personnel Department employees included educational secretary training but no workshops on specific human resource issues although Region 1 offers training on several personnel issues including Fair Labor Standards Act wage and hour issues, certification and Teacher Retirement System benefits reporting.

An important consideration when organizing staff development activities is their value to the district, the department and the individual. Evaluation tools are essential for making this determination. The Elementary and Secondary Curriculum departments submitted copies of evaluation instruments for several staff development workshops offered during 2001-02. The forms were completed by attendees at the end of the training sessions. Attendees were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree or strongly disagree with the following four statements:

1. workshop objectives were clearly identified and accomplished;
2. the workshop was well organized, well presented and conducted in an appropriate manner;

3. the information provided can be applied to my educational setting classroom, school or district; and
4. the worship materials were appropriate and well organized.

According to SHRM, this type of evaluation tool has limited usefulness because it really measures whether people liked the program rather than assessing the level of learning it provided. However, this type of evaluation is frequently used because it is the easiest to administer. Other evaluation tools can provide more insight and better measure results. These are more difficult to measure and, as a result, are used less frequently.

Other district departments did not provide evaluations of training programs or examples of evaluation tools.

It is important for a district to track training provided, who was trained, at what cost and whether it was effective. Centralized tracking would help ensure staff development is conducted appropriately and opportunities are distributed fairly.

Kingsville ISD improved the coordination of its staff development by having its Instructional Services Department centrally plan and coordinate these activities. To ensure staff development and training needs are met, the department communicates directly with each school's administrators. To continue improving staff training, participants are asked to complete evaluation forms at the end of each formal staff development session. Instructional Services reviews these and incorporates changes based on the feedback obtained from the evaluation forms.

Recommendation 39:

Assign responsibility for overseeing staff development to the Personnel director and create a staff development plan.

Staff development can still be decentralized, but one employee needs to be responsible for the budget and for identifying and matching staff training needs and opportunities with district goals and priorities. The Personnel director should create a districtwide staff development plan that includes all classes of employees, thereby ensuring that all employees, not just instructional employees, are included in training plans. The Personnel director, with the assistance of other department heads, should evaluate the effectiveness of training programs so the district will not spend money on ineffective programs.

The new plan would serve as a resource for department heads trying to identify what types of training are available and how each type of training

supports the district's mission and goals. Staff development goals and strategies for instructional employees should be aligned with curriculum guides and coordinated with the Curriculum and Instruction Department. By requesting input from department heads, the district could also focus training and development on specific areas of deficiency and be sure required training is accomplished.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent assigns staff development responsibilities to the Personnel director.	November 2002
2.	The Personnel director conducts a needs assessment to determine the type of training needed by instructional and non-instructional staff. The Personnel director should seek input from the supervisors and directors of the different classes of employees and from the employees themselves.	December 2002
3.	The Personnel director creates a staff development plan that identifies training and staff development needs that support the district's mission and goals and includes estimated training costs.	February 2003
4.	The superintendent reviews and revises the plan using the assistant superintendent of Business and Finance as a resource for budgetary issues.	April 2003
5.	The superintendent approves the plan.	May 2003
6.	The Personnel director distributes the approved plan to supervisors.	July 2003
7.	The Personnel director and supervisors identify external training and development programs that meet the plan's objectives and budget.	July 2003 and Ongoing
8.	The Personnel director, with the assistance of affected department heads, develops training programs to meet staff development needs when external resources are inadequate.	July 2003 and Ongoing
9.	The Personnel director, with the assistance of the Evaluation director, develops assessment instruments to evaluate training and development programs.	July 2003 and Ongoing
10.	The Personnel director updates the plan annually.	July 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 5
FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter discusses the facilities use and management within the Donna Independent School District (DISD) in the following sections:

A. Facilities Planning and Construction Management
B. Maintenance Operations
C. Custodial Operations
D. Energy Management

Effective facilities management ensures that a district has enough facilities that are designed and built in a way that enhances a district's primary educational programs; ensures that facilities comply with state, local and federal regulations; and minimizes the district's utility and maintenance costs. Efficient facilities are essential to building public trust and confidence in district management. Maintenance managers are responsible for providing a clean school and working environment.

BACKGROUND

DISD covers 89 square miles in far south Texas along the Mexican border. In 1997, the district began an extensive building program by issuing bonds and obtaining state assistance from the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) program administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This program was established by the Legislature in 1997 to help fund the building of schools for districts such as DISD that do not have the financial resources to fund major construction projects on their own. To qualify for the allotment, a district has to meet certain wealth-per-student requirements and pass a local bond issue to provide matching funds. The district held bond elections in December 1997 and May 2000 to provide the local portion of the payment. DISD taxpayers approved bonds of $27 million in 1997 and $29 million in 2000. On June 8, 2002, the district approved a third bond election for $17 million. This third bond election also relies upon the IFA program matching funds.

The district has 15 educational facilities including 11 elementary schools, two middle schools, a ninth-grade center and a high school. A rebuilt elementary school, Runn Elementary, will open fall 2002 and will substantially replace the existing school. In addition, the district has six support facilities including a fine arts building, a separate high school library, two central administration buildings, a storage facility and a service center for maintenance and transportation. The facilities include approximately 1.6 million square feet of space and are described in **Exhibit 5-1**.

Exhibit 5-1
DISD Facilities
2001-02

Facility	Year Built	Dates of Major Renovations	Square Footage	Number of Students
Caceres Elementary	1987	2002	56,206	505
Garza Elementary	1999		105,188	843
Guzman Elementary	1992	2000	51,902	442
LeNoir Elementary	1955	2000	46,547	470
Munoz Elementary	1999		67,060	786
Ochoa Elementary	1959	2000	67,686	514
Price Elementary	1996		64,248	488
Rivas Elementary	1985	2002	52,991	475
Runn Elementary	1904	1986, 1994, 2000, 2002	38,123	356
Salinas Elementary	1994		92,670	684
Stainke Elementary	1956	2000	59,816	367
A. P. Solis Middle School	1988	2000	136,453	1,139
Veterans Middle School	2000		145,840	1,127
W.A. Todd (ninth grade campus)	1967	2000	127,457	736
Donna High School	1984		278,676	1,519
High School Library	1996		18,056	
Donna Fine Arts Center	1996		53,922	
Moye Complex	1950		61,391	
McQueen Complex	1950		27,274	
Administration Office	1955		12,189	
Service Center	1968		108,888	
Total			**1,672,583**	**10,451**

The district used the proceeds from the 1997 bond election to build three schools and provide renovations at all of the remaining campuses. The district built two new elementary schools, Garza Elementary School and Munoz Elementary School, as well as a new middle school, Veterans Middle School. The district used the bond funds to bring its schools in compliance with Americans for Disability Act (ADA) requirements, repair roofs, upgrade electrical systems, add classrooms and labs and provide additional restrooms.

The district is using 2000 bond funds, $29 million, to build another middle school and to rebuild major portions of four elementary schools: Ochoa, LeNoir, Stainke and Runn. The district also has used the funds to add a library at Guzman Elementary School and a cafeteria at Rivas Elementary, an air-conditioning system at Donna High School and repairs at Caceres Elementary School.

The district will use the $17 million funds approved by the voters at the June 8, 2002 bond election to build two new elementary schools to accommodate future student population growth and to pay off $7 million in existing debt on projects completed earlier. The earlier projects included Price Elementary School, the Donna Library and the Donna Fine Arts Center. The district built all of these facilities in 1996 using a lease purchase agreement. Under this type of agreement, DISD does not become the owner of the property until it makes all payments.

Exhibit 5-2 lists each school in the district, its current capacity and estimated classroom use rate. The district is currently at 77 percent capacity for all schools across the district. Runn Elementary, with the relatively low use rate of 58 percent, is under construction and located in a rural area south of Donna. The school is being substantially rebuilt. The 18 portable classrooms currently located at the school will be relocated after the building is completed increasing its overall use rate.

DISD modifies attendance zones periodically, particularly after it builds a new school, in an effort to equalize enrollment at all its schools including the three new schools built in the last three years. The district rezoned elementary attendance zones in spring 2002 for this purpose. The district is planning to build an additional middle school and two additional elementary schools in anticipation of future growth.

Exhibit 5-2
DISD Schools Capacity and Use Rates
2001-02 Enrollment

Schools	Permanent Classrooms	Portable Classrooms	Special Purpose Rooms	Total Number of Classrooms	Total Student Capacity	Current Enrollment	Percent Current Use
Caceres Elementary	31	6	5	32	704	505	72%
Garza Elementary	44	4	0	48	1,056	843	80%
Guzman Elementary	31	0	3	28	616	442	72%
LeNoir Elementary	28	4	8	24	528	470	89%
Munoz Elementary	45	0	1	44	968	786	81%
Ochoa Elementary	34	0	5	29	638	514	81%
Rivas Elementary	35	0	7	28	616	475	77%
Price Elementary	33	0	7	26	572	488	85%
Runn Elementary	12	18	2	28	616	356	58%
Salinas Elementary	40	6	0	46	1,012	684	68%
Stainke Elementary	30	0	6	24	528	367	70%
Solis Middle School	66	2	0	68	1,700	1,139	67%
Veterans Middle School	52	0	0	52	1,300	1,127	87%
Todd 9th Grade	39	0	6	33	825	736	89%

Donna High School*	72			72	1,800	1,519	84%
Total	**592**	**40**	**50**	**582**	**13,479**	**10,451**	**77%**

Source: DISD floor plans and TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02. Note: capacity was calculated using 22 students per elementary school classroom and 25 students per secondary classroom.

Exhibit 5-3 lists Maintenance Department expenditures for the four-year period from 1998-99 to 2001-02. During this period, total maintenance costs increased by 40.5 percent while student enrollment increased only 5.7 percent, which is an increase in maintenance expenditures of 33 percent for each student in the district. The greatest increase has been in the category of "Other Expenses," which increased almost five times and includes items such as employee travel and insurance, which rose due to an increase in insurance costs for the new buildings.

Exhibit 5-3
Maintenance Expenditures
1998-99 through 2001-02

	1998-99 Actual	1999-2000 Actual	2000-01 Actual	2001-02 Budget	Percent Change from 1998-99 to 2001-02
Payroll	$3,893,770	$4,353,425	$4,478,185	$5,032,980	29.3%
Other Services	1,722,764	2,143,015	2,641,692	2,446,178	42.0%
Supplies	432,681	494,499	488,598	489,525	13.1%
Other Expenses	122,717	312,401	211,469	725,629	491.3%
Capital Outlay	31,423	119,674	46,910	20,000	(36.4%)
Total	**$6,203,355**	**$7,423,014**	**$7,866,854**	**$8,714,312**	**40.5%**
Student Enrollment	**9,888**	**10,013**	**10,332**	**10,451**	**5.7 %**
Cost per Student	**$627**	**$741**	**$761**	**$834**	**33.0%**

Chapter 5
FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

**A. FACILITIES PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION
MANAGEMENT**

School districts use a number of planning processes and documents to
build and maintain educational facilities that meet the changing needs of a
community. A district's long-range facilities master plan is the result of
these planning efforts and becomes the district's policy statement for
allocating resources and developing alternatives for facility improvement.
A good master plan incorporates the following elements:

- Facility Capacity:The capacity of each school facility is established
  industry using standards that determine student-to-teacher ratios
  and the amount of square feet of classroom space required for each
  student. The standards also determines the capacities of core
  facilities such as cafeterias and libraries to ensure that schools do
  not overuse these core facilities resulting in situations in which
  children eat lunch at 10:45 a.m. or use the library only one day a
  week, or overuse portable classrooms.
- Facility Inventory: Facility master plans should include an accurate
  inventory of each classroom in a school to determine the capacity
  of each school. Modifications to schools should be noted in the
  inventory so that the overall capacity of schools is kept updated.
- Enrollment Projections: Effective planning requires accurate
  enrollment projections. These projections should be made for at
  least five years into the future and updated annually. Many school
  districts work closely with county and city planners to track growth
  patterns, neighborhood demographics and new construction
  activity.
- Attendance Zones:Effective facility planning requires adjustments
  to attendance zones as the population changes in a community.
  Attendance zones are geographic areas assigned to specific
  schools. Students residing in a given zone will attend the zone's
  assigned schools. These adjustments are necessary if children are
  to have access to appropriate educational settings as population
  distribution trends change in the community.
- Capitol Improvement Master Plan:Schools are built to last 30 years
  or more. This requires districts to anticipate future needs and
  balance them against current and future resources. A capital
  improvement master plan charts future improvements to school
  facilities and identifies funding sources for them.

FINDING

DISD does not have a long-range facilities plan or an integrated and coordinated approach for planning, managing and controlling its construction program. Few of the key elements needed to effectively manage a $66 million construction program, the largest in the history of the district, are in place. The planning process does not rely on a long-range planning process or on any planning documents. The review team did not find any evidence of any facilities planning documents, deferred maintenance planning, updated five-year enrollment projections or a master plan. District staff told the review team at the findings meeting that a 1994-2001 feasibility study was done, but the staff did not provide the document.

Deferred maintenance planning is defined as planning efforts that identify major existing facility needs and recommend costs and timing to address those needs. Deferred maintenance items often include roof replacements, major carpet replacements and renovation of school functional areas such as kitchens and restrooms.

Instead, the district relies upon the judgments of individual board members and senior administrators to prioritize renovations, construction and maintenance projects. For example, the district made substantial renovations at Runn and LeNoir elementary schools with funding from 1997 bond proceeds and is now in the process of substantially rebuilding the same schools in the current bond program. The director of Maintenance and Transportation stated in interviews that the district decided to rebuild existing schools, rather than build new schools in different locations, because additional matching funds from the state under the IFA program became available, the locations are still appropriate and there is room on the existing school site. LeNoir Elementary School was first built in 1955, and parts of the Runn Elementary School were originally built in 1904. No planning documents were made available to the review team to support the decision to rebuild these schools, such as enrollment projections or comparison of the costs of building entirely new schools to the costs of rebuilding on the same site. While the first set of renovations are being retained during the rebuilding, proper planning could have prevented the need to have two separate construction projects on the same campus and may have resulted in less cost to the district.

In September 1997, the district began a bond program for $27 million. The board established a committee of 23 community leaders and representatives of different community groups to advise the district in developing a school construction program that the voters would support in a bond election. Members included former school board members, local business owners and parents. Committee members visited schools and worked with district staff and the district's outside architect to develop a proposed bond program. The committee considered five-year enrollment

projections and realignment of elementary schools to a standard pre-Kindergarten through grade 5 setting, but did not develop a long-range facility plan that included an evaluation of the current condition of the building or specific education specifications to be included in the proposed construction program. The district also did not consider site locations. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said the goal of this first program was to provide "something for everyone" to ensure voter approval. Voters approved the bond election in December 1997 for $27 million.

Exhibit 5-4 lists the final list of proposed construction activities.

Exhibit 5-4
DISD 1997 $27 Million Bond Program
Projected Costs

School	Construction Program	Renovation Costs	New Construction
New 800 student elementary school - Guzman	Buy land and build sewer plant, utility extensions, 43 classrooms, cafetorium, administrative offices and resource learning center	N/A	$4,444,100
New 800 student elementary school - Munoz	Buy land and build sewer plant, utility extensions, 43 classrooms, cafetorium with full-service kitchen, administrative offices and learning resource center	N/A	$4,444,100
New 500 student elementary school - never built	Buy land and build sewer plant, utility extensions, 24 classrooms, cafetorium, administrative offices and library resource center	N/A	$3,310,800
New 1300 student middle school - Veterans Middle School	Buy land and build sewer plant, utility extensions, 60 classrooms, cafetorium with full service kitchen, gym, administrative offices and library media center	N/A	$9,726,795
Caceres	Repair roof, extend covered walkways, comply with ADA	$82,700	
Guzman	Comply with ADA on toilets,	$27,750	$895,400

	build new 15-student classroom wing		
LeNoir	Comply with ADA on toilets, build new toilets, renovate gym and expand library	$263,070	$74,650
Ochoa	Comply with ADA on toilets and expand library	$55,000	$74,650
Price	Build covered area for student pick up and improve site lighting	$97,650	
Rivas	Repair roof leaks and extend covered walkways	$50,500	
Runn	Upgrade electrical, comply with ADA, build new staff and student toilets and build eight new classrooms	$77,700	$547,550
Salinas	Comply with ADA on toilets, extend intercom and fire alarms to gymnasiums, extend covered walkways and improve site drainage	$126,418	
Stainke	Build additional parking, build a new kitchen, comply with ADA on toilets, build new staff and student toilets, repair roof leaks, build covered walkways and bus pickup area with covered canopy	$411,938	$98,292
Solis Middle	Install elevator, repair roof leaks, upgrade science lab, expand shelter and expand P.E. dressing rooms (Cost listed as $436,819 in summary)	$371,819	
Todd	Convert to 9th grade center - install new roof, build new science lab wing and construct 10 new classrooms (Cost listed as $670,759 for new construction and $1,004,895 for renovations in summary)	$1,004,895	$1,290,759
Donna High School	Expand dining room, convert band hall to classrooms, provide	$77,964	

	water to drinking fountains at Academy and remodel offices at the Alternative Center		
Subtotal		**$2,647,404**	**$24,907,096**
Grand Total			**$27,554,500**

Source: DISD School Facilities Summary of Projected Cost, April 9, 1998. Note: Grand Total exceeds amount of bond election due to anticipated interest earnings. The district did not provide the review team updated information regarding the actual expenditures as compared to these projections.

Voters approved the bond election in December 1997 for $27 million.

In 1999, the district began another bond effort for $29 million. This program was also based upon the availability of matching funds from the state under the IFA program. This program included rebuilding four elementary schools: Ochoa, LeNoir, Guzman and Runn. The district had already made substantial renovations at these schools in the first bond program. Although district staff maintains that the work at these sites will not be duplicated, there are increased costs to renovate and then substantially rebuild a site. District staff said that the projects in this bond program are approximately six months to one year behind the original schedule due to a variety of factors, including change orders and delays in getting materials. The district did not make cost information available to the review team.

The district's lack of long-range planning has resulted in increased costs and a significant decline in community support. Through interviews with community members and community input obtained through public forum and survey comments, the review team learned that many in the community are questioning board decisions regarding the district's facilities needs. Without an effective long-range planning effort the district is unable to adequately address those concerns.

Deferred maintenance is also an issue in the district. The director of Maintenance and Transportation said he is aware of needed repairs that the district cannot afford to make. The director has an informal plan that is prioritized by greatest need and greatest payback. However, there are no formal plans or timelines, no estimates of the total amount of deferred

maintenance needed in the district and no cost estimates for that maintenance.

Crystal City ISD (CCISD) has also used the IFA program to fund instructional facilities. However, CCISD first developed a facilities master plan that was based upon a needs assessment conducted by an outside architectural firm. The needs assessment indicated $7.1 million of needed improvements and an additional $1.5 million of other needed renovations. The district formed a citizens' committee of 20 members, representing all elements of the community, to review the needs assessment and to make recommendations on the items to be included in the final bond package. The committee continued to operate until all scheduled projects were completed. This continued community support helped the district determine how to spend additional funds generated through interest income. While DISD did use citizen committees for input during the first two bond programs, the district dissolved them as soon as the voters approved the bond programs. By first doing a formal needs assessment and encouraging community input throughout the process, CCISD was able demonstrate to its residents not only the need for the building program, but also its ability to address those needs appropriately.

Many districts use a facility plan as an excellent tool to create a dialog with parents and the community regarding the opportunities and challenges the district faces in providing the appropriate educational settings for its children.

Recommendation 40:

Develop a long-range facilities plan.

The plan should include specific recommendations for each facility, identification of deferred maintenance, documented cost estimates and a timeline to address these recommendations. The plan could also include an area demographic profile, a growth evaluation, and attendance zone analysis for the secondary schools.

The district should use a team of six to eight members to develop the actual draft plan. Community representatives should be included in the team developing the plan. Given the condition and age of many DISD facilities, the condition of facilities should be reevaluated every five years.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and assistant superintendent for Business and Finance meet and establish criteria for hiring an outside consultant to develop the long-range facilities plan and place	September 2002

	it on the board agenda for approval at the October board meeting.	
2.	The superintendent instructs the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance to create a team to develop a long-range facilities plan.	October 2002
3.	The superintendent obtains board approval and begins the process to select and solicit bids for and hire a facilities planning consultant.	October 2002
4.	The superintendent hires a facilities planning consultant who begins a preliminary evaluation of facilities.	November 2002
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance creates a team of six to eight members, including members from the community, to provide input to the facilities planning consultant on the development of a plan.	December 2002
6.	The facilities planning consultant and facilities team develop the plan.	April 2003
7.	The superintendent reviews and approves the plan and submits it to the board for approval.	May 2003
8.	The board approves the plan.	May 2003
9.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance includes budget items for the plan, identified for 2003-04, in the draft budget for consideration.	June 2003
10.	The superintendent initiates the annual update process.	October 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The district will need to use an outside consultant who specializes in facility planning to develop this plan. Estimated cost to develop the plan is $30,000 based upon the cost to perform similar studies for other school districts in Texas of this size.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Develop a long-range facilities plan.	($30,000)	$0	$0	$0	$0

FINDING

The district does not have a formal process to evaluate sites for new facilities. Since the beginning of the 1997 bond program, the district has

purchased four sites to build new schools, including the land for Garza
Elementary School, Munoz Elementary School, Veterans Middle School
and an additional as yet unnamed middle school.

Some members of the community have questioned the process used for the
recent purchase of
35 acres of land in the western part of the district for a new middle school.
The decision was an action initiated and acted upon by the board without
input from the director of Maintenance and Transportation regarding the
land's suitability. Plans for two new elementary schools were included in
the bond program approved by the voters on June 8, 2002.

The timeline for this land purchase is described in **Exhibit 5-5**.

Exhibit 5-5
DISD Purchase of 35-Acre Site

Date	Action
January 30, 2001	Original property owner listed 44 acres for sale.
September 17, 2001	DISD board votes to authorize administration and legal counsel to pursue acquisition of real estate for a new middle school.
September 21, 2001	The property owner agrees to sell 44 acres to a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) at $6,500 per acre.
November 5, 2001	The board approves an earnest money contract to purchase 35 acres of the site from the LLC.
November 11, 2001	The board, through its attorney acting as trustee, executes the earnest money contract with the LLC to purchase 35 of the 44 acres at $10,900 per acre.
December 17, 2001	The board approves a contract to purchase the 35-acre site.
December 17, 2001	The LLC finalizes the purchase of the land from the previous owner.
December 17, 2001	The purchase transaction between the district and the LLC is finalized.

*Source: DISD board minutes, attorney invoices, earnest money contracts
and real estate settlement statements for the dates indicated.*

The attorney for the district stated that an environmental study was done
of the property, but he provided limited information on the study to the

review team. In addition, the district's attorney provided copies of Multiple Listing Services descriptions of other properties for sale in the Donna area, indicating to the review team that the district felt they had paid a reasonable price for the property.

The Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) provides training for administrators on land purchasing decisions and recommends in its training sessions a six-step process shown in **Exhibit 5-6**.

Exhibit 5-6
TASBO Guidelines for Land Purchase Process

Step	Description
1	Determine desired location.
2	Obtain data from real estate agents about available sites and costs.
3	Conduct in-house evaluation of sites.
4	Make recommendation to staff and Building Committee.
5	Seek approval for funds to investigate site.
6	Conduct detailed evaluation/investigation or feasibility study including: • Geologic assessment; • Environmental Assessment; • Utilities commitments; and • Endangered species

Source: Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO), School Plant Planning and Construction - Course M&O 201, 2002.

The Texas Building and Procurement Commission (TBPC) also requires a similar process for the purchase of land from the private sector in its Operating Policies Manual, Purchase of Raw Land - EA-12.11. This process requires the following steps as shown in **Exhibit 5-7**.

Exhibit 5-7
TBPC Required Process
Land Purchases from the Private Sector

Step	Description
1	Describe in writing the programming needs for the land acquisition, in

	order of importance.
2	Develop an RFP to solicit candidates.
3	Rank qualified candidate parcels in accordance with the prioritized programming needs.
4	Ensure that the most qualified candidate parcel is: • Priced with the appraised value and within the appropriated amount; • Survey and title commitment do not reveal incurable encroachments, easements or deed restrictions or other restrictions which affect the value of the property for its intended use; and • Environmental assessment indicates remediation efforts, if any, would not exceed available appropriations.
5	Authorize negotiation of a final sales price with top ranked candidate.
6	Conduct detailed evaluation/investigation or feasibility study including: • Geologic assessment; • Environmental Assessment; • Utilities commitments; and • Endangered species.

Source: Texas Building and Procurement Commission (TBPC) Operating Policies Manual Policy EA-12.11, March 1, 2002.

Failure to use common business practices for site selection and procurement leaves the district at risk of paying more than necessary for land purchases and incurring unforeseen costs as it proceeds to begin building on the land.

Recommendation 41:

Implement a process to evaluate the suitability and value of potential building sites before the district purchases land.

The district should implement a process to thoroughly investigate any property that it considers purchasing. At a minimum, this process should include development of specifications based upon the enrollment demographics and educational objectives, evaluation of potential sites and conducting a level-1 environmental study and an appraisal. This district should rely on professionals with the appropriate education, training and experience and those who substantially exceed state minimum standards

for licensing and certification to conduct the investigation. The district should ensure that the process is clearly communicated to the community. The district should implement the process before the district makes a decision regarding the purchase of additional land for the two new elementary schools included in the June 2002 bond program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance develops a process for evaluating raw land acquisitions by the district, including engaging professional consultants. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance uses guidelines from TASBO, the state and other sources to develop the process.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent reviews the process and submits it to the board for approval.	November 2002
3.	The board approves the process and directs its implementation.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost to implement this recommendation for a single land purchase is based on an estimated cost of $10,000 for an appraisal and level-1 environmental study and consultation regarding site selection. The total cost for studies of land for the two new schools included in the recent bond election in June 2002 would be $20,000.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Implement a process to evaluate the suitability and value of potential building sites before the district purchases land.	($20,000)	$0	$0	$0	$0

FINDING

The district does not have experienced construction staff overseeing the district's construction programs. The Maintenance Department supervisor inspects each site and reports construction progress and any problems weekly, in writing, to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. The director of Maintenance and Transportation is not part of that reporting process, though he is notified informally of the results. Neither the director of Maintenance and Transportation nor the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance has construction experience. The

Maintenance supervisor obtained some construction experience over 15 years ago, but it was not enough to oversee the current construction program. The lack of construction experience in the district and the size of the program increase the risks of projects costing more than necessary and not meeting the needs of the district.

Because construction requires a specific set of skills and a certain level of expertise, many districts that have extensive construction programs have full-time construction managers. Bastrop ISD, for example, hired a full-time construction manager to oversee its major construction projects. The construction manager reported to the deputy superintendent and monitored the work of the contractor, architects and engineers. This position helped to ensure that work was performed according to the contract. The construction manager also evaluated change orders and coordinated the building acceptance process by the district.

Recommendation 42:

Hire an experienced construction manager to oversee the district's building program.

The district should hire a construction manager to oversee major construction projects on a daily basis. The manager should report to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and the director of Personnel develop a job description and an estimated salary for a district construction manager.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent reviews the job description and salary, recommends any changes and submits the final requirements to the board for approval.	November 2002
3.	The board approves the position and recommended salary.	December 2002
4.	The director of Personnel advertises the position in local newspapers and other appropriate media.	January 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance interviews and selects a qualified candidate.	February 2003
6.	The construction manager begins work in the district.	March 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation assumes that a professional-level position would be created at a salary of $40,000 plus benefits of $8,902 (16 percent of salary, plus $2,502 fixed amount for medical and life insurance) or $48,902. The recommendation also assumes that the position would be filled for the last six months of fiscal year 2002-03 ([$48,902/12] x 6 = $24,451).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Hire an experienced construction manager to oversee the district's building program.	($24,451)	($48,902)	($48,902)	($48,902)	($48,902)

Chapter 5
FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

B. MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

Effective school maintenance requires timely and accurate information to plan and manage daily operations, a comprehensive work order system that ensures quick response to school needs and also collects information regarding equipment and related cost of repairs, a preventive maintenance process that minimizes downtime, reduces costs and extends equipment life and a method to monitor service levels and obtain feedback for improvement.

The DISD Maintenance Department is responsible for maintaining all district facilities including grounds. The department has a staff of 194 full time positions and 40 substitute custodians. DISD's Maintenance staff includes a director, two supervisors, three secretaries and two parts clerks. There are also 16 head custodians, one at each school and one at the Donna Fine Arts Complex, and 105 custodians assigned to the schools. Maintenance workers are grouped by craft depending upon their experience or as general maintenance workers. There are also seven groundskeepers. The department maintains the district's 15 schools and six support facilities including maintenance and custodial operations. The director of Maintenance and Transportation is responsible for both the maintenance and transportation functions in the district. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance is responsible for the district's facility planning function and oversees major construction projects. **Exhibit 5-8** shows the organizational structure of the department.

Exhibit 5-8
DISD's Maintenance Department Organization and Staffing

2001-02

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │  Assistant Superintendent│
                    │           for            │
                    │   Business and Finance   │
                    └────────────┬─────────────┘
                                 │
                    ┌────────────┴─────────────┐
                    │        Director          │
                    │ Maintenance and Transportation│
                    └────────────┬─────────────┘
              ┌──────────────────┴──────────────────┐
        ┌─────────────┐                      ┌──────────────┐
        │Secretaries (3)│                     │Parts Clerks (2)│
        └──────┬──────┘                       └──────────────┘
        ┌──────┴───────────────────────────────────────┐
  ┌──────────────────┐                        ┌──────────────────┐
  │Custodian Supervisor│                       │Maintenance Supervisor│
  └────────┬─────────┘                         └────────┬─────────┘
     ┌─────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌────────────────────────┐
     │Head Custodians (16)│  │Grounds Crew (7)│ │Craft Positions│  │General Maintenance Workers (24)│
     └──────┬──────┘        └──────────────┘  └──────┬───────┘  └────────────────────────┘
   ┌────────┴──────────┐
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐
│Custodians (105)│ │Substitute Custodians (40)│
└──────────────┘ └──────────────────┘
```

Craft Positions:
- Painters (3)
- Carpenters (6)
- HVAC Technicians (3)
  - A/C Filters Technician
- Plumbers (4)
- Electricians (4)
- Sanitation Workers (2)
- Locksmith
- Masons (2)
- Fence Workers (2)
- Backhoe Operator
- Stadium Keeper
- Welders (2)
- Water Treatment Workers (2)

Source: DISD Staffing Report by Category, February 2002 and the director of Maintenance and Transportation.

FINDING

DISD's maintenance-staffing number exceeds established standards by more than 26 percent resulting in unnecessary costs to the district. **Exhibit 5-9** lists the current maintenance staff and compares DISD staffing to recommended standards established by the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers, formerly known as Association of Physical Plant Administrators (APPA). The name change occurred in 1991. APPA is a national organization whose focus is facilities staffing and operations for educational facilities. Based on these standards, the district is understaffed in skilled craft positions by 8.5 positions and overstaffed by over 20 positions in the unskilled general maintenance area.

Exhibit 5-9
DISD Staffing Comparison

Craft	APPA Standards	Recommended Staffing	DISD Staffing	Difference
HVAC Technicians	1:450,000 gross per square (GSF)	3.7	4.0	0.3
Electricians	1:380,000 GSF	4.4	4.0	(0.4)
Carpenters	1:200,000 GSF	8.4	6.0	(2.4)
Plumbers	1:390,000 GSF	4.3	4.0	(0.3)
Painters	1:200,000 GSF	8.4	3.0	(5.4)
Parts Clerks	*	2.0	2.0	0.0
Sanitation	*	2.0	2.0	0.0
Masons	*	2.0	2.0	0.0
Fence workers	*	2.0	2.0	0.0
Backhoe Operator	*	1.0	1.0	0.0
Stadium Keeper	*	1.0	1.0	0.0
Welders	*	2.0	2.0	0.0
Water Treatment	*	2.0	2.0	0.0
Locksmith	*	1.0	1.0	0.0
General Maintenance	1:500,000 GSF	3.3	24.0	20.7
Total		**47.5**	**60.0**	**12.5**

Source: Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers (APPA) and DISD Maintenance Department.
*These positions do not have established standards. For this comparison, the actual number of positions was treated as the standard.

Exhibit 5-10 compares DISD 2001-02 budgeted maintenance expenditures to those of its peers. DISD spends more maintenance dollars than any of the other districts on a per-student basis, with the exception of Rio Grande City. The district also spends about 4 to 15 percent more of its

total maintenance budget on payroll than its peers, even though Mission and Edgewood ISDs have approximately 3,000 more students than DISD.

Exhibit 5-10
Comparison of Budgeted Maintenance Expenditures
DISD and Peer Districts
2001-02

Expenditure Type	Donna	Eagle Pass	Edgewood	Mission	Rio Grande City	San Benito
Payroll	$5,032,980	$3,585,231	$4,771,789	$4,664,182	$3,897,676	$2,879,352
Other Services	2,446,178	2,776,180	3,660,265	3,056,927	2,395,473	3,199,683
Supplies	489,525	520,726	1,254,762	830,101	814,900	553,654
Other Expenses	725,629	270,489	327,009	147,700	179,000	131,712
Capital Outlay	20,000	47,100	15,400	21,500	150,960	64,345
Total	$8,714,312	$7,199,726	$10,029,225	$8,720,410	$7,438,009	$6,828,746
Payroll as Percent of Total	57.8%	49.8%	47.6%	53.5%	52.4%	42.2%
Enrollment	10,451	12,778	13,435	13,122	8,906	9,102
Payroll Cost Per Student	$482	$281	$355	$355	$438	$316
Total Cost Per Student	$834	$563	$747	$665	$835	$750

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

Exhibit 5-11 compares 2000-01 budgeted Maintenance Department expenditures to regional averages for public schools. These averages are the result of an annual survey of public school districts with 600 or more students conducted by American School and University (ASU), a professional association focused on the business of managing educational facilities. In comparison to the five states studied, DISD spends more, both per student and per square foot, than the regional average. The region includes Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas and Oklahoma. The comparison shows that, at $5.21 per square foot, DISD spends 50 percent

more than the five-state regional average of $3.46 per square foot and 38 percent more per student, $231, than the five-state regional average of $602 per student.

Exhibit 5-11
DISD Maintenance Department
Budgeted Expenditures 2001-02
Comparison to Regional Averages

Cost per Square Foot	Maintenance and Operations Expenditures
DISD cost per square foot	$5.21
ASU average cost per square foot	$3.46
Difference	**$1.75**
DISD cost per student	$834
ASU average cost per student	$602
Difference	**$232**

Source: American School and University (ASU) 2001 survey of public schools in the southwest and DISD budget reports.

Midland ISD completed an analysis of staffing requirements for handling ordinary facilities repair and maintenance needs. In this analysis, the district determined the number and frequency of specialized work orders and the typical peak workload times. Based on this analysis, the Maintenance Department maintains a small core maintenance staff to meet ongoing facilities repair and maintenance needs and contracts with private companies during unexpected and peak workloads and for specialized jobs. By using this practice, the district avoids significant amounts of staff downtime and payroll cost.

Recommendation 43:

Adopt staffing standards for the Maintenance Department.

The district should develop staffing formulas for its maintenance workers based on objective industry standards, such as those developed by APPA, and on identified district needs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation freezes all hiring of additional maintenance workers.	September 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation works with the director of Personnel to develop staffing formulas by craft.	October 2002
3.	The director of Personnel and the director of Maintenance and Transportation develop a reduction-in-force plan to eliminate 12.5 positions to address the overstaffing.	November 2002
4.	The director of Personnel and the director of Maintenance and Transportation submit this plan to the superintendent for approval.	December 2002
5.	The superintendent approves the plan and submits the plan to the board for approval.	December 2002
6.	The board approves the plan and instructs the director of Personnel to implement the plan.	January 2003
7.	The director of Personnel implements the plan.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The implementation of this recommendation will result in the elimination of 12.5 maintenance positions resulting in annual savings of $266,912. The calculation for this fiscal impact is shown below:

Maintenance level 1 position:		
Annual salary ($7.34 average hourly rate x 8 hours x 261 days)	$15,326	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.23	
	$18,851	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$21,353
		x 12.5
Total fiscal impact for eliminating the 12.5 positions:		$266,912

This recommendation also assumes that one half of the positions would be eliminated in 2002-03 as a result of the hiring freeze and that the recommendation would be fully implemented beginning in 2003-04.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Adopt staffing standards for the Maintenance Department.	$133,456	$266,912	$266,912	$266,912	$266,912

FINDING

According to the director of Maintenance and Transportation, the department does not have a formal preventive maintenance system that focuses on extending the useful life of facilities and equipment. The lack of a preventive maintenance system ultimately results in increased costs to the district because minor repairs and routine replacement of parts are not done on a timely basis to properly maintain facilities and equipment requiring large one-time expenditures are made to repair or to replace items. The current maintenance process is informal. Preventive maintenance activities are not documented and are limited those ordered by the director of Maintenance and Transportation on an as-needed basis. Some preventive maintenance tasks are scheduled during the summer and when funds are available. For example, an air-conditioning technician changes filters, inspects compressors and makes minor heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) repairs.

Effective school districts establish formal preventive maintenance programs. Districts base the programs on the size, age and condition of the district's facilities. Older buildings and older equipment such as HVAC equipment, require more frequent maintenance.

Once a district establishes a program, it schedules maintenance tasks as frequently as needed. Such tasks include cleaning and testing air-conditioning systems, cleaning plumbing systems and roof drainage, inspecting interior and exterior lighting, performing bleacher maintenance, inspecting and cleaning interior finish, and assessing exterior lighting and finish. The district budgets and evaluates preventive maintenance costs separately to determine the cost effectiveness of each task. Districts may assign particular staff to perform preventive maintenance full-time or may assign work orders to all staff. Maintenance staff members assigned to perform preventive maintenance are not routinely reassigned to address other needs.

The lack of a preventive management program limits department staff to reacting to equipment breakdowns, rather than addressing equipment needs before there is an actual equipment breakdown. Without an effective preventive maintenance program, overall maintenance costs are likely to be high.

San Angelo ISD has developed an innovative preventive maintenance program. This district uses a special maintenance crew to visit each school at least once a year to perform preventive maintenance and low-priority work orders. This crew, called the forward maintenance crew, includes personnel with mechanical, electrical, carpentry, painting and plumbing experience. During these visits, the crews address the majority of preventive maintenance needs and other low-priority needs. Principals in San Angelo are pleased with this process.

A formal preventive maintenance program with scheduled tasks and frequency can be evaluated in terms of time spent and dollars expended to determine the cost effectiveness of each task. Using this approach a district can evaluate the cost effectiveness of the preventive maintenance as compared to addressing individual repairs. For example, a district may replace all stadium lights on a regular schedule rather than individually as the lights burnout.

Recommendation 44:

Develop a preventive maintenance plan to help reduce maintenance costs.

The director of Maintenance and Transportation should develop a preventive maintenance program that identifies all preventive maintenance projects needed in the district, provides a detailed schedule by facility and prioritizes needs. Although DISD needs to achieve lower staffing levels, DISD will still have sufficient Maintenance personnel to conduct preventive maintenance activities. Consequently, as staffing levels are reduced, DISD will need to continue monitoring staffing patterns and hold Maintenance staff accountable for achieving the desired results.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation, working with his staff and school principals, identifies preventive maintenance activities for the district.	October 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation develops a draft preventive maintenance plan and submits it to the assistant superintendent of Business and Finance for approval.	December 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent of Business and Finance approves the plan and includes the current year activities in the budget process for the coming year.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources and could achieve significant savings over time. As preventive maintenance is conducted, costs for major repairs should decline.

FINDING

DISD's Maintenance Department does not use its work order system effectively, and the system does not provide sufficient managementor cost reporting. The district uses an A/S 400 system, a financial and administrative automated system, installed in 2000 with a formatted work order form. The system is installed at all district campuses and departments. All campus principals and department heads and their assigned staff have access to the system. Schools complete a computerized work order and route it to the Maintenance Department for work to be assigned and performed. The system automatically numbers and dates the work orders. The Maintenance Department prints out the work orders, and the Maintenance supervisor categorizes them as either low or high priority and assigns them to a maintenance worker. Once the worker completes the work order, the campus or department head signs the order as proof of completion. Schools call in emergencies to the department. The department does not use the system to track preventive maintenance tasks.

The automated system can record the time a worker spent on each task and the cost of materials used, but the department does not use this feature. The department does not record anywhere the time spent on tasks or the cost of parts, nor does it age work orders -or analyze them to monitor staff productivity. The department has no standards for completing even routine tasks. The Maintenance supervisor uses the system basically to log work orders and determine assignments and status of work orders. From August 2001 through April 9, 2002, 5,033 work orders were generated. A review of work orders for the first six months of this year indicated that 3,921 work orders were issued and 3,250 were completed for a completion rate of 83 percent.

To be effective, maintenance departments need accurate and timely information regarding service levels, workload assignments, labor hours and costs. Without this information, the director must rely on only his judgment in evaluating his staff's performance and responsiveness. The department should make replacement decisions and evaluate preventive maintenance based on historical information about repairs at a given facility. This lack of this information limits the director's ability to develop documented support for increasing preventive maintenance or addressing deferred maintenance.

United ISD developed standard expectations of the staff hours required to complete each type of work order and compared the expected staff hours

to actual work hours to monitor staff productivity. Crewmembers were required to enter travel time on all work orders. In 1997, the Maintenance Department began a "service call" system that significant increased productivity. The system assigns work orders by school and allots time to complete specific tasks. One feature of the system is that principals sign work orders upon completion and record the precise time that tasks are completed. In the first three months of implementation, department maintenance workers completed 900 work orders, compared to 600 work orders during a previous three-month period. In 2000, the district projected a five-year savings of $2.4 million.

Recommendation 45:

Use the existing work order system to track work orders and preventive maintenance needs by facility, frequency and cost.

The Maintenance Department should use its automated work order system to effectively track work orders and better manage its operations. The system also should be used to track scheduled preventive maintenance information. If training is needed, the district should provide training to at least four staff members.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation reviews the system capabilities and identifies features to use to monitor maintenance work in the district.	November 2002
3.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation develops a schedule for using the features.	December 2002
4.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation identifies staff training needs, determines how to provide the training and submits a training request to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.	January 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance approves the training request including fees and any out of pocket expenses.	February 2003
6.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation provides training to staff members.	April 2003
7.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation begins using the system features.	May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented based upon the one-time cost to train appropriate staff. If four staff members were trained, including the Maintenance supervisor, a foreman and two clerical staff, the cost would be $3,200 ($500 each for training and $300 travel expenses each for four people).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Use the existing work order system to track work orders and preventive maintenance needs by facility, frequency and cost.	($3,200)	$0	$0	$0	$0

Chapter 5
FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

C. CUSTODIAL OPERATIONS

In 2001-02, DISD employed 119.5 custodians, seven groundskeepers and 47 part-time bus drivers, who double as custodians as required, to clean and maintain the district's facilities and grounds. Custodians report both to the Maintenance Department's custodial supervisor and to an individual principal. There are head custodians at each school. The principal at each school supervises the daily activities of the custodians. The Warehouse supervisor has also recently assumed some supervisory responsibilities over custodians, primarily concerning providing supplies. He is also working with the custodial supervisor to develop routine inspection procedures.

FINDING

The district does not use staffing guidelines for custodians. The review team compared DISD staffing to regional averages based upon an annual survey by ASU and custodial guidelines developed by APPA. In its publication *Custodial Staffing Guidelines for Education Facilities, Second Edition, 1999*, APPA examines custodial service levels, productivity, type of space, finishes and space allocation per custodian in determining custodial staffing patterns. Because the guidelines are based on the type of space cleaned, finishes and level of service provided, they provide a more accurate assessment of staffing levels than is afforded by other methods.

Based on these averages and standards and the age and condition of the district's facilities, DISD has 26.7 more custodians than needed to clean its facilities. In addition to these custodians, there are 47 bus drivers who spend three hours a day cleaning, although they are not assigned to a specific school. The district also uses 27 substitutes to fill custodial staffing vacancies due to illness or personal leave. This level of overstaffing increases custodial cleaning costs significantly.

DISD custodial staffing exceeds both regional averages determined by the 2001 ASU survey and industry standards developed by APPA. The ASU standard for classrooms is 21,445 square feet per custodian. The APPA average for the auditorium is 14,000 square feet per custodian and for offices is 18,200 square feet. The comparison does not include bus drivers and substitute custodians. **Exhibit 5-12** compares the district's custodial staffing using a conservative standard allocation formula of 18,000 square feet per custodian, based upon the age and condition of the district's facilities.

Exhibit 5-12
DISD Custodial Staffing Comparison
2001-02

School/Facility	Square Feet	Recommended Staffing at 18,000 Sq. Ft. per Custodian	DISD Staffing	Difference
Caceres Elementary	56,206	3.1	4	0.9
Garza Elementary	105,188	5.8	8.5	2.7
Guzman Elementary	51,902	2.9	3	0.1
LeNoir Elementary	46,547	2.6	5	2.4
Munoz Elementary	67,060	3.7	8	4.3
Ochoa Elementary	67,686	3.8	6	2.2
Rivas Elementary	52,991	2.9	5	2.1
Price Elementary	64,248	3.6	4	0.4
Runn Elementary	38,123	2.1	4	1.9
Salinas Elementary	92,670	5.1	7	1.9
Stainke Elementary	59,816	3.3	6	2.7
Solis Middle School	136,453	7.6	12	4.4
Veterans Middle School	145,840	8.1	10	1.9
Todd 9th Grade	127,457	7.1	8.5	1.4
Donna High School*	278,676	15.5	17	1.5
High School Library	18,056	1.0	0	-1.0
Donna Fine Arts Center	53,922	3.0	6	3.0
Moye Complex	61,391	3.4	2	-1.4
McQueen Complex	27,274	1.5	2	0.5
Administration Office	12,189	0.7	1	0.3
Service Center	108,888	6.0	0.5	-5.5
Total	**1,672,583**	**92.8**	**119.5**	**26.7**

Source: DISD Custodial Staffing Assignments 2001-02, the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers (APPA) Custodial Staffing Guidelines and American School and University (ASU) 30th annual Maintenance and Operations Cost Study, 2001 and TSPR. Note: Actual staffing does not include 1.5 staff on personal and family medical leave.

Recommendation 46:

Use custodial staffing formulas to staff schools and other facilities.

The district should develop staffing formulas based upon industry standards and use these formulas to immediately reduce staff.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation freezes all hiring of additional custodians.	October 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and the director of Personnel Resource develop custodial staffing formulas for DISD's schools and other facilities.	October 2002
3.	The director of Personnel and the director of Maintenance and Transportation develop a reduction-in-force plan to address the overstaffing.	November 2002
4.	The director of Personnel submits this plan to the superintendent for approval.	December 2002
5.	The superintendent approves the plan and submits the plan to the board for approval.	December 2002
6.	The board approves the plan and instructs the director of Personnel to implement the plan.	January 2003
7.	The director of Personnel implements the plan.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The implementation of this recommendation will result in the elimination of 26.7 custodial positions resulting in annual savings of $568,737. The calculation for this fiscal impact is shown below:

Custodial position:		
Annual salary ($7.32 average hourly rate x 8 hours x 261 days)	$15,284	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.23	
	$18,799	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$21,301
		x 26.7
Total fiscal impact for eliminating the 26.7 positions:		$568,737

This recommendation also assumes that one half of the positions would be eliminated in 2002-03 and that the recommendation would be fully implemented beginning in 2003-04.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Use custodial staffing formulas to staff school and other facilities.	$284,368	$568,737	$568,737	$568,737	$568,737

Chapter 5
FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

D. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Energy and utility expenses represent more than 24 percent of DISD's maintenance budget. The district does not have a formal energy management program or a position assigned the responsibility of monitoring the district's energy costs. **Exhibit 5-13** lists the utility costs for the first half of 2001-02.

Exhibit 5-13
Utility Costs per Square Feet
August 2001-January 2002

Facility	Electricity Cost per Square Feet.
Caceres Elementary	1.37
Garza Elementary	1.32
Guzman Elementary	0.39
LeNoir Elementary	0.33
Munoz Elementary	0.47
Ochoa Elementary	0.26
Price Elementary	0.29
Rivas Elementary	1.21
Runn Elementary	0.25
Salinas Elementary	1.12
Stainke Elementary	0.23
A. P. Solis Middle School	0.34
Veterans Middle School	0.31
W.A. Todd (ninth grade campus)	0.45
Donna High School	0.43

Source: DISD 2001-02 Maintenance Budget dated January 31, 2002.

FINDING

DISD does not have an energy management program. An energy management program can range from basic efforts to encourage people to switch off lights when not needed, to adding insulation, replacing inefficient equipment and planting trees for shade, to computerized heating and cooling equipment that automatically functions at optimum efficiency based on temperatures and other weather-related conditions. DISD staff said the district provides no formal training in energy conservation for either campus staff or custodians. The district has not had an energy management audit, such as those performed by the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO), which is part of the Texas State Comptroller's Office. SECO provides free energy management audits to public sector entities, including school districts. The audits provide detailed recommendations of equipment and procedures to implement, which serves as the basis for an energy management plan and an estimate of the amount of time it will take to recoup money spent on energy-efficient equipment through lower energy costs.

Corpus Christi ISD (CCISD) conducted an energy audit to identify savings opportunities. In response to the audit, CCISD contracted with a private company to change out lighting and implement energy management systems. The district paid for the contract with related energy savings reflected in lower energy bills. The district has developed a plan to identify other retrofit and construction projects and to replace the district's window air-conditioning units. The district estimates that it will save over $1 million over five years due to lower utility bills.

Tyler ISD conducted an assessment of its lighting system districtwide and, as a result, installed new lighting with funding from a low-interest state loan and bond funds. It also conducted an assessment of HVAC equipment. From 1996-97 through 1999-2000, the district realized savings of $275,000.

Recommendation 47:

Request that an energy consultant conduct an energy management audit of all DISD facilities and create an energy management plan.

The audit should serve as the basis for an energy management plan. Given the financial situation in the district, it may be necessary to implement the plan in stages over several years. The plan should include an analysis of cost benefits, consideration of alternatives, a schedule to implement and the sources of funding for implementation

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation schedules an energy management audit with an energy consultant.	November 2002
2.	The energy consultant completes the audit and provides DISD with recommendations.	March 2003
3.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and the assistant superintendent of Business and Finance review the report and develop a recommended implementation plan.	April 2003
4.	The superintendent approves the plan and submits it to the board.	May 2003
5.	The board approves the plan and directs implementation.	September 2003
6.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation evaluates the results of the plan at the end of the first year of implementation and annually thereafter.	October 2004 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

Chapter 6
ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

This chapter addresses the asset and risk management functions of the Donna Independent School District (DISD) in the following sections:

A. Cash and Investment Management
B. Risk Management/Insurance Programs
C. Fixed Assets

Texas school districts have a fiduciary responsibility to protect publicly financed assets provided to educate children. An effective asset and risk management program aims to control costs by ensuring that the district is adequately protected against all significant losses with the lowest possible insurance premiums. This includes the identification and measurement of risk and techniques to minimize the impact of risk. Fixed asset management should account for district property efficiently and accurately and safeguard it against theft and obsolescence. The district's insurance programs for employees' health, workers compensation and district assets should be sound and cost effective to protect the district from financial losses.

BACKGROUND

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance oversees the asset and risk management functions in the district. Unlike many small districts in Texas, DISD has a risk manager. The director of Employee Services directs the risk management programs for the district, including employee health insurance, workers' compensation insurance, general and liability insurance, auto insurance and property insurance. Asset management is separated into two sections; cash management and fixed assets. The district has a Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager located at the actual warehouse site who ensures the district's fixed assets have been accounted for properly. District cash management is the responsibility of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. **Exhibit 6-1** presents the organization chart for the asset and risk management functions in the district.

Exhibit 6-1
DISD Asset and Risk Organization Chart

Source: DISD Asset and Risk staff, April 2002.

DISD has three outstanding bonds and contractual obligations to finance facility improvements. The district issued a $27 million Unlimited Tax School Building Bond Series in 1998 due in annual installments of $385,000 to $2.09 million and guaranteed by the Texas state government.

In September 2000, the district issued a $29 million Unlimited Tax School Building Bond 2000 Series, guaranteed by the state and due in annual installments of $610,000 to $2.06 million. The bonds mature in years 2001 through 2026.

School Facility Lease Revenue Bonds Series 1995 and dated April 1995 consist of $9.74 million in serial bonds payable in annual installments with interest ranging from 5.8 percent to 6.75 percent. The bonds include $5.76 million of term bonds due in annual increments ranging from $670,000 to $990,000 plus 6.375 interest beginning on April 15, 2004.

The General Long-Term Debt Account (**Exhibit 6-2**) shows bonded indebtedness.

Exhibit 6-2
DISD General Long-Term Debt Account Group
Summary of Changes as of August 31, 2001

Description	Interest Rate	Original Issue	Interest Paid in Current	Amount Outstanding at 9/1/00	Issued	Retired	Amount Outstanding at 8/31/01

			Year					
General Obligation Bond: Unlimited Tax School Building, Series - 2000	5% - 6%	$29,000,000	$1,295,004		$0	$29,000,000	$650,000	$28,350,000
General Obligation Bond: Unlimited Tax School Building Bonds 1998	4.1% - 5.5%	$27,000,000	$1,280,526	$25,740,000	$0		$930,000	$24,810,000
Revenue Bond: School Facility Lease 1995	5.8% - 6.4375% 4%	$9,740,000	$494,453	$7,545,000	$0		$565,000	$6,980,000
Total			**$3,069,983**	**$33,285,000**		**$29,000,000**	**$2,145,000**	**$60,140,000**

Source: Orozco and Reyna, Certified Public Accountants, Audited Financial Statement for the Period Ending August 31, 2001.

The Debt Service fund (**Exhibit 6-3**) accounts for the district's current requirement for principal and interest expenditures.

Exhibit 6-3
DISD Debt Service Fund
Debt Service Requirements as of August 31, 2001

	General Obligations		
Year Ending August 31	**Principal**	**Interest**	**Total Requirements**
2002	$2,195,000	$3,209,560	$5,404,560
2003	$2,310,000	$3,096,416	$5,406,416
2004	$2,430,000	$2,315,319	$4,745,319

2005	$2,560,000	$2,835,531	$5,395,531
Thereafter	$50,645,000	$25,700,353	$76,345,353
Total	**$60,140,000**	**$37,157,179**	**$97,297,179**

Source: Pressman, Thompson and Company, CPAs, Audited Financial Statement for the
Period Ending August 31, 2001.

Chapter 6
ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

A. CASH AND INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT (Part 1)

Sound cash management practices must establish a balance between maintaining an adequate amount of available cash for daily operations and investing a sufficient amount of cash to yield the highest possible return, without endangering the principal. Principal is the amount of money invested. The district's goal is to ensure smooth operations while not permitting cash to sit idly without earning interest. These issues take on added meaning when annual revenues exceed annual expenditures by a relatively small amount. The need for sound cash management is heightened because revenues flow in and out of school districts in varying amounts at different points in time. Temporary cash shortages often can be solved through short-term borrowing, while surplus cash can be placed into short-term investments that earn interest.

Because cash is the most liquid of all assets, it is imperative that the necessary procedural safeguards are in place to protect against theft and mismanagement. Adequate tracking systems are necessary to manage large amounts of cash. Millions of dollars are moved into and out of separate checking and investment accounts during the school year.

With technological advances, managing cash and investing has become more efficient. Electronic banking allows a district and its banking/investing partners to accomplish a great deal in less time with less effort. There is no substitute, however, for fundamentally sound relationships between a district and its financial partners. Because of the competition for school district business, districts can and should aggressively seek beneficial banking and investing relationships that minimize costs and maximize returns. Effective cash management and investment requires a school district to develop and implement a sound cash management plan that involves cash flow forecasting; a system for monitoring cash as it moves within the district; surplus cash investment strategies and mechanisms; and good banking and investment relationships.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance has been the board-appointed Investment Officer for the district since 1997. The district's investment policy is based on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) legal policy (CDA - Legal). Details from the investment policy are as follows:

Written Policies

Investments should adhere to board-approved policies. The investment policies must emphasize safety of principal and liquidity and must address investment diversification, yield and maturity and the quality and capability of investment management. The policies must include:

- a list of authorized investment types in which the board can invest;
- the maximum allowable stated maturity of any board-owned individual investment;
- for pooled fund groups, the maximum dollar-weighted average maturity allowed based on the stated maturity date of the portfolio;
- methods with which to monitor the market price of investments acquired with public funds; and
- a requirement for all transaction settlements, except investment pool funds and mutual funds, on a delivery versus payment basis.

Investment Strategies

As part of the investment policy, the board should adopt a separate written investment strategy for each of the funds or group of funds under the board's control. Each investment strategy must describe the investment objectives for the particular fund under the following priorities:

- understanding the suitability of the investment to the board's financial requirements;
- preservation and safety of principal;
- liquidity;
- marketability of the investment if the investment needs to be liquidated before maturity;
- diversification of the investment portfolio; and
- yield.

Investments are governed by the preservation and safety of the principal invested, maintaining optimal liquidity and maximizing the yield of the district's investment portfolio. Excess operating cash is transferred into TexPool. The district invests its bond proceeds into TexPool and repurchase agreements with Lehman Brothers.A repurchase agreement is the purchase of a security with an agreement to repurchase that security at a guaranteed price and date. Most securities trading is done between dealers. Securities dealers might buy securities valued at a sum greater than their net worth. For example, a bond dealer might purchase $1 billion worth of government securities. The dealer would pay several million dollars at the onset of the transaction and enter into a repurchase agreement for the balance. Essentially, the bond dealer agrees to sell the unpaid balance back to the government with the understanding that the securities can be repurchased in the future. When the dealer buys the securities back from the government, the dealer pays the government

interest. After the auction, and after the repurchase agreement is initiated, the bond dealer begins selling the bonds. As the bonds sell, they are removed from the government inventory and the proceeds pay off the remaining bonds. **Exhibit 6-4** summarizes the district's investment activities.

Exhibit 6-4
DISD Investments
As of February 2002

Investment Pool	Account Name	Account Type	Interest Rate	Account Balance
TexPool	General Fund	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$18,016,848
TexPool	Debt Service Fund	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$668,890
TexPool	Health Insurance Fund	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$715,238
TexPool	Workers' Compensation	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$1,142,563
TexPool	Sports Facility Bond	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$201,754
Total - General Operating Fund				**$20,745,293**
TexPool	2000 Bond Issue	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$2,711,135
TexPool	1998 Bond Issue	Investment Pool	1.8577%	$1,410,833
Lehman Brothers	Capital Projects Fund	Repurchase Agmt.	5.96%	$6,277
Lehman Brothers	Capital Projects Fund	Repurchase Agmt.	5.96%	$19,120,146
Total - Capital Project Fund				**$23,248,391**
Public Facility Corp.	Project Acquisition Fund	Money Market	4.27%	$765
Public Facility Corp.	Project Acquisition Fund	Money Market	4.27%	$1,033,098

Public Facility Corp.	Project Acquisition Fund	Money Market	4.27%	$565,831
Total - Trust and Agency Fund				**$1,599,694**
TOTAL FUNDS INVESTED				**$45,593,378**

Source: DISD, Investment Activities Report, February 28, 2002.

The district's depository agreement is with First National Bank (FNB). The two-year term began September 1, 2001 and extends through August 31, 2003.

FINDING

The district is not maximizing interest income available from the funds on deposit with FNB. The district maintains seven primary checking accounts with FNB, none of which bear interest. However, the district does not pay monthly bank fees. **Exhibit 6-5** summarizes the bank balances at FNB for the seven district accounts from September 28, 2001 through May 31, 2002.

Exhibit 6-5
First National Bank Balances
September 2001 through May 2002

Date	General Operating	Payroll	Interest and Sinking	County Education District	Workers' Compensation	Health Insurance	Tax Collections	Total
09/28/01	$690,025	$481,161	$49,041	$11,982	$107,414	$55,094	($496)	$1,394,221
10/31/01	$987,811	$668,086	$57,930	$8,341	$168,630	$80,543	($503)	$1,970,838
11/30/01	$844,668	$145,233	$62,651	$7,490	$157,643	($33,013)	($594)	$1,184,078
12/31/01	$715,853	$94,333	$67,349	$8,413	$274,653	$584,399	$64,943	$1,809,943
01/31/02	$1,574,986	$171,850	$72,904	$8,777	$327,653	$437,547	$134,334	$2,728,051
02/28/02	$51,988	$881,023	$83,995	$9,939	$375,137	$604,139	$0	$2,006,221
03/29/02	$490,167	$36,708	$712,009	$11,699	$351,808	($67,878)	$9,797	$1,544,310
04/30/02	$1,285,765	$99,987	$723,733	$15,117	$328,915	$378	($10,448)	$2,443,447
05/31/02	$2,778,749	$271,116	$732,485	$9,249	$339,247	$193,112	($13,158)	$4,310,800
Average	**$1,046,668**	**$316,611**	**$284,677**	**$10,112**	**$270,122**	**$206,036**	**$20,431**	**$2,154,657**

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance transfers excess cash from the district's bank accounts to TexPool when the balances seem too high. In reviewing the district's balances held in FNB during the current fiscal year, there was at least $1.2 million on deposit in a non-interest bearing account, and at times more than $4 million.

Exhibit 6-6 presents the most recent available U.S. Treasury bill (T-bill) rates. Many financial analysts consider T-bills a fairly risk-free investment. In an overnight investment, the return should be somewhat higher than the T-bill since there would be a slightly higher risk associated with it than the risk-free T-bill rate.

Exhibit 6-6
U.S. Treasury Bill Rates
June 2002

Date	Total
3-month	1.74%
6-month	1.85%
1-year	2.25%
2-year	3.05%
3-year	3.55%
5-year	4.24%
7-year	4.65%
10-year	4.98%
20-year	5.68%
Average	**3.55%**

Source: United States Treasury.

Many districts combine their account balances and sweep those funds into overnight investments as a means of collectively earning interest. In addition, many districts structure their bank depository agreements to include pay-per-service fees in interest bearing accounts instead of non-interest bearing accounts and no service fees.

For example, Ysleta ISD's (YISD's) depository agreement provides that excess collected balances not invested in other authorized investment vehicles be swept nightly into overnight repurchase agreements. The funds return to the district's accounts first thing each morning so the district can meet the day's cash obligations. With this arrangement, YISD ensures that all district funds are invested and earning the highest rate of return available.

Recommendation 48:

Restructure the next bank depository agreement to combine district accounts, sweep all balances into overnight investments and include pay-per-service fees.

DISD maintained an average of $2.2 million in its accounts throughout 2001-02. These funds can easily increase the district's cash flow by being invested in an interest-bearing overnight investment. Generally an overnight investment will yield a higher interest rate than an interest-bearing account. Many interest-bearing accounts base the interest earned upon the average balance. By combining multiple account balances, the district could earn a higher rate of interest on the aggregate balance. A nightly sweep of all accounts into one overnight investment vehicle will yield a higher rate given the higher aggregate balance than will a number of accounts with lower balances.

The district should restructure its compensating balance agreement so that the account directly pays service charges, receives interest and includes a nightly sweep of all funds in the district's accounts at the close of each business day. This will provide the district with additional interest without sacrificing its ability to meet its cash obligations.

Although the district is not currently paying bank fees, the amount of interest lost is higher than the total monthly fees that would be assessed if the banking agreement paid interest income and collected a bank fee. **Exhibit 6-7** presents an average fee scenario that would apply to DISD if the district paid bank fees.

Exhibit 6-7
Average Bank Fee Schedule

Activity	Average Number of Transactions per Month for Each Primary Checking Account	Per Item Service Charge	Combined Annual Fee for Primary Checking Accounts

Maintenance Fee	7	$6	$504
Debits Posted	3,800	0-50/No charge $0.15	$6,750
Deposits	275	0-50/No charge $0.15	$405
TOTAL FEES			**$7,659**

Source: First National Bank business on-line account brochure, June 2002.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance prepares a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new depository agreement that includes a nightly investment sweep of excess district funds held in the district's primary checking accounts.	March 2003
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance makes a recommendation to the superintendent for approval.	May 2003
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance prepares an agenda item for the board to review.	June 2003
4.	The superintendent presents the recommendation for a new depository agreement to the board.	June 2003
5.	The board approves the new depository agreement and the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance issues the RFPs.	June 2003
6.	The superintendent and assistant superintendent for Business and Finance review submitted RFP responses and submit their recommendation to the board for approval.	July - August 2003
7.	The superintendent, upon receiving board approval, signs the bank depository agreement.	August 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

To calculate the fiscal impact of this recommendation, the average balance of $2,154,657 was used as the baseline. Assuming an average interest rate of 3.55 percent based on the U.S. Treasury bill rates and received from the overnight investment, the district would earn an additional $76,490 ($2,154,657 x 3.55 percent) minus $7,659 in annual bank fees for a net earnings of $68,831 annually. The additional interest would not be available until the new depository agreement has been signed in the summer of 2003.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Restructure the next bank depository agreement to combine district accounts, sweep all balances into overnight investments and include pay-per-service fees.	$0	$68,831	$68,831	$68,831	$68,831

FINDING

The district does not segregate its cash management functions from its general bookkeeping functions. The district's designated investment officer, the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, is also responsible for reconciling the general operating and payroll bank accounts, the district's two most active accounts. This position is the final level of review for these accounts.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance manually reconciles the accounts using a stand-alone software package, but there is no procedural safeguard in place to prevent staff from making miscellaneous general ledger entries. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance also downloads bank activity from the district accounting system into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet where it is reconciled against the monthly bank statement. All bank accounts are reconciled on a timely basis.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance told the review team that an accountant was hired in spring 2002 and was in the midst of assuming the district's account reconciliation duties. As of May 1, 2002, however, the accountant had not begun any training or assumed any account reconciliation duties.

Many districts separate their asset maintenance and bookkeeping functions to ensure that district assets are properly safeguarded from unauthorized use and to enhance the reliability of accounting information. They frequently adopt the Texas Education Agency (TEA) *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG) recommendation that school districts segregate responsibilities for collection and deposit preparation from those for recording cash receipts and general ledger entries.

Many districts further follow TEA's policy suggestions regarding controls over cash and investment balances including:

- segregation of responsibilities for cash receipts functions from those for cash disbursements;
- segregation of responsibilities for disbursement preparation and disbursement approval functions from those for recording or entering cash disbursements information on the general ledger;
- segregation of responsibilities for disbursement approval from those for the disbursement, voucher preparation and purchasing functions;
- segregation of responsibilities for cash receipt or disbursement record entries from those for general ledger entries;
- segregation of responsibilities for preparing and approving bank account reconciliations from those for other cash receipt or disbursement functions; and
- if electronic data processing is used, maintain the principle of segregated duties within processing activities.

In the area of cash and investment handling, many districts also adopt TEA's suggested procedural controls for collections, disbursements, custody, detail accounting and general ledger maintenance.

Recommendation 49:

Segregate the cash management and bookkeeping functions by immediately training the new accountant to reconcile all bank accounts.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance should train the new position immediately. In addition, the district should not allow the person responsible for reconciling the bank statements to make any general ledger entries that relate to the bank reconciliation. For example, if there was an entry that had not been properly posted to the general ledger, the accountant should not have access to the accounting system to make the correction. Instead, this person should fill out the reconciliation report noting the required adjustment; have the reconciliation report reviewed and approved by the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance; and then the chief accountant would post the adjusting entry to the general ledger.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance develops a reconciliation spreadsheet to help facilitate the bank reconciliation process.	September 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews the reconciliation spreadsheet with both the chief	October 2002

	accountant and the accountant.	
3.	The accountant, with the direct supervision of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, reconciles the September 2002 operating and payroll accounts.	November 2002
4.	The accountant independently reconciles the October 2002 operating and payroll accounts, using the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance as an advisor when necessary.	November 2002
5.	The accountant independently reconciles the November 2002 operating and payroll accounts and provides the reconciliation report to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.	December 2002
6.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews the reconciliation reports and works with the accountant to ensure there are no errors.	December 2002
7.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance approves the final reconciliation report and instructs the chief accountant to make any necessary journal adjustments.	December 2002
8.	The accountant completes all monthly bank account reconciliations providing them to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance for approval.	January 2003 and Ongoing
9.	The chief accountant makes any necessary journal entry adjustments from monthly bank account reconciliations.	January 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 6
ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

A. CASH AND INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT (Part 2)

FINDING

The DISD elementary and middle school campus administrators do not have adequate internal controls in place for their activity funds. The district maintains 16 separate activity fund accounts at FNB that do not earn interest. The district is not maximizing its earning potential by leaving money in an interest-free account.

As required by law, DISD includes activity funds in its annual external audits. In each of the external audits reviewed, the auditor identified internal control issues related to the district's activity accounts, mostly associated with a lack of consistency from campus to campus (**Exhibit 6-8**). During onsite visits to the district, the review team verified this issue.

Exhibit 6-8
Audit Findings - Activity Accounts
1998-99 through 2000-01

1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
• Campus secretaries counted monies, prepared deposit slips and took monies to the bank.	• Campus secretaries counted monies, prepared deposit slips and took monies to the bank.	• An audit sample of transactions tested of an elementary campus revealed a lack of support documentation for some disbursements and receipts.
• One principal did not approve payment authorizations.	• The checkbook was not properly placed in locked storage for safekeeping.	• Campus was not following the policies and procedures prescribed by the district activity account manual.
• One school did	• Several bank	

not prepare payment authorization forms as required by the district.	accounts were dormant for several months.	
• Campus secretary was unable to produce supporting documentation for various checks prepared from the campus activity account.	• Campus secretary was unable to produce supporting documentation for various checks prepared from the campus activity account.	
• There was one instance where student activity monies were combined with the Parent Teacher (PTO) monies.		

Source: Pattillo, Brown and Hill, LLP, Certified Accountants, Audit Report, 1998-99 and 1999-2000 and Orozco and Reyna, Certified Public Accountants, Audit Report, 2000-01.

On most campuses, the principal's secretary maintains the cash and account deposits and payments. The one exception is the high school, where a bookkeeper assumes these responsibilities. Activity fund bank statements are sent to the individual campuses. The principals' secretary or campus bookkeeper reconciles the account to the bank statement and then forwards the reconciliation to the chief accountant in the Business Office. **Exhibit 6-9** summarizes the activity account balances during each quarter of fiscal 2001-02 and as of May 31, 2002.

Exhibit 6-9
First National Bank Balances - Activity Accounts

Account Name	Account Balance 9/28/01	Account Balance 12/31/01	Account Balance 3/29/02	Account Balance 5/31/02
Donna High School Student Activity Fund	$104,066	$131,653	$113,321	$121,310
Truman Pride Account	$4,214	$5,345	$5,583	$9,190
Veteran's (W.A. Todd) Middle School	$5,909	$9,523	$27,791	$15,302
M. Rivas Account	$363	$363	$363	$363
B.G. Guzman Elementary	($357)	$2,039	$3,254	$1,399
A.P. Solis Middle School	$1,877	$13,864	$19,802	$9,533
Stainke Elementary	$191	($612)	$516	($95)
J. P. LeNoir Elementary	$3,945	$10,489	$9,489	$5,699
A.M. Ochoa Elementary	$977	$7,107	$5,511	$1,540
Salinas Faculty Club Account	$8,422	$27,359	$14,690	$13,943
Special Athlete's Account	$47	$85	$47	$119
Runn Elementary	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
B.G. Guzman Elementary Faculty Club	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P.A. Garza Elementary Student Activity Account	$1,020	$3,623	$2,119	$1,499
Munoz Elementary PTO Account	$1,265	$7,625	$8,598	$7,700
W.A. Todd 9th Grade School	$4,115	$6,557	$8,975	$11,307
Total Activity Account Balance	**$136,054**	**$225,020**	**$220,059**	**$198,809**

Source: DISD, First National Bank Statements, September 2001 through May 2002.
*Note: N/A assumes a zero balance.

The high school bookkeeper follows written procedures that ensure that the activity accounts are accounted for properly. The high school activity accounts were well organized and the bank statements had been reconciled through March 31, 2002 at the time the review team was at the school. At that time, the remaining activity accounts from the other campuses had been reconciled through February 28, 2002. The high school has approximately 50 clubs that have transactions running through the activity account. All deposits are counted twice, once by the club sponsor and once by the bookkeeper. The sponsor and the bookkeeper sign the counted cash receipts, then seal them in a money bag. The money bag is kept in the vault until the end of the day, when the bookkeeper takes the deposit to the bank. All checks for payment to vendors and employee reimbursements are processed by the Business and Finance office.

The elementary and middle school activity account procedures are not as specific as the high school's. The principals' secretary keeps a log of all transactions related to the activity accounts. The transaction log is kept at the secretaries' desks. In the elementary and middle schools visited by the review team, there were two distinct processes in place. Price Elementary School keeps all cash in the safe located in the principal's office. The principal approves any fundraising activity on campus. All money is collected on a daily basis and taken to the secretary. The secretary counts the money, verifies the amount with the amount listed on the receipt and enters the transactions into the log. The elementary school secretary maintains a running balance on each account and reconciles the account each month. The principal signs off and keeps the money in the safe. The principal reviews the expenditures and revenue each month.

At Solis Middle School, the secretary maintains the cash with little involvement from the principal. The assistant principal authorizes checks for the campus. The secretary counts the money and makes the cash deposits. Recently, the school's safe was stolen from the secretary's office. Since the theft, the secretary tries to make daily deposits to reduce the amount of cash on hand. The secretary maintains the account balances and reconciles the bank statements each month. No other administrator verifies the transactions or the reconciled bank statement.

In the past three audit reports, the auditing firm has cited instances when a payment was made without the principal's authorizing signature, a school where the checkbook was not kept in a secure place, a school that lacked supporting documentation for some disbursements and receipts and a school not following established district policy and procedures prescribed in the district's student activity manual. Although the district responded to the 1999 audit by stating that it would hire a bookkeeper to oversee the campus activity accounts to ensure compliance with district policy, this position was not in place as of May 1, 2002.

Many school districts use uniform standards for all activity fund accounting. Some districts centralize activity fund accounting through the central Business or Financial Management Office to provide:

- better internal control given that all receipts and disbursements flow through one central accounting systems rather than through systems throughout the district that can vary from school to school;
- easier access for performing internal and external audits;
- consistency in the manner in which repetitive matters are handled;
- better control of cash management operations, including assurance that cash and investment balances are properly collateralized;
- more consistency in applying district polices and procedures; and
- a reduced need to audit funds when campus staff leaves.

San Antonio ISD (SAISD) centrally accounts for student activity funds. All funds are deposited into a single checking account for school activity funds, and the central office reconciles this account each month. Interest earned on the funds is credited to each school's account.

SAISD detailed accounting manual and sponsor's manual cover all aspects of student activity funds, including identifying all accounting codes used to record cash receipts and expenditures. Both manuals include all the rules about what student activity funds can be used for, what is allowed and what is not allowed and identify multiple "what-if" scenarios for using student activity funds. Included are instructions for principals and clerks as to what they can accept from sponsors. For easy reference, the manuals contain examples of required forms and instructions for each form. There are also instructions for record maintenance and contact names and numbers. Each principal on every campus receives a manual.

Recommendation 50:

Centralize the activity fund accounting and combine all activity fund bank accounts into one account that can be swept into overnight investments.

Consolidate the activity funds into one bank account and include these accounts in the nightly sweep of the district's overnight balances. Transfer the accounting function to the Business Office, where the accountant can maintain this account under the direct supervision of the chief accountant.

Forward deposit slips and related receipts and/or copies of checks to the Business Office on the first business day following the deposit. School secretaries and/or bookkeepers should deposit all club funds and send a receipt to the Business Office. Expenditure requests should follow the district's purchasing procedures and be processed through the district's

accounts payable system. Distribute all checks from the Business Office. In the event of an emergency, the campuses should be allowed to keep $100 in petty cash locked in the safe. Because many functions are planned weeks or months in advance, there is usually adequate time to perform the requisition process. The Business Office should send each club a report showing the prior month's activity by the tenth business day of each month.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance meets with the FNB representative to obtain information on consolidating all of the district's activity accounts.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent and the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance prepare an agenda item for centralizing the activity accounts.	October 2002
3.	The board approves the agenda item.	October 2002
4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance meets with the high school bookkeeper to review written procedures. The assistant superintendent then authorizes the high school bookkeeper to create a procedure manual for the new centralized activity accounts.	November 2002 - January 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance implements the new procedures districtwide and consolidates all of the activity accounts into one account.	January 2003
6.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance conducts workshops to train principals, campus secretaries and/or bookkeepers and club sponsors in the procedures for fund deposits and payment requests.	February 2003
7.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance revises the accountant's job description to include administrating the district activity accounts.	February 2003
8.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance trains the accountant on the new procedures for activity fund account administration.	March 2003
9.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the accountant to conduct campus visits on a rotating basis ensuring all campuses follow the procedures and are visited every other month for the first year and then every six months thereafter.	February - December 2003 and Every Six Months Thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

In order to calculate the fiscal impact of this recommendation, the average balance of $194,986 [($136,054 + $225,020 + $220,059 + 198,809)/4)] was used as the baseline. Assuming an average interest rate of 3.55 percent, the district would earn an additional $6,922 interest ($194,986 x 3.55 percent) minus $72 ($6 maintenance fee x 1 account x 12 months) minus $270 for check fees (150 checks x 0.15 per check x 12 months) minus $270 for deposit fees (150 deposits x 0.15 per deposit x 12 months) for net earnings of $6,310 annually. The additional interest would not be available until the new depository agreement has been signed in the summer of 2003.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Centralize the activity fund accounting and combine all activity fund bank accounts into one account that can be swept into an overnight investment.	$0	$6,310	$6,310	$6,310	$6,310

FINDING

DISD does not perform cash flow forecasting. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance prepares a cash flow statement as part of the board package. The cash flow statement provides a snapshot of the district's current cash situation, but is not a tool to determine or forecast future cash needs for the district. Cash flow forecasting involves identifying the amount of cash that will be available to the district, when it will be available, from what source is it expected and whether it will be sufficient to cover the district's anticipated expenditures.

The cash flow statement that the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance provides to the board includes year-to-date total revenues and expenditures to report the year-to-date operating income or loss for each of the funds (general fund, special revenue fund, interest and sinking fund, capital projects fund, internal service fund and trust and agency fund). The report then summarizes, by fund, the changes in assets and liabilities to provide the current cash position. The reports, however, are difficult to follow unless one has some finance and/or cash management background, and there are no explanatory notes to provide the reader with additional guidance. **Exhibit 6-10** shows an example of the cash flow report that is provided in the board packet prior to each board meeting. An explanatory note would provide the reader, in this instance the board member, with the basis to understand what they are reading. For example, there could be an explanatory note defining a restricted asset.

Exhibit 6-10
Example of DISD Cash Flow Report
As of January 31, 2002

	General Fund	Special Revenue Fund	Interest and Sinking Fund	Capital Projects Fund	Internal Service Fund	Trust and Agency Fund
Local Revenues	$2,474,359	$78,056	$34,788	$739,332	$2,823,553	$8,461
State Revenues	31,440,831	1,043,058	0	0	0	0
Federal Revenues	1,469,901	2,192,414	0	0	0	0
Total Revenues	**$35,385,092**	**$3,313,528**	**$34,788**	**$739,332**	**$2,823,553**	**$8,461**
Payroll Costs	$23,337,511	$2,583,951	$0	$0	$0	$0
Contracted Services	1,906,904	220,025	0	0	287,426	0
Supplies and Materials	1,949,877	416,068	0	67,920	0	0
Other Operating Expenses	765,645	87,903	0	0	2,957,226	($209)
Debt Services	970,284	232,337	0	822	0	0
Capital Outlay	393,836	5,000	0	4,437,460	0	0
Total Expenditures	**$29,324,057**	**$3,545,283**	**$0**	**$4,506,201**	**$3,244,652**	**($209)**
Other Resources	$0	$432,514	$0	$0	$0	$0
Other Uses	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net of Other Uses and Resources	$0	$432,514	$0	$0	$0	$0
Operating Income/(Loss)	**$6,061,034**	**$200,758**	**$34,788**	**($3,766,870)**	**($421,099)**	**$8,670**
Receivables Increase/(Decrease)	($12,439,151)	($1,681,997)	($25,073)	$0	$0	$4,720
Inventories Increase/(Decrease)	(42,250)	20,152	0	0	0	0
Other Current Assets Increase/(Decrease)	(54,709)	0	0	0	0	0

Restricted Assets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Change in Assets	**($12,536,110)**	**($1,661,845)**	**($25,073)**	**$0**	**$0**	**$4,720**
Current Payables Increase/(Decrease)	$165,250	($228,790)	$0	($7,112,464)	$0	($2,720,198)
Accrued Expenses Increase/(Decrease)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deferred Revenues Increase/(Decrease)	(1,844,449)	(105,117)	(18,884)	0	0	($3,306)
Payable from Restricted Assets Increase/(Decrease)	(14,461)	0	435	0	0	$1,092
Loans Payable - Deferred Increase/(Decrease)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Changes in Liabilities	**($1,693,660)**	**($333,906)**	**($18,449)**	**($7,112,464)**	**$0**	**($2,722,412)**
Net Cash Provided by (Used For) Operating Activities	$16,903,484	$1,528,696	$41,412	($10,879,334)	($421,099)	($2,718,462)
Cash as of August 31, 2001	**$8,775,303**	**$1,325,200**	**$700,889**	**$27,291,893**	**$3,098,966**	**$842,149**
Cash as of End of Accounting Period	$25,678,787	$2,853,896	$742,301	$16,412,559	$2,677,867	($1,876,313)
Cash in Banking Accounts	$6,896,927	$1,254,202	$74,363	($6,745,021)	$822,709	($1,876,313)
Cash in Petty Cash Accounts	1,561	0	0	0	0	0
Cash Investments Accounts	18,780,299	1,599,694	667,938	23,157,580	1,855,158	0
Total Cash Accounts	**$25,678,787**	**$2,853,896**	**$742,301**	**$16,412,559**	**$2,677,867**	**($1,876,313)**
Fund Balance as of Accounting Period	**$11,190,730**	**$1,582,336**	**$399,031**	**$23,522,063**	**$2,055,260**	**$12,439**

Source: DISD, Cash Flow Report, Board Meeting Packet, March 4, 2002.

Many districts provide scheduled cash flow forecasts to their Board of Trustees. Some districts use sophisticated software programs to generate a variety of detailed reports, while others use a simple spreadsheet such as the one available through TEA's FASRG found on the TEA Web site, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/school.finance/index.html#audit.

These districts inform management of projected shortfalls and surpluses and include input from staff administering local, state and federally funded programs. The districts then address solutions and investments in advance, avoiding crisis, maximizing returns and ensuring financial liquidity required to meet short and long-term obligations. These forecasts consider the timing of federal and state aid payments, local property tax levies and collections, interest earnings and disbursements. Some districts also include bond proceeds and short-term loan proceeds and disbursements in their cash flow forecasts. The state sends the district a payment schedule that outlines the amount and the timing of each state payment throughout the year. This schedule is entered into the cash-forecasting tool, by date and amount. Historic data directs the payment schedule for federal payments. Lastly, the local revenues are included into the cash forecast. These funds include estimated tax collection and delinquent collections based on prior history and any other revenue received, such as payments for meals or receipts from ticket sales at sporting events. The best revenue-forecasting tool will solicit input from any and all district staff that administer the various programs.

Recommendation 51:

Prepare weekly, monthly and annual cash flow forecasts.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance should prepare weekly cash flow forecasts, monthly cash flow forecasts and annual cash flow forecasts. The first step in cash flow forecasting is to estimate the major revenues, by year, month, week or day where possible. State payments to the district are usually the easiest to estimate.

Once the revenues have been estimated, then the expenditures must be estimated and tracked by month or by shorter periods, if they are to be useful. Payroll is the district's most significant cash expense and must be tracked effectively. Included in the payroll costs are employee benefits and federal and state taxes. It is essential that the district have adequate cash on hand to meet the employee payroll and the federal tax deposit obligations on time. Expenditures for goods and services will fluctuate throughout the year.

It is important to remember that these are estimates and must be tracked against actual performance and revised when necessary. Cash flow

forecasting allows the district to maximize its investing activities. In the worst-case scenario, cash flow forecasting can provide the district with advance warning if it needs to borrow additional funds and for how long those funds may be necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance researches the available cash flow forecast tools and selects the tool that is the most user-friendly and best meets the district's needs.	November 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance prepares a sample cash flow forecasting format to present to the superintendent for approval.	December 2002
3.	The superintendent approves the format and instructs the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and the chief accountant to prepare a cash flow forecast for the board.	January 2003
4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance prepares weekly, monthly and annual cash flow forecasts for presentation to the superintendent and inclusion in monthly board packets.	February 2003 and Ongoing Weekly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 6
ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

B. RISK MANAGEMENT/INSURANCE PROGRAMS

Risk management is the identification, analysis and reduction of different types of risk through insurance and safety programs designed to protect the district's employees and assets. Workers' compensation protects district employees in the case of a work-related accident or injury. Property and casualty insurance protects the district from liabilities arising from property damage, bodily injury and other situations in which the district may be at risk. A group health plan ensures that the district's employees are protected from catastrophic illness and financial ruin by spreading the monetary risk of serious illness across the pool of employees.

DISD offers group health care and employee benefit plans, workers' compensation insurance and property and casualty insurance. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance oversees all of the district's insurance programs. The director of Employee Services assumes the daily responsibility for administering the insurance policies for the district. **Exhibit 6-11** summarizes DISD employee benefits.

Exhibit 6-11
DISD Employee Benefits
2001-02

Benefit	Eligible Employee	Description of Benefit	Paid By
Workers' Compensation Insurance	All employees	Benefits payable to any employee who has been injured in an on-the-job accident or has been disabled by an occupational disease	District
Group Term Life Insurance	All employees	$20,000 in death benefits	District
Dental	All employees	100% Preventive (no deductible) 80% Basic ($50 deductible - $1,500 annual maximum) 50% Major ($50 deductible - $1,500 annual maximum)	Employee $25.88 EO $65.47 Family

		50% Orthodontia (no deductible - $1,000 lifetime benefit)	
Medicare	All employees hired after March 1986, including substitutes and temporary employees.	.0145 of gross wages .0145 of gross wages	District Employee
Unemployment Compensation	All employees, including substitutes and temporary employees	.001 of gross wages	District
Health Plan - Self-insured	All full-time employees	$206.18 Base Plan	District and Employee
Teacher Retirement	All employees (except employees who work less than half time), including bus drivers who drive at least one TEA-approved route	0.065 1 of gross wages 0.064 1 of gross wages	District Employee
State Personal Leave	All employees	half work day for 18 days of employment and accumulate (maximum 5 days each year)	District
Local Sick Leave	All employees working 30 hours or more a week	half work day for every 18 days of employment and accumulate (maximum 5 days each year)	District
State Sick Leave	All employees who earned state sick leave before September 1, 1995 and have carried a balance forward	The number of days carried forward at daily rate of pay	District

Source: DISD, Employee Services Department, April 2002.

Employee Health Insurance

In June 2001, the district began sponsoring a modified self-funded insurance plan to provide health care benefits to staff members and their

dependents. *Modified self-funded* means that the district assumes the risk of loss and pays all claims rather than paying an insurance company to assume the risk. In this case, the district takes out additional liability insurance to gain additional protection. This additional insurance provides a cap on the maximum amount the district will pay for either a separate claim or an aggregate of all district claims. Note that this additional coverage is paid to the district as a reimbursement once the district can prove it has paid the entire claim.

Prior to becoming self-insured, the district was fully insured with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas (BCBS). When BCBS offered renewal rates to the district in spring 2001, the district felt that the annual increase in premium was too high. In 2000-01, the district paid just under $4.1 million in premiums. BCBS quoted 2001-02 premiums of $6 million, a 46.3 percent increase to the district. DISD management determined that the level of financial exposure encumbered by switching to a self-insured program was less than the $6 million BCBS wanted in premiums.

Health Administrative Services (HAS) administers the district's health insurance plan. The plan has an annual $75,000 stop-loss per claim to an aggregate of $3.8 million. The district pays an estimated $428,100 in annual administrative fees for the plan. The 12-month contract has no allowance for run-off claims. In other words, the company will not pay continuing claims that fall outside the 12-month contract period. The district anticipates that there will be approximately $200,000 in run-off claims for which DISD will retain payment liability.

The district is currently negotiating the 2002-03 contract. It is attempting to negotiate a 15-month contract that would cover an additional three months of run-off claims. This would ensure that the claims made under the Plan would be honored three months after the conclusion of the 12-month contract period. However, the district does not have a full year of claim history with HAS, making it extremely difficult to negotiate for the longer contract. In most cases, a reinsurer that provides stop-loss coverage requires at least one full year of claim history before it is willing to increase its own liability. The insurer wants the claim history so that it can make a judgment as to the likelihood of claims during the extended time period.

Exhibit 6-12 presents the six-year history of actual dollars spent on health insurance costs for district employees and their dependents from 1995-96 through 2000-01. Health insurance costs increased every year with the exception of 1999-2000. During the six-year period, health insurance costs increased 95.4 percent.

Exhibit 6-12
DISD Actual Health Insurance Costs
1995-96 through 2000-01

	1995-96	**1996-97**	**1997-98**	**1998-99**	**1999-2000**	**2000-01**
Annual Expenditures	$2,083,040	$2,343,456	$2,821,407	$3,622,613	$3,475,755	$4,071,009
Annual Percent Change	N/A	12.5%	20.4%	28.4%	(4.1%)	17.1%
Percent Change over Five-Year Period	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	95.4%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 1995-96 through 2000-01.

The 77th Texas Legislature established a statewide school employee health insurance plan for teachers and other school district employees. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Teacher's Retirement System (TSA) collaborated to release a memorandum in March 2002 to outline the specific requirements of the new plan. The highlights of this memorandum are listed below:

- Each employee of a school district, charter school participating in TRS ActiveCare, regional education service center or another educational district whose employees are eligible for TRS membership is entitled to an annual amount of $1,000 to use for health insurance contributions, health care expenses or compensation.
- Monthly fund distribution will be based on the monthly count of employees that are actively contributing TRS members, adjusted for any dual-employment situations that may exist.
- TIC Art 3.50-9 prohibits school districts and other entities from reducing contributions toward school employee health insurance from the 2000-01 levels, except for declines in employment.
- Each entity, with the exception of open-enrollment charter schools that do not participate in TRS ActiveCare, must contribute at least $150 per month ($1,800 per year) per participant (an employee that elects health insurance) as the employer's share of health insurance.

- Each entity must report participation in health insurance, regardless of whether the entity participates in TRS ActiveCare, secures health insurance through directly contracting with providers or is self-funded. The only exception to this requirement is for open-enrollment charter schools that have chosen not to participate in TRS ActiveCare.

FINDING

In 2001, the district established an Insurance Committee composed of 20 staff members to represent administrators, supervisors, teachers and para-professionals throughout DISD. The committee was established to educate district decision makers on insurance issues so that the district can make the best decision regarding insurance options. Insurance agents come before the committee to explain the benefits and associated costs of all plans the district is contemplating. The committee develops recommendations regarding insurance options for the district and presents them to the superintendent. The superintendent then takes the recommendations to the board. This committee plays a critical role in the decisions associated with the new state plan and the district's desire to make the decision that will best benefit DISD staff and their dependents.

COMMENDATION

The district has established an Insurance Committee to review and evaluate the insurance options available and manage the transition to the state health plan.

FINDING

The district has not made an enrollment decision regarding the state health plan. As a self-insured group, the district can choose whether or not it elects to participate. The district must make its decision by September 1, 2005. The Insurance Committee is considering all of the district's options with the input of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and the risk manager. **Exhibit 6-13** compares the three health insurance plans from which DISD employees can select.

Exhibit 6-13
DISD Health Insurance Plans
2001-02 Plan

	Base Plan	High Plan	TRS Plan
Schedule of Benefits	PPO Providers	PPO Providers	PPO Providers

Calendar Year Deductible Individual/Family	$1,000/$3,000	$450/$1,350	$300/$900
Out-of-Pocket Maximum Individual/Family	$3,000/$6,000	$2,000/$4,000	$2,000/$4,000
Coinsurance	70%	80%	90%
Physician Office Visit	100% after $25 copay	100% after $20 copay	100% after $20 copay
Inpatient Hospital Expenses	70% after deductible Must be precertifed (Non-certified, $300 penalty)	80% after deductible Must be precertifed (Non-certified, $300 penalty)	90% after deductible Must be precertifed (Non-certified, $300 penalty)
Outpatient Hospital Expenses	70% after deductible	80% after deductible	90% after deductible
Routine Exam	100%, deductible waived	100%, deductible waived	100%, deductible waived
Emergency Services (within 48 hours of accident or medical emergency) Facility Charges Physician Charges	70% after $50 Copay (Copay waived if admitted) 70% after deductible	80% after $50 Copay (Copay waived if admitted) 80% after deductible	90% after $50 Copay (Copay waived if admitted) 90% after deductible
Diagnostic X-Ray	70% after deductible	80% after deductible	90% after deductible
Mental Health	70% limited to 30 days	80% limited to 30 days	89% limited to 30 days
Serious Medical Illness	70% after deductible	80% after deductible	90% after deductible
Chemical Dependency	70% after deductible Lifetime maximum - three treatments	80% after deductible Lifetime maximum - three treatments	90% after deductible Lifetime maximum - three treatments
Chiropractic Care	70% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	80% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	90% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session
Hospice Care	100% $20,000 Lifetime Benefit	100% $20,000 Lifetime Benefit	100% $20,000 Lifetime Benefit

Skilled Nursing Facility/Home Health Care	70% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	80% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	90% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session
Prescription Drugs: (Retail - 30 day supply) Generic: Preferred: Non Preferred:	 $10 $20 $35	 $10 $20 $35	 $10 $20 $35
Prescription Drugs: (Mail Order - 90 day supply) Generic: Preferred: Non Preferred:	 $10 $20 $35	 $10 $20 $35	 $10 $20 $35
Calendar Year Deductible Individual/Family	$2,000/$6,000	$2,000/$62,250	$500/$1,500
Out-of-Pocket Maximum Individual/Family	$5,000/$15,000	$4,000/$8,000	$2,000/$8,000
Coinsurance	50%	60%	70%
Physician Office Visit	50% after deductible	60% after deductible	70% after deductible
Inpatient Hospital Expenses	50% after deductible Must be precertifed (Non-certified, $300 penalty)	60% after deductible Must be precertifed (Non-certified, $300 penalty)	70% after deductible Must be precertifed (Non-certified, $300 penalty)
Outpatient Hospital Expenses	50% after deductible	60% after deductible	70% after deductible
Routine Exam	50%, after deductible	60%, after deductible	70%, after deductible
Emergency Services (within 48 hours of accident or medical emergency) Facility Charges Physician	50% after $50 Copay (Copay waived if admitted) 50% after deductible	60% after $50 Copay (Copay waived if admitted) 60% after deductible	70% after $50 Copay (Copay waived if admitted) 70% after deductible

Charges			
Diagnostic X-Ray	50% after deductible	60% after deductible	70% after deductible
Mental Health	50% limited to 30 days	60% limited to 30 days	70% limited to 30 days
Serious Medical Illness	50% after deductible	60% after deductible	70% after deductible
Chemical Dependency	50% after deductible Lifetime maximum - three treatments	60% after deductible Lifetime maximum - three treatments	70% after deductible Lifetime maximum - three treatments
Chiropractic Care	50% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	60% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	70% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session
Hospice Care	50% $20,000 Lifetime Benefit	60% $20,000 Lifetime Benefit	70% $20,000 Lifetime Benefit
Skilled Nursing Facility/Home Health Care	50% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	60% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session	70% after deductible Annual Maximum: 30 sessions $50 per session
Prescription Drugs: Generic: Preferred: Non Preferred:	80 %, up to the average wholesale price minus the copay amount Mail order Prescriptions not covered	80 %, up to the average wholesale price minus the copay amount Mail order Prescriptions not covered	80 %, up to the average wholesale price minus the copay amount Mail order Prescriptions not covered

Source: DISD Employee Benefit Plan, April 2002.

The district pays $206 per month per employee for health insurance and an additional $2 per month per employee for $20,000 term life insurance. **Exhibit 6-14** summarizes the premium cost and employee participation for each plan.

Exhibit 6-14
DISD Health Plan Premium Cost and Participation Rates
2001-02 Plan

	All Plans	Base Plan		High Plan		TRS Plan	
Employee Tier	Number of Employees	Employee Cost	Number of Employees	Employee Cost	Number of Employees	Employee Cost	Number of Employees
Employee Only	1,553	$0	1,041	$25	437	$75	75

To add Child(ren)	202	$112	80	$153	103	$235	19
To add Spouse Only	48	$190.81	22	$242.67	21	$347.16	5
To add Spouse and Child(ren)	48	$323.25	27	$393.39	20	$535.56	1
Total Enrollment	**1,851**		**1,170**		**581**		**100**

Source: DISD, Employee Services Department, April 2002.

Many districts with the option of participating in the state health insurance plan take it very seriously. They include a wide variety of staff on study committees and consider employee benefits as support to staff retention strategies. Many of these districts perform a cost benefit analysis to provide district management with necessary information to determine whether the state-provided plan can provide comparable benefits to employees at a comparable cost. These districts study the benefit structure of the state plan and compare it line by line to their own current health plan specifics.

Recommendation 52:

Conduct a cost benefit analysis of the district's self-insured plan and the state health plan and decide whether to enroll or remain self-funded.

The district must provide the most comprehensive health plan that it can afford. Therefore, DISD management should continue to review the plans currently offered under the self-funded program and compare the benefits and employee costs to those of the state plan.

Although employee health insurance is an extremely expensive benefit, it is one of the most important ways that a district can enhance employee retention. The district has a crucial decision to make as to whether or not it will elect to participate in the state health plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Employee Services prepares a line-by-line comparison of the district's current plan to the state plan	November 2002

	including the cost of each plan.	
2.	The director of Employee Services presents the comparison to the insurance committee.	December 2002
3.	The insurance committee prepares a board agenda with its recommendation and submits it to the superintendent for approval.	January 2003
4.	The superintendent presents the insurance committee's recommendation to the board for approval.	February 2003
5.	The board approves the recommendation.	February 2003
6.	The director of Employee Services completes the requirements to either enroll in the state plan or sends out for bids for the district's third party administrator.	March 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district does not have adequate reserves set aside for its self-funded health insurance plan. As a self-insured district, DISD uses actuarial studies to determine the amount of excess insurance that it should purchase; but it does not use this data to set its reserve targets or determine an optimum amount to reserve from its fund balance to pay current and future health care claims. An *actuary* is a professional who uses mathematical and statistical modeling techniques to project future possibilities and the financial resources needed to meet them. The actuary reviews the fund annually and recommends adjustments to district and employee plan contributions based on actual claims experience, market trends and actuarial assumptions.

The actuary accounts for health care costs in separate internal service funds taken from the district's general fund to cover claims costs, professional and contracted service fees, supplies and materials, and other operating expenses. DISD has obtained excess loss insurance, which limits annual claims paid for the year ending August 31, 2001, to $75,000 for any individual participant and an aggregate limit equal to $3.8 million.

The health and insurance fund balance is the excess or shortfall of plan assets over plan liabilities. A positive fund balance indicates that the health plan is solvent; a deficit indicates that the plan is inadequately funded. The fund balance increases or decreases each year by the amount

that plan contributions exceed or fall short of claim costs and operating expenses. According to the 2000-01 audited financial statements, the district's internal service health insurance fund had a fund balance of $889,596 as of August 31, 2001.

Health insurance costs have continued to escalate. **Exhibit 6-15** presents the district's actual costs between 1995-96 and 2000-01. Over the five-year period, there has been a 73.7 percent increase in health insurance costs. The annual increase has averaged 14.9 percent.

Exhibit 6-15
DISD Actual Health Insurance Costs
1996-97 through 2000-01

1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
$2,343,456	$2,821,407	$3,622,613	$3,475,755	$4,071,009	73.7%

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

In 2000-01, DISD paid $2,184 per district employee for health insurance costs. When compared against its peer districts, DISD's costs were slightly higher than the peer average of $1,971. **Exhibit 6-16** compares the health insurance costs paid by DISD and its peer districts in 2000-01.

Exhibit 6-16
Actual Health Insurance Costs
DISD vs. Peer Districts
2000-01

	Edgewood	San Benito	Donna	Mission	Eagle Pass	Rio Grande
Group Health	$1,839,626	$3,824,735	**$4,071,009**	$4,088,557	$4,840,704	$1,813,676
Employees	2,105	1,375	**1,804**	1,918	1,691	1,506
Cost/Employee	$874	$2,782	**$2,257**	$2,132	$2,863	$1,204

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2000-01 and Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2000-01.

Some districts with self-funded health insurance use annual actuarial studies to set sufficient amounts aside from their general fund; this adequately covers both accrued and projected insurance liabilities. This

service can be provided by the plan's third party administrator HAS. Galveston ISD (GISD) incorporates advice from its insurance consultant and its third-party administrator to review its plan annually for type and amount of claims paid, costs and actuarial reliability.

Recommendation 53:

Draft district policy to reserve sufficient funds to cover accrued liabilities in the self-funded health plan, as recommended in the annual actuarial report.

If health insurance costs increased by the same levels as they have over the past five years, the annual health insurance costs would rise to approximately $7.1 million by the 2004-05 plan year, a dollar increase of $3 million. This type of increase must be carefully planned for and appropriately funded.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Employee Services meets with the actuary to establish the proper reserve level and to arrange inclusion of a recommended amount in each annual actuarial report.	October 2002
2.	The director of Employee Services drafts a policy establishing a target health insurance reserve based on the actuarial reports and including language that requires an annual review of Fund 753.	November 2002
3.	The director of Employee Services presents the draft policy to the Insurance Committee. The insurance committee reviews the draft policy and makes necessary revisions.	November 2002
4.	The director of Employee Services presents the final draft policy statement to the superintendent.	December 2002
5.	The superintendent presents the draft policy to the board.	December 2002
6.	The board adopts the policy.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

Texas does not require employers to provide workers' compensation insurance. However, district employees are eligible for coverage under

Chapter 501 of the Texas Labor Code. DISD provides workers' compensation insurance to its employees as part of the district's employee benefit plan.

The state legislature heavily regulates workers' compensation insurance. During the 77th legislative session, the law significantly changed. The changes were made to improve the quality of care for injured workers, increase the accountability of doctors and insurance carriers, and most importantly, reduce the overall medical costs in the Texas workers' compensation system. The new changes include:

- improve the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission's (TWCC's) ability to regulate and sanction doctors who do not provide quality medical care;
- allow the state to establish regional health care delivery networks with the guidance of a network advisory committee;
- promote return-to-work programs by requiring employers to report whether they have modified duty and by requiring insurance carriers to provide return-to-work services to employers;
- improve injured employees' ability to receive prescriptions filled for the first seven days after their injury giving preference to generic drugs;
- revise the process for seeking an independent medical opinion for impairment rating and data of maximum medical improvement issues;
- allow a TWCC-designated doctor, not an insurance carrier-selected doctor, to examine the injured employee first and if the insurance carrier disputes the designated doctor's opinion, the carrier can request the TWCC to order the injured employee to attend a required medical exam conducted by a doctor selected by the insurance carrier;
- expand the definition of lifetime income benefits to include workers with third-degree burns;
- allow injured workers with multiple jobs to calculate their income benefits based on all of their wages, not just the wages of the job where they were injured. Insurance carriers can seek reimbursement for these additional benefits from the state's Subsequent Injury Fund; and
- prohibit non-subscribers from asking their employees to waive their right to sue for damages for on-the-job injuries.

A portion of the district's workers' compensation coverage is self-funded by the district. DISD contracts with Shepard, Walton and King Insurance Group to provide risk management and administrative services in connection with the plan and F.A. Richard and Associates to provide claim administration services.

FINDING

The district created a risk manager position in 1994 to focus on safety issues and effectively protect its assets. The risk manager develops, plans and implements procedures to control the level of physical and financial risks to which the district might be exposed. The director of Employee Services works closely with the other functional areas in the school district such as food service, transportation, human resources, legal and finance. It is ultimately the director of Employee Services' responsibility to protect the district against all significant risks.

The director of Employee Services encourages employees to report any type of injury incurred at the workplace, regardless of whether or not medical attention was required. The Worker's Compensation secretary maintains an injury log that lists by month, the date of the injury, the name of the employee, the cause of the injury, the location of the injury and whether or not the injury required medical attention. The injury logs for 1998-99 through 2000-01 show that the district's largest percentages of injuries result from slips and falls. The director of Employee Services encourages campus custodians to post signs when they are mopping the floors warning staff that the floors are wet.

Every campus holds safety meetings once a week. When an accident does occur, the director of Employee Services reviews the accident with the employee to identify the cause of the accident. The employee is encouraged to watch a videotape that relates directly to the type of injury incurred. The director of Employee Services inspects the accident site and orders repairs if deemed necessary. The director of Employee Services told the review team that creating awareness throughout the district is the top priority, so everyone benefits from a safe workplace.

COMMENDATION

The district's risk management program is committed to encouraging safe practices throughout the district through awareness and follow-up.

FINDING

DISD has significantly reduced the average workers' compensation cost per claim by 73.1 percent from 1998-99 through 2000-01 (**Exhibit 6-17**).

Exhibit 6-17
DISD Workers' Compensation Claims and Incurred Costs per Claim
1998-99 through 2000-01

1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
Number of Claims	Average Incurred Cost/Claim	Number of Claims	Average Incurred Cost/Claim	Number of Claims	Average Incurred Cost/Claim
111	$6,725	124	$3,952	122	$1,810

Source: DISD, Employee Services Department, April 2002.

Exhibit 6-18 dramatically depicts the drop in the average cost per claim realized largely from 1998-99 to 1999-2000. The number of claims increased by 9.9 percent over the three-year period, but the average cost per claim decreased by 1.7 percent from 2000-02.

Exhibit 6-18
DISD Workers' Compensation Claims and Incurred Costs per Claim
1999-2000 through 2001-02
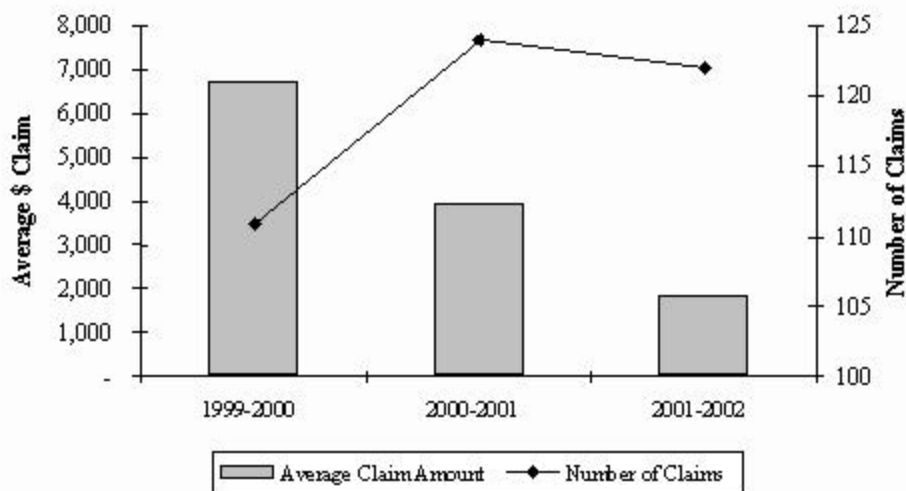
Source: DISD, Employee Services Department, April 2002.
Note: 2001-02 is a partial year from September 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002.

The district has instituted a return-to-work program. The Workers' Compensation secretary maintains contact with the injured employee while he/she is off work. The secretary follows up with the physicians to track the employee's progress and to determine if the employee can reassume light duty until he/she can resume normal work duties.

The Employee Services department maintains a videotape library of safety films. Any staff member can check out these films. Usually the head

custodian or cafeteria managers check these videotapes out to show in their weekly safety meeting.

The director of Employee Services conducts a number of in-service workshops throughout the district. These workshops focus on safety initiatives. The Workers' Compensation secretary attends these workshops and will often address specific workers' compensation questions.

COMMENDATION

The district has implemented a number of initiatives designed to control workers' compensation costs.

Property and Casualty Insurance

The director of Employee Services must obtain and maintain the district's property and casualty insurance coverage under the direct supervision of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. Property and casualty insurance includes coverage for facilities, vehicles, equipment, personal injury and professional and general liability. **Exhibit 6-19** provides details of DISD's property and casualty policies.

Exhibit 6-19
DISD Property and Casualty Coverage
2001-02

Type of Coverage	Insurer	Covered Items	Limits	Deductible	Policy Expires	Premium Amount
Property	Chubb Group of Insurance Companies	Building and Contents	$82,771,603 $13,448,069	$5,000	12/31/02	$116,137
Commercial Auto	Texas Association of Public Schools	Owned/Leased Vehicles: Bodily Injury per Person:	$100,000	$500	12/31/02	$67,865
Commercial Auto	Texas Association of Public Schools	Owned/Leased Vehicles: Bodily Injury per Occurrence:	$300,000	Included	12/31/02	Included
Commercial Auto	Texas Association of Public	Owned/Leased Vehicles: Property	$100,000	Included	12/31/02	Included

	Schools	Damage				
Commercial Auto	Texas Association of Public Schools	Owned/Leased Vehicles: Out of State Limit:	$1,000,000	Included	12/31/02	Included
Commercial Auto	Texas Association of Public Schools	Owned/Leased Vehicles: Medical Payments: per Person per occurrence	$5,000 $50,000	$500	12/31/02	Included
Crime	Hartford Insurance Company	Employee theft of money	$250,000	$1,000	05/26/02	$1,000
Errors and Omissions	Texas Association of School Boards	DISD board and administrators	$10,000 each occurrence	$0	12/31/02	N/A
General Liability	Texas Association of Public Schools	Bodily injury, property damage, advertising liability	$1,000,000	$500	12/31/02	$24,178
Police Professional liability	Hanover Insurance Company	General liability	$1,000,000	$2,500	05/19/02	$3,387
Special Risk Accident Policy	Hartford Insurance	N/A	$10,000	$0	07/05/02	$630
Storage Tank Liability and Cleanup Insurance	Seneca Insurance Company	Hazardous waste accidents	$1,000,000	$5,000	06/28/02	$1,096
WIA/TAP Program	Hartford Insurance Company	Accidental Death an Dismember-ment (AD&D)	$15,000	$0	06/01/02	$310
Workers' Compensation - TPA	EOS Claims	Administrative Fees	N/A	Per Fee Schedule	04/30/04	Per Fee Schedule

Administration						
Workers' Compensation (Excess)	Frontier Insurance Company	Statutory	$1,000,000 each loss Excess Aggregate $3,000,000 Loss Fund Aggregate $2,214,000	SIR - $200,000	04/30/03	$17,385 (Annual Deposit)
Workforce Investment Act	Hartford Insurance Company	AD&D	$15,000	None	07/06/02	$630

Source: DISD, Employee Services Department, April 2002.

FINDING

The district has effectively implemented centralized procedures to ensure that all DISD vehicles are properly insured. Up until 2000-01, each department maintained its vehicle listing independently. For example, all documents for the trucks in the warehouse were kept in the warehouse. Rarely were these documents reviewed to ensure that the insurance policy represented the most recent data. There was no practical means to track each vehicle and assure that adequate insurance was in place. When the director of Employee Services was bidding the auto insurance contract, it was discovered that the vehicle listing was incomplete and incorrect. There were vehicles on the property list that were no longer owned by the district and newer vehicles purchased to replace these vehicles that were not included on the property list.

The director of Employee Services implemented a districtwide requirement that all district vehicles are inventoried and maintained centrally in the Employee Services Department. Prior to bidding the auto insurance, the Employee Services Department reviews the vehicle log to identify any changes that might have occurred since the last bid. Additionally, as district vehicles are sold, they are deleted from the policy and the policy is amended to reflect any purchases. The Workers' Compensation secretary maintains the district log and ensures that the policy is correct and the district has adequate auto insurance.

COMMENDATION

The district implemented the necessary procedures to adequately protect the district's vehicles.

Chapter 6
ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

C. FIXED ASSETS

In governmental fund accounting used by school districts, fixed assets are purchased with money available within a given fund. For example, an oven for a cafeteria would be paid for using money from the Food Services Special Revenue Fund. Fixed assets are tangible items that typically have a significant value, usually greater than $5,000. Therefore, it is critical to maintain control of and accountability for these items. Fixed asset management is how assets are purchased and accounted for and maximizes surplus or obsolete equipment disposal so that resulting cash or the extra equipment is returned to productive channels.

According to the TEA *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG), governmental accounting for fixed assets emphasizes control and accountability. Accordingly, a school district must accumulate a variety of data relating to fixed assets, including quantity, location, condition and life expectancy, to maintain this control and accountability.

Fixed asset records designate who is responsible for the custody and maintenance of individual items and to assist in estimating future requirements. School districts generally control capital transactions for the acquisition of fixed assets by using a well-defined authorization procedure. Separate accountability for fixed assets is a specific legal requirement of many federal programs.

The most important purposes for keeping and maintaining accurate accounting records of fixed assets are:

- accurate fixed asset records inform taxpayers of their investments, versus expenditures, in district operations;
- fixed asset records provide the basis for adequate insurance coverage;
- systematic physical inventories of fixed assets allow the district to survey the physical condition of its assets and assess the need for repair, maintenance or replacement;
- periodic inventories establish a system of accountability for custody of individual items;
- for budgeting purposes, reliable information about current fixed assets can provide material assistance in determining future requirements; and

- periodic inventories identify lost or stolen items so that insurance claims can be filed, additional controls instituted and accounting records adjusted to reflect the losses.

Schools should periodically inventory certain fixed assets, such as furniture and equipment. Districts should take an annual fixed asset inventory at the end of each school term before staff members leave for the summer. Settle any discrepancies between the fixed asset inventory list and what is on hand as quickly as possible. Any missing items should be dealt with in accordance to district policy.

TSPR has found that the most successful districts perform the following fixed asset func tions:

- tagging of all valued assets when they are received using a bar code system;
- using accounting codes to track capitalized fixed assets as well as expensed assets;
- inventorying all assets annually;
- using the annual inventory results to set insurance rates; and
- identifying inventory shrinkage and tightening controls when necessary.

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. 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 are recorded as an operating expense of the appropriate fund under TEA guidelines.

DISD operates and maintains a Fixed Asset Department to account for and track all properties, tangible and intangible. Tangible property is property that can be touched, such as equipment, buildings, or furniture. An intangible asset is not physical property. However, it is property that adds value to the district. For example, patent and proprietary software are considered to be intangible assets.

The Fixed Asset Department is staffed with a Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager, a Fixed Assets/Inventory clerk and two warehouse delivery personnel. The department works directly under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. The district classifies fixed asset items in accordance with the FASRG guidelines under the district's local policy entitled CFB (Local). Items valued at $5,000 or more with a useful life of one or more years are considered capital outlay and

are subject to the accounting rules and regulations as promulgated by the FASRG.

The district had total fixed assets of $93.4 million as of August 31, 2001. **Exhibit 6-20** shows a summary of DISD's fixed assets.

Exhibit 6-20
Fixed Assets
As of August 31, 2001

Description	Balance 09/1/00	Additions	Deletions	Balance 8/31/01	08/31/01 Balance as a Percent of Total
Land	$4,794,676	$0	$0	$4,794,676	5.1%
Buildings and Improvements	$62,073,054	$3,082,710	$0	$65,155,764	69.8%
Construction in Progress	$1,827,156	$5,380,067	$3,082,710	$4,124,513	4.5%
Furniture and Equipment	$11,739,430	$1,418,705	$8,017,164	$5,140,971	5.5%
Library Books	$890,943	$55,528	$946,471	$0	0.0%
Vehicles	$3,200,041	$302,579	$97,220	$3,405,400	3.6%
Capital Leases	$10,760,626	$0	$0	$10,760,626	11.5%
Total	**$95,285,926**	**$10,239,589**	**$12,143,565**	**$93,381,950**	**100%**

Source: DISD Audited Financial Statement, Note E, for the period ending August 31, 2001.

Effective September 1, 2001, school districts are required to depreciate their assets due to the issuance of Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement 34. GASB issues accounting and financial reporting rules for state and local governments throughout the United States. GASB Statement 34, issued in June 1999, requires capital assets to be reported in the financial statements after depreciation. The new GASB 34 statement requires that assets be depreciated each accounting period. Depreciation is a periodic expense recognized on the accounting records of an organization, and to properly estimate this expense, determination of an asset's useful life is necessary. This means that government entities

must maintain fixed asset systems that will calculate and account for asset depreciation amounts. Before the issuance of GASB 34, governments expensed all their assets at the time of acquisition, rather than recognizing a portion of expense each accounting period during the asset's useful life.

FINDING

The district does not perform an inventory of fixed assets or track inventory results and reconcile it to the general ledger. In the last three external audit reports, 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-01, the district inventory sampled during the audit process did not match the general ledger. Although the district maintains a fixed asset inventory listing it does not perform an annual physical inventory to determine what items should be dropped from the listing. There are items on the listing that are more than 30 years old and have long since outlived their usefulness. The district does not have a good baseline accounting of its fixed asset inventory.

The Fixed Asset manager, who was hired in October 1999, is responsible for ensuring that all new equipment, with the exception of computer equipment is tagged and delivered to the appropriate facility. The Technology Department is responsible for all technology equipment. The district does not perform a districtwide annual inventory. The Fixed Asset Manager told the review team that inventories were taken upon request. The warehouse is inventoried each month. When an item is received into the warehouse, it is tagged by the drivers and entered into a manual log by the Fixed Asset Clerk. The data is then input into the general ledger system. The district does not keep up with disposed of fixed assets. Although they are auctioned, there is no procedure in place to remove these items from the fixed asset inventory.

Many districts follow TEA's FASRG recommendation that school districts conduct annual physical inventories and either hire outside contractors or assign district staff to perform these duties on a scheduled basis. Elgin ISD (EISD) uses an outside contractor to inventory the district's fixed assets using a bar coding system. Based on inventory changes identified by the contractor, the Business manager investigates the changes and adjusts the records in the fixed asset database accordingly. By using an outside contractor, EISD reduces the administrative staff time and effort needed to maintain the fixed asset records and eliminates the need for the district to purchase or maintain bar coding equipment.

Recommendation 54:

Establish a comprehensive fixed asset management system and conduct an annual inventory.

Using an outside contractor would provide the district with a reliable starting point to improve its existing fixed asset inventory listing. The 2001-02 audit will require the district to report its fixed assets under the new GASB 34 requirements and it will be beneficial to have a valid fixed asset listing going forward.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance researches the market for an outside contractor to inventory the district's fixed assets.	January 2003
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents a recommendation of a contractor to the superintendent and board for approval.	February 2003
3.	The outside contractor performs a physical inventory and documents all changes in the fixed asset inventory listing.	August 2003
4.	The Fixed Assets/Inventory Clerk posts the adjustments to the general ledger.	September 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance monitors the contractor's performance and reports the progress to the superintendent and board.	September 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

During the first year, the district will incur the highest costs of the contract since the outside contractor will be establishing new procedures. It is anticipated that the first year will cost $15,000. The cost should drop by approximately 50 percent of the initial cost in the second year of implementation and will decrease to $5,000 annually thereafter.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Establish a comprehensive fixed asset management system and conduct an annual inventory.	($15,000)	($7,500)	($5,000)	($5,000)	($5,000)

FINDING

The Fixed Assets staff has not had adequate training to effectively perform their job duties in compliance with GASB 34. Although the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance has attended training for GASB 34, none of the staff have received any such training as of May 1, 2002. These individuals are responsible for ensuring that the district will be in

compliance with the new financial reporting standards, and according to staff interviews, they are all relatively new to fixed asset accounting and do not yet fully understand their roles. The Fixed Assets clerk specifically has not been given any guidance regarding financial reporting standards.

Kerrville ISD (KISD) sent both staff and management to GASB 34 training through their Regional Education Service Center to ensure that all affected employees understand their respective roles. KISD provided management with a general understanding of the new standard and staff with training regarding accounting depreciation and the practical side of the standard. Karnes City ISD ensured the superintendent and Business Manager attended outside GASB 34 training and then subsequently conducted training for appropriate staff through the district. Some districts also include proficiency in GASB 34 compliance in performance reviews and job descriptions for appropriate staff.

Recommendation 55:

Include proficiency in GASB 34 compliance in Fixed Asset employees' job descriptions and performance evaluations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance contacts Region 1 to request GASB 34 training for staff and requests permission from the superintendent to include GASB 34 proficiency in Fixed Asset staff job descriptions and performance evaluations.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent instructs the Personnel director to add knowledge of GASB 34 to Fixed Asset staff job descriptions and authorizes inclusion of proficiency in GASB 34 compliance for staff performance evaluations.	November 2002 and Ongoing
3.	The staff attends training at Region 1.	December 2002 - January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The district pays an annual fee to the service center. Therefore, this recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD does not assign individual accountability for fixed assets. Principals and department heads are not specifically assigned the responsibility for

the custody and safekeeping of the district's fixed assets. In December 2001, four safes were taken from school offices. Only the high school principal includes a physical inventory of classroom fixtures in the sign-out sheet at the end of the school year. The high school was not one of the campuses that lost its safe.

The elementary and middle school campuses do not consistently account for the fixed assets on their campuses or maintain an itemized inventory listing that details all their fixed assets.

Best practice examples in other school districts have shown that districts having control over fixed assets are those districts that assign responsibility to specific individuals and then hold those individuals accountable for any missing assets or other discrepancies. Broward County Public School System in Florida specifically assigns fixed asset responsibility to department heads and principals. The annual evaluations of these individuals in Broward County assess the adequacy demonstrated in protecting and accounting for district assets. In addition, the Broward County Board of Trustees reviews a quarterly report that shows a detailed listing of any missing or stolen assets and who was responsible for the custody of those assets. As a result of assigning individual responsibility and holding individuals accountable, Broward County has a very low percentage of fixed assets that are missing or stolen each year.

In Hillsborough County Florida, the district has instituted strong asset control measures. The principal of every school is given an asset listing at the beginning of the year. At the end of the year, a physical inventory is taken and the results are compared to the asset listing from the beginning of the year. If there are any items missing, the proper paperwork should have been filed. This paperwork includes either a transfer form indicating that the asset has been transferred to another site or a Property Loss/Damage Report (PDR). The PDR requires the following information:

- site number;
- date discovered missing;
- name of facility reporting loss;
- type of loss (vandalism, fire, storm, theft/burglary, theft/missing, disappearance, money, or other);
- if stolen:
  - What was the date of the police report?
  - Is there visible evidence of forced entry? (Y/N)
  - Was the building protected with burglar alarms? (Y/N)
  - Did alarm detect entry? (Y/N)
  - Was building occupied at the time of loss? (Y/N)
  - How was building entered?
  - Describe what happened.

- o Describe damage/loss to premises/equipment.
- o What was the name of the witness/informant?
- o What action was taken to prevent recurrence?
- name of principal or site supervisor;
- sender;
- date;
- title of sender; and
- schedule of school district owned items involved:
  - o description;
  - o asset number;
  - o date purchased;
  - o serial number;
  - o original cost;
  - o estimated repair/replacement cost; and
  - o reason for the loss.

If the proper paperwork is not filed for any missing assets, the principals are held accountable for replacing the items.

Recommendation 56:

Assign individual accountability for fixed asset custody to principals and department heads.

DISD should ensure the protection of district assets by including the assignment of responsibility for fixed assets to principals and department heads in district fixed asset policy, and by holding these individuals accountable for the assets in their custody. Without this kind of detail, district's assets cannot effectively be tracked. In addition, principals and department heads cannot be held accountable if there is no effective tracking system in place.

Principals or department heads should be able to assign actual asset tracking functions to another individual under his or her supervision, but ultimately he or she will be held accountable. The school's next years' budget will be adjusted for any missing items.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, Purchasing manager and Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager meet with the principals to present accounting procedures.	November 2002
2.	Each principal reviews their campus property inventory of all fixed assets located in their school.	December 2002
3.	The principals and department heads conduct a physical	May 2003 and

	inventory at the end of the school year.	Annually Thereafter
4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance compares the inventory counts conducted at each school to the master list of fixed assets.	May 2003 and Annually Thereafter
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance deducts funds from the next year's budget request from any school, reporting missing inventory without documentation of sale, donation or obsolescence.	May 2003 and Annually Thereafter

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This chapter reviews the financial management functions of Donna Independent School District (DISD) in the following sections:

A. Organization, Management and Staffing
B. Fund Balance
C. Budgeting
D. Accounting, Internal Control and Payroll
E. Internal and External Auditing
F. Tax Collection

Sound school district financial management involves the effective use of limited resources to support student achievement. Districts must maximize their resources available from all sources and must account for their use of these resources accurately to local taxpayers and the state and federal governments. The planning and budgeting process must support district goals. Proper accounting must reduce the risk of lost assets and ensure their appropriate use. The district must provide its board and administrators with timely, accurate and useful reports concerning its financial condition.

BACKGROUND

School districts' financial operations must comply with a variety of federal, state and local laws and regulations, as compiled in the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (*FASRG*).

Texas school districts receive local, state and federal revenue. Property taxes are the most important source of local revenues. Local property tax rates may include a portion dedicated to maintenance and operations (M&O), which supports the district's general operating needs, and an interest and sinking (I&S) portion, which supports the district's debt service. DISD currently levies an M&O tax of $1.49 per $100 of assessed valuation, near the maximum of $1.50 allowed in state law. DISD did not levy an I&S tax fee in 2001-02. Other local sources include interest from time deposits, donations and athletic revenues. Of DISD's total 2001-02 budgeted revenues, only 11.5 percent was from local revenues.

DISD receives state funding based on formulas approved by the Texas Legislature. The major factor in these funding formulas is average daily attendance (ADA). The formulas also contain additional funding for programs designed to benefit educationally disadvantaged students. DISD

also receives state funding provided to assist with bond payments for facility renovations and acquisition. Of DISD's total 2001-02 budgeted revenues, 82.7 percent is from the state.

DISD also receives federal revenues for services it provides to students. TEA requires districts to report all of its food service fund budget to its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). TEA does not, however, require districts to report other federal revenue. In **Exhibit 7-1**, note that when comparing actual federal revenues with budgeted federal revenues, the actual revenues are higher because they include all PEIMS-reported federal program revenue. **Exhibit 7-1** presents DISD revenues for all actual funds by source from 1997-98 through 2000-01, as well as budgeted revenues for 2001-02.

Exhibit 7-1
DISD Revenues by Source
1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	Actual 1997-98	Actual 1998-99	Actual 1999-2000	Actual 2000-01	Budget 2001-02
Local and Intermediate	$6,621,051	$7,990,076	$7,875,138	$10,755,565	$8,320,203
State	48,811,564	50,269,215	56,964,521	59,822,875	60,099,032
Federal	9,414,354	9,306,465	10,047,527	11,086,955	4,218,695
Total	**$64,846,969**	**$67,565,756**	**$74,887,186**	**$81,665,395**	**$72,637,930**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 1997-98 through 2001-02.

Total budgeted revenues for 2001-02 are 12 percent higher than 1997-98 actual total revenues; budgeted local revenues are 25.7 percent higher and state revenues are 23.1 percent higher. These increases reflect increases in property value and student enrollment over the period. The decrease in budgeted federal funds is explained by the fact that in 2001-02, only budgeted food service fund revenues were reported, while the other federal funds were not included.

DISD selected Eagle Pass, Edgewood, Mission Consolidated, Rio Grande City Consolidated and San Benito Consolidated ISDs as "peer districts" for various TSPR comparisons. **Exhibit 7-2** compares DISD's budgets by source with those of its peer districts.

Exhibit 7-2
DISD vs. Peer Districts
Budgeted Revenues by Source
2001-02

Description	Local and Intermediate	Percent of Total	State	Percent of Total	Federal	Percent of Total
Donna	**$8,320,203**	**11.5%**	**$60,099,032**	**82.7%**	**$4,218,695**	**5.8%**
Edgewood	$10,112,752	11.2%	$74,089,015	82.0%	$6,200,527	6.9%
Rio Grande City	$7,728,085	13.0%	$47,218,479	79.7%	$4,317,110	7.3%
San Benito	$8,888,115	14.7%	$46,353,005	76.9%	$5,068,582	8.4%
Mission	$14,056,097	16.3%	$65,982,074	76.7%	$5,999,359	7.0%
Eagle Pass	$13,142,175	17.6%	$56,213,917	75.5%	$5,109,218	6.9%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

All of the districts rely on the state for more than 75 percent of their revenue. DISD relies most heavily on the state and is second-lowest in its reliance on local revenues.

Exhibit 7-3 presents student enrollment, percentage of economically disadvantaged students, property value per student and total budgeted expenditures for DISD and its peer districts.

Exhibit 7-3
DISD vs. Peer Districts
Comparative Data for 2001-02

District	Student Enrollment	Percentage Economically Disadvantaged	Property Value per Student	Total Budgeted Expenditures
Edgewood	13,435	96.3	$43,909	$90,878,877
Mission	13,122	82.2	$60,998	$86,681,147
Eagle Pass	12,778	91.1	$67,455	$74,811,952
Donna	**10,451**	**90.0**	**$44,789**	**$72,637,881**
San Benito	9,102	85.7	$49,275	$62,274,391
Rio Grande City	8,906	86.6	$64,503	$59,753,873

Exhibit 7-3 indicates that DISD and its peer districts are comparable in terms of size, percentage of economically disadvantaged students, property value per student and total budgeted expenditures. Such similarities were the reasons for the peer districts' selection.

Exhibit 7-4 compares budgeted expenditures as a percentage of total spending for 2001-02.

Exhibit 7-4
DISD vs. Peer Districts
Budgeted Expenditures for All
Funds by Object Code Description
2001-02

District	Payroll	Contracted Services	Supplies	Other Operating	Debt Service	Capital Outlay
Edgewood	74.0%	8.6%	7.3%	1.7%	7.9%	0.5%
Mission	75.1%	6.8%	7.9%	2.2%	7.1%	0.9%
Eagle Pass	78.9%	6.3%	7.2%	1.5%	5.6%	0.4%
Donna	**75.9%**	**5.8%**	**6.1%**	**2.7%**	**8.8%**	**0.7%**
San Benito	69.5%	8.0%	9.7%	2.0%	9.3%	1.6%
Rio Grande City	73.7%	8.3%	8.7%	2.2%	4.8%	2.3%

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

DISD is the fourth-largest among the peers in terms of enrollment and is second-highest in its expenditures for payroll and debt service. DISD budgets the lowest share of funds for contracted services and supplies. The peer districts and DISD budget comparably for capital outlay.

Chapter 1 of the FASRG mandates the use of function codes to track expenditures for different operations. **Exhibit 7-5** compares budgeted expenditures per student by function.

Exhibit 7-5
DISD vs. Peer Districts
Functional Expenditures per Student
2001-02

Description	Donna	San Benito Cons.	Edgewood	Rio Grande City Cons.	Mission Cons.	Eagle Pass
Students	**10,451**	9,102	13,435	8,906	13,122	12,778
Instruction	**$3,341**	$3,248	$3,251	$3,161	$3,441	$3,099
Instructional Resources	**127**	121	140	115	188	71
Curriculum and Staff Development	**53**	76	96	66	49	47
Instructional Leadership	**177**	95	84	193	187	67
School Leadership	**284**	322	337	317	282	336
Guidance and Counseling	**222**	192	245	200	233	170
Social Work Services	**30**	25	47	10	2	18
Health Services	**81**	68	85	90	83	65
Student Transportation	**153**	204	60	252	136	146
Food Services	**413**	498	495	504	458	443
Co-/Extracurricular Activities	**167**	201	121	194	137	141
General Administration	**235**	278	266	293	201	210
Plant Maintenance/Operations	**834**	750	746	835	665	563
Security and Monitoring Services	**99**	69	99	90	22	88
Data Processing Services	**96**	8	140	47	46	38
Community Services	**20**	21	11	23	8	12
Debt Service	**611**	634	533	319	466	328
Facilities Acquisition	**0**	30	7	0	0	10
Payments to Fiscal	**0**	0	0	0	2	3

Agent						
Payments to Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement	**7**	2	1	0	0	0
Total	**$6,950**	**$6,842**	**$6,764**	**$6,709**	**$6,606**	**$5,855**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02. Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

DISD budgets more per student than any of the peer districts. Compared to the peer districts, DISD's per-student spending for plant maintenance/operations, debt service, data processing services, social work and instruction appear high. The remainder of the budgeted expenditures compare well to the peer group.

Exhibit 7-6 presents functional expenditures per student for 1997-98 through 2001-02. These expenditures do not include facility acquisition and construction expenditures, as these may vary significantly from year to year. DISD experienced steady enrollment growth over this period; even so, its per student expenditures rose at a higher rate than student enrollment.

Exhibit 7-6
DISD Functional Expenditures Per Student
1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	1997-98 (Actual)	1998-99 (Actual)	1999-2000 (Actual)	2000-01 (Actual)	2001-02 (Budget)	Percent Change 1997-98 through 2001-02
Number of Students	9,871	9,893	10,035	10,354	10,451	5.9%
Instruction	$3,300	$3,369	$3,966	$3,758	$3,341	1.2%
Instructional Resources	113	150	155	139	127	12.4%
Curriculum and Staff Development	82	92	85	73	53	(35.4%)
Instructional Leadership	162	140	231	217	177	9.3%
School Leadership	240	286	296	293	284	18.3%
Guidance and Counseling	199	212	268	274	222	11.6%
Social Work Services	26	32	42	41	30	15.4%

Health Services	65	73	85	87	81	24.6%
Student Transportation	171	199	183	221	153	(10.5%)
Food Services	388	421	448	452	413	6.1%
Co-/Extracurricular Activities	166	147	166	170	167	0.6%
General Administration	206	248	241	282	235	14.1%
Plant Maintenance/Operations	597	627	740	760	834	39.7%
Security and Monitoring Services	67	80	109	121	99	47.8%
Data Processing Services	63	59	75	76	96	52.4%
Community Services	72	72	77	77	20	(72.2%)
Debt Service	188	459	448	714	611	225.0%
Payments to a Fiscal Agent	16	18	0	0	0	(100.0%)
Payments to Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement	2	3	3	7	7	250.0%
Total	**$6,121**	**$6,686**	**$7,617**	**$7,762**	**$6,950**	**13.5%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1997-98 through 2001-02. Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Exhibit 7-6 shows that DISD's student enrollment rose by 5.9 percent while its budgeted expenditures per student rose by 13.5 percent. The most significant increases were in the areas of debt service and payments to Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement (JJAEP).While the total amount of funds budgeted for JJAEP are not significant, the funds budgeted for debt service are. Their increase reflects debt incurred to build new facilities in DISD. The budget for instruction rose by just 1.2 percent over the period, while enrollment increased by 5.9 percent.

Exhibit 7-7 presents DISD's functional expenditures and percentage of total by function for 1999-2000 through 2001-02.

Exhibit 7-7
DISD Expenditures by Function

**and Percentage of Total by Function
1999-2000 through 2001-02**

Function	1999-2000 Actual	Percent of Total	2000-01 Actual	Percent of Total	2001-02 Budget	Percent of Total
Instruction (11, 95)	$35,822,455	41.8%	$38,081,564	44.3%	$34,648,525	47.7%
Instructional Related Services (12, 13)	2,117,761	2.5%	2,049,373	2.4%	1,877,246	2.6%
Instructional Leadership (21)	2,275,611	2.7%	2,216,039	2.6%	1,848,459	2.5%
School Leadership (23)	2,938,288	3.4%	3,012,058	3.5%	2,971,599	4.1%
Support Services (31, 32, 33)	3,920,730	4.6%	4,151,231	4.8%	3,487,019	4.8%
Student Transportation (34)	1,828,374	2.1%	1,957,736	2.3%	1,455,161	2.0%
Food Services (35)	4,479,946	5.2%	4,681,194	5.4%	4,311,106	5.9%
Co-/Extracurricular Activities (36)	1,627,418	1.9%	1,711,505	2.0%	1,741,104	2.4%
Central Administration (41, 92)	2,383,147	2.8%	2,900,563	3.4%	2,459,802	3.4%
Plant Maintenance /Operations (51)	7,303,340	8.5%	7,819,944	9.1%	8,694,312	12.0%
Security and Monitoring Services (52)	1,058,219	1.2%	1,243,506	1.4%	1,034,102	1.4%

Data Processing Services (53)	658,612	0.8%	719,314	0.8%	1,007,344	1.4%
Other *	19,298,239	22.5%	15,502,195	18.0%	7,102,102	9.8%
Total	**$85,712,140**	**100.0%**	**$86,046,222**	**100.0%**	**$72,637,881**	**100.0%**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1999-2000 through 2001-02. Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.
*Other includes any operating expenditures not listed above and all non-operational expenditures such as debt service, capital outlay and community and parental involvement services.

The state average for share of total spending devoted to instruction ranged from 51 percent to 52 percent from 1999-2000 through 2001-02. DISD, by contrast, devoted less than 42 percent of its total expenditures to instruction in 1999-2000, less than 45 percent in 2000-01 and less than 48 percent in 2001-02.

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

DISD's Business Office consists of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and 12 employees. The Business Office is responsible for accounting, accounts payable, budgeting, cash receipts, financial reporting, investments and payroll. The district contracts with Orozco & Reyna, Certified Public Accountants, for its annual external audit.

Positions in the Business Office are aligned by function (**Exhibit 7-8**). A chief accountant, an accountant and two bookkeepers perform the accounting and financial reporting functions. Two clerks perform the accounts payable function and one clerk performs data input. The department secretary is responsible for cash receipts and controls the signature plate for check signing. A supervisor and three clerks handle the payroll function.

Exhibit 7-8
Business Office Organization
May 2002
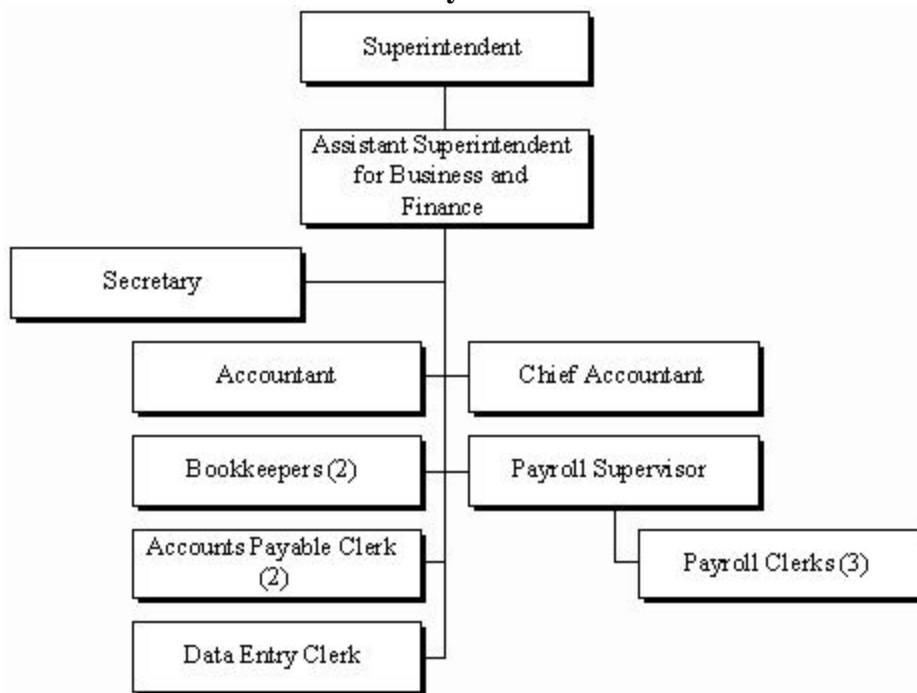
Source: DISD assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, May 2002.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance is housed in the administration building with most of the Business Office staff. The Payroll Office is located in a complex across the street from the administration building. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance is available for guidance on all business issues and holds a weekly staff meeting to promote communication on various issues of concern. Of the 12 employees in the Business Office, nine report directly to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance; the three Payroll clerks report to the Payroll supervisor.

FINDING

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance's span of control does not allow enough time for him to provide proper attention to each task. He functions as the director of Finance and the director of Technology, with direct responsibility for the district's budget preparation, asset and risk management, cash management and contract administration. Twenty employees report directly to the assistant superintendent, including nine employees from the Business Office and 11 from the other departments. The chief accountant, is classified at pay grade 4 which implies that his position supervises staff. While the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said the chief accountant has supervisory duties, the chief accountant's job description specifically states that the position has no supervisory responsibilities and no positions report directly to the chief accountant.

DISD is too large for one individual to have this degree of control over so many business functions. Consequently, some key tasks are being missed. For example, the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance does not prepare cash flow forecasts to enable the district to invest excess cash effectively and plan for periods when cash may be tight. The district has not acted on its external auditor's recommendations to improve year-end closing procedures, review and write off old outstanding checks and improve controls over student activity funds.

Based on responses from the peer districts, the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance has more direct reporting relationships than any of his peers. Edgewood ISD, for example, has four positions reporting directly to its executive director for Business & Management Support Services; Mission CISD has seven positions reporting to the administrative assistant for Business Operations; and San Benito CISD has nine positions reporting to the assistant superintendent for Finance and Human Resources.

School districts of comparable size segregate the supervision of business functions under various director positions. For example, a director of

Technology may be responsible for daily oversight of the Technology Department. This position may report directly to an assistant superintendent, but staff positions in the department report to the director. In a well-functioning Business Office, a director or controller may report directly to the Business Office department-head, while other staff positions report to the director or controller.

Recommendation 57:

Restructure the Business Office to reduce the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance's span of control.

Restructure the Business Office to give the chief accountant position supervisory responsibility for the accountant, bookkeepers, accounts payable clerks and data entry clerk.

This recommendation would eliminate six direct reports to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent presents a plan to the board to restructure the Business Office by assigning supervisory responsibilities for the accounting functions to the chief accountant.	November 2002
2.	The superintendent directs the Personnel director to revise the chief accountant's job description to include supervision of the accountant, bookkeepers, accounts payable clerks and data entry clerk.	December 2002
3.	The superintendent directs the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance to implement the restructuring plan.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The chief accountant position is classified as a pay grade 4 in the district's classification system. This is one pay grade higher than the Payroll supervisor position, which supervises three clerical positions. The chief accountant position is also on the same pay grade as elementary and middle school assistant principals. Based on these comparisons, the chief accountant should have supervisory responsibilities; this recommendation, therefore, can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

B. FUND BALANCE

A district's fund balance is a key indicator of its financial condition. The fund balance is simply the difference between the district's assets and its liabilities. School districts establish fund balances (also called reserve balances) that work as "savings accounts"; they serve as a source of funds in an emergency, supply cash to pay bills when the district has cash-flow problems, or allow the district to build up savings for large purchases not affordable in a single year, such as a computer system.

Prudent financial management requires the accumulation of a general fund balance large enough to cover any cash outflows not offset by corresponding cash inflows (which can occur in nearly all schools during the fiscal year). TEA sets target or "optimum" fund balances for the general fund. The formula for optimum fund balances calls for the general fund balance to equal the estimated amount needed to cover cash flow deficits 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.

FINDING

DISD does not have a long-range financial plan to achieve the optimum fund balance in its general fund. Although DISD's financial position is improving, the district's fund balance is below TEA's recommended optimum. **Exhibit 7-9** presents DISD's optimum fund balance calculation for the last three years.

Exhibit 7-9
Optimum Fund Balance Calculations - General Fund
As of August 31, 1999 through 2001

Description	1999	2000	2001
Fund balance as of 8/31 (1)	**$3,448,312**	**$5,519,910**	**$5,129,696**
Total reserved fund balance (2)	$1,862,320	$1,485,799	$1,198,750*
Fall cash flow deficits (3)	$1,200,000	$1,700,000	$2,000,000
One month's disbursements (4)	$4,656,267	$5,463,302	$5,792,585
Optimum fund balance (5=2+3+4)	$7,718,587	$8,649,101	$8,991,335

Excess (deficit) fund balance (Line 1-5)	($4,270,275)	($3,129,191)	($3,861,639)

As the exhibit shows, DISD has not met its optimum fund balance for several years. For the year ending August 31, 2001, DISD was almost $3.9 million below its optimum fund balance.

Section 1 of the FASRG states, "The fund balance of the General Fund is of primary significance because the General Fund is the primary fund through which most functions are financed and which includes state aid and local maintenance taxes. One primary criterion of rating agencies for school bonds is the relative amount of undesignated, unreserved fund balance. Bond rating agencies view undesignated, unreserved fund balances as a reflection of the financial strength of school districts and show concern when district fund balances decrease." Reserved funds are revenues that have been set aside to fund some large project, such as playground equipment, or are legally restricted to use for a specific program. The undesignated, unreserved fund balance represents financial resources actually available to the district. DISD's undesignated, unreserved fund balance in the general fund was $3.4 million as of August 31, 2001.

DISD's general fund balance declined sharply in the year ending August 31, 1997, to a deficit of $2.8 million, and has since increased to $5.1 million as of August 31, 2001 (**Exhibit 7-10**). While the district has increased its general fund balance, it still remains well below the optimum fund balance.

Exhibit 7-10
Fund Balance for the General Fund

As of August 31, 1996 through 2001
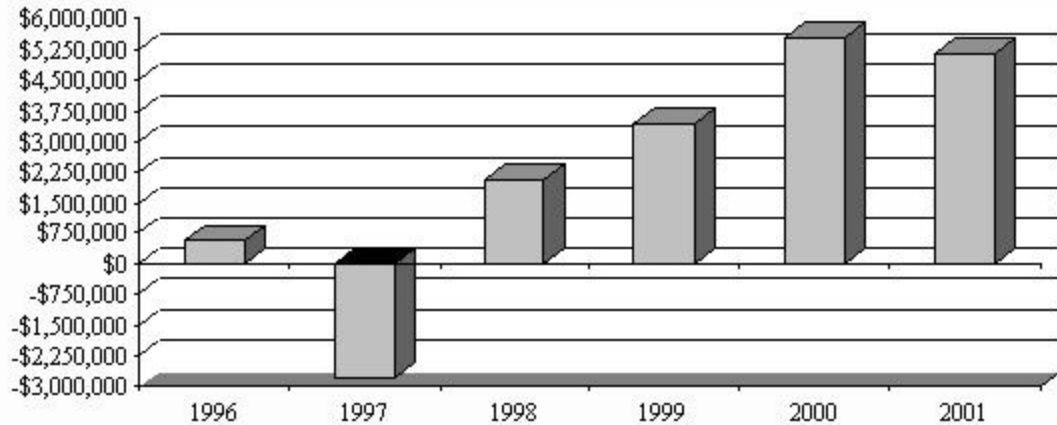
Source: DISD Annual Audit Reports, 1996 through 2001.

The deficit of 1996-97 was due to several factors. First, the district's external auditors found that in prior years, the district had improperly accrued property tax revenues and the district changed the way it accrued state revenues. As a result, a $1.2 million audit adjustment was made which reduced the district's revenues in 1996-97. In addition, the district adopted a deficit budget where the budgeted expenditures exceeded the budgeted revenues to cover those expenditures. DISD ended the year with a deficit of $2.1 million.The cumulative effect of these two factors was a deficit fund balance of $2.8 million.

A board-adopted resolution to transfer $1.14 million from the debt service fund to the general fund increased the general fund balance in 1998. The transfer was made because the district had no outstanding bonded debt at the time; the district made the last payment on its outstanding bonds in 1997. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said the increase in fund balance for 1998 through 2001 also was due to conservative budgeting and expenditures.

Many districts establish a goal for their fund balance and create a long-range financial plan to achieve this goal. These districts closely monitor the impact of every decision on their fund balance. Often, agenda items presented to the board contain an impact statement on fund balance so that the board is aware of the financial consequences of their decisions. Monthly financial reports highlight the fund balance and contain a revised projection for the ending fund balance based on current revenue and expenditure patterns.

Recommendation 58:

Create a long-range financial plan to achieve an optimum fund balance and report the fund balance monthly to the board.

The district should establish a goal for its fund balance as a percentage of general fund expenditures. This goal should be considered for each proposal that will have an impact on the fund balance. The district should develop a financial plan to achieve the goal. Future budgets should be prepared with amounts dedicated to increasing the general fund balance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and assistant superintendent for Business and Finance determine a reasonable goal for the general fund balance by reviewing the optimum levels established by TEA and draft a long-range financial plan to achieve this goal.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent and assistant superintendent for Business and Finance create a format for the monthly fund balance report to the board.	October 2002
3.	The superintendent presents the general fund balance goal and long-range financial plan to the board for discussion.	October 2002
4.	The board adopts a goal and plan.	November 2002
5.	The superintendent presents the fund balance report to the board.	November 2002 and Monthly
6.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance uses the long-range financial plan to guide the preparation of the proposed budget and subsequent budget discussions.	March 2003 and Annually
7.	The board supports the general fund balance goal by adopting budgets that increase the general fund balance.	August 2003 and Annually
8.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance revises the long-range financial plan based on the adopted budget and presents the revised plan to the board for discussion.	August 2003 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

C. BUDGETING

A school district's annual budget represents planned expenditures for the year and provides the basis for determining the tax rate. The budget process should include phases for development, presentation and adoption.

First, the district must estimate its revenues to determine the amount of funds available for the budget year. School districts receive revenues from the federal and state governments and local taxpayers. Federal revenues can fluctuate significantly based on changes in the federal budget, and districts must take great care to monitor the federal funds that will be available. State revenues are based on a variety of factors that must be estimated annually, the most critical of which is student attendance. A district must not only estimate its number of students but their type, due to the special weighting factors in the state funding formula that provide different funding for students with special needs. The district also requires a good estimate of the appraised value of property in the district to estimate the funding it will receive from local taxpayers.

Next, the district must estimate the expenditures for the budget year. Although the Texas Education Code (TEC) states that the superintendent is responsible for preparing the budget, the development phase should include opportunities for staff and community members to express their opinions.

The district-level and campus-level Site-Based Decision-Making Committees (SBDMC) must be involved in preparing a budget for each school if the district uses an allocation process for staffing, supplies and other budgeted expenditures based on the number of students enrolled. This committee can assist district decision-makers in determining how to allocate expenditures to meet the individual needs of each school. If the district uses a budget process where funds are requested by category of need, it must involve the SBDMC in formulating and prioritizing requests in line with the school's needs.

Due to limited resources, districts often find they can fund only their highest priorities. During the development process, the district also must account for the priorities established in its Campus Improvement Plans (CIP) and District Improvement Plan (DIP). All other departments must establish their needs based on the services they plan to provide. Once all the necessary information is compiled, the preliminary budget is ready for the presentation phase.

The presentation phase should provide opportunities for the administration and board to review and discuss the revenue and expenditure estimates and their underlying assumptions. If estimated revenues are not sufficient to pay for the estimated expenditures, the presentation phase should include options for increasing revenue, reducing expenses or using a portion of the undesignated fund balance to arrive at a balanced budget. The fund balance should be used only for one-time expenditures such as capital improvements, and not to fund recurring expenditures such as employee raises. The presentation phase should include opportunities for district employees to provide input into the discussions. Finally, the presentation phase should specifically allow for public input on the budget. The TEC requires the district to conduct a budget hearing; the board can adopt the budget only after the public hearing.

The final step in the budget process is adoption, which must occur before the district can spend any funds. Once adopted, the budget provides the district with legal authority for its expenditures. The budget controls expenditures, and expenditures cannot exceed the budget. If an expenditure will exceed the budget, the district must prepare, present and adopt a budget amendment before the expenditure is made.

DISD has a comprehensive budget that covers all funds. TEA requires districts to adopt budgets for the general fund, food service fund and debt service fund. These budgets must be prepared and approved at fund and function levels, meaning by each type of fund that the district maintains and each functional expenditure category to comply with state law. This allows the board and public to obtain a full picture of the district's financial operations during the budget process. The budget also lists full-time equivalents (FTE) for staff to be assigned to the area where they work.

The district's accounting software supports the budget process by providing information to budget managers about current budgets and expenditures. The software is used to develop the budget for the next year and to provide salary and benefit information. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said that the software gives budget managers access to the budgetas soon as the board approves the budget and the fiscal year begins.

DISD's budget development process begins in March. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance distributes a calendar specifying the timing of critical events during the budget process to all budget managers in the district. Each school and department reviews its prior-year budget, current expenditures and proposed budget to draft budget requests for their school or department. These must be sent to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance for review. While the schools and

departments review their budget needs, the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and Business Office staff review the prior-year budgets for all schools and departments. The Business Office consolidates the budget by the end of May and presents to the board. Workshops held in June and July allow the board to discuss the budget; the public can attend these workshops. The budget is finalized in July and adopted by the board in August, after the required public hearing. **Exhibit 7-11** presents the DISD budget calendar.

Exhibit 7-11
DISD Budget Calendar

Completion Date	Activity	Person Responsible
March 22, 2002	Budget planning and preparation orientation workshop is held for school and program administrators and other budget managers.	Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance
April 5, 2002	Budget forms for school, program and department budgets and per-pupil allocations for 2002-03 based on student projections, are prepared.	Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance
April 15, 2002 through April 29, 2002	Budget review teams review budgets and make changes as required before approval.	Budget Review Team of Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance
May 6, 2002	Budget forms for school, program, and department budgets are prepared and submitted to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.	School/Program/Department Administrators
May 13, 2002 through May 17, 2002	Budget review team reviews and approves program options and reports this information to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.	Budget Review Team Assistant Superintendents Program Administrators
May 20, 2002 through May 24,	Budget is consolidated and finalized.	Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance

2002		
June 2002 July 2002	Budget workshop sessions for the board and interested taxpayers are scheduled.	Superintendent
July 2002	Superintendent reviews and accepts final copy of the district budget.	Superintendent
August 31,2002	Board adopts budget on or before August 31, 2002	Board

Source: DISD Business Office, April 2002.

FINDING

DISD does not budget for indirect costs in its general fund and does not charge indirect costs associated with federal programs to those programs.

Indirect costs are administrative costs incurred for the benefit of all programs in the district. These costs cannot easily be allocated to individual programs. TEA allows districts to charge the federal program for indirect costs associated with administering the program based on an indirect cost ratecalculated for each district. Indirect costs allocated to federal programs are budgeted as revenues in the general fund and shown as expenditures in the district's federal program application for funds. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said the district uses all available funds in various grants' budgets and that this has been the practice in DISD for years.

DISD's annual external audit provides a schedule of administrative costs and allowed direct costs that TEA uses to determine its indirect cost rate of 1.263 percent. Indirect cost revenues in the general fund are determined by multiplying the direct expenditures for the grant times the indirect cost rate. The district expended more than $11 million in special revenue funds for 2000-01, including $6.6 million in federal funds to which the indirect cost rate generally applies. If these costs had been allowable and the district claimed indirect costs at their rate of 1.263 percent, the district could have charged indirect costs of $83,358 to the associated federal program. The federal law or grant provisions, the availability of funds and the extent of direct program expenditures may limit indirect cost revenues. Indirect costs and the direct costs of the program cannot exceed the maximum entitlement for the program.

Many school districts budget indirect cost revenues in their general funds. Most districts maximize their indirect cost revenues by applying the

highest allowable indirect cost rate to the grant expenditures. This provides additional revenue in the general fund that can be used for any legal purpose.

Recommendation 59:

Budget indirect costs in the general fund and allocate the costs to the appropriate federal program.

The district could dedicate these revenues to the general fund as part of its plan to increase the fund balance. Charging indirect costs associated with federal programs is a legitimate means of allocating revenue to the general fund.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs to include indirect costs in its federal applications for funds.	March 2003
2.	The deputy superintendent of Federal/SCE Programs includes indirect costs in the federal applications for funds.	April 2003
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance includes the indirect cost revenues in the general fund budget.	May 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

D. ACCOUNTING, INTERNAL CONTROL AND PAYROLL

The district's accounting and payroll functions are critical for the maintenance of a solid financial foundation. Accurate and timely financial reports are crucial to administration and board decision-making. Payroll must be accurate, as it represents the district's largest budgeted expenditure. Internal controls must safeguard the district's assets from misappropriation.

DISD uses Comprehensive Information Management for Schools (CIMS) software to maintain its financial records. This software provides all the information needed to manage the district's finances properly, including the general ledger, subsidiary ledgers and comparative financial reports for both the current period and year to date. The software includes an encumbrance module the district uses to ensure that its expenditures do not exceed the budget. This module places a hold on budgeted funds as soon as a purchase order is entered and will not accept the purchase order if sufficient funds are not available. The software produces the information needed to fulfill TEA's financial reporting requirements. It provides financial information online for all principals, directors and program managers. The database is updated each night to ensure that the financial information available to budget managers is current and accurate.

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

DISD is preparing for the implementation of Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement 34. GASB 34 requires governmental entities to provide additional information in their annual financial reports to give readers a more complete picture of the entity's finances. Government entities now must recognize the annual cost of assets through depreciation. Depreciation is a periodic expense recognized in accounting records that aims to distribute the cost of tangible capital assets, less their salvage value (if any), over their estimated useful lives. TEA is requiring all school districts to implement GASB 34 for the year ending in 2002. The district has taken several steps to prepare for this implementation. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance has attended GASB 34 training sessions, had discussions and planning sessions with the external

auditor and removed fixed assets worth less than $5,000 from the general fixed-asset accounting records during 2000-01.

DISD's accounting functions are segregated so that no one person has control over an entire function. This segregation of duties is an effective internal control. For example, Purchasing issues purchase orders, Accounts Payable processes invoices for payment and the Business Office secretary affixes the appropriate signatures to the checks using signature plates. The accountant and bookkeepers reconcile the different bank accounts and are not involved in processing or approving items for payment. The external auditor has not reported any material weaknesses in DISD's internal controls over the past three years.

The district's Business Office prepares and presents monthly financial reports to the board. These statements provide information on the amended budget, year-to-date expenditures and budget funds remaining. The statements are presented for the general fund, special revenue funds, debt service fund, the capital projects fund and internal service funds. The financial statements also present a cash flow report for each of the funds.

A Payroll supervisor and three clerks perform the payroll function. The Personnel Department enters employee data into a database shared by Personnel and Payroll and sets the rate of pay. The software system controls the ability of individuals to change information based on their access to the system. This prevents unauthorized individuals from changing this information. The Payroll Office:

- reviews the pay calculations made by Personnel based on the number of days the individual will work;
- receives the deduction information for benefits and enters the deductions in the payroll system;
- inputs the new hires once the appropriate information is received;
- receives and enters information from employee time sheets; and
- maintains leave balances.

The Payroll Office runs 26 biweekly payrolls and 12 monthly payrolls during the course of each year.

FINDING

DISD does not spend special revenue funds evenly throughout the year. These funds generally are federal program funds the district receives to provide specific services to students based on their needs. If funds are not spent evenly through the year, the district risks being forced to make unplanned, last-minute expenditures to avoid returning money to the grantor. These last-minute purchases often do not benefit the program or

the students for which the funds were provided. The district must return unspent funds to the agency responsible for the program at the end of the program year, unless the agency allows the district to roll a portion of the funds forward into the next program year.

TSPR's review of special revenue accounts indicates that the district spends a large percentage of special revenue funds at the end of the program year. The deputy superintendent said that program managers and principals spend these funds as they deem appropriate. As of March 20, 2002, the district had spent about 50 percent of its special revenue funds for the year ended August 31, 2002. **Exhibit 7-12** presents balances remaining in the district's special revenue programs with budgets more than $100,000 as of March 2002.

Exhibit 7-12
DISD Special Revenue Funds
March 2002

Description	Grant Amount	Balance Left	Percent Left	End Date
Academics and Reading Improvement	$329,300	$227,808	69.2%	5/31/2002
Title-I School Improvement	$163,881	$49,217	30.0%	6/30/2002
Vocational Education Basic	$131,583	$58,063	44.1%	6/30/2002
ESEA, Title-I, Part A	$2,733,797	$1,401,623	51.3%	6/30/2002
Teaching and Learning Grant	$102,403	$61,201	59.8%	6/30/2002
IDEA-B Formula Program	$861,789	$515,054	59.8%	6/30/2002
Teaching and Learning Grant	$102,727	$64,664	62.9%	6/30/2002
Teaching and Learning Grant	$103,202	$71,632	69.4%	6/30/2002
Teaching and Learning Grant	$103,178	$74,115	71.8%	6/30/2002
ESEA, Title-I, Part C	$1,309,353	$656,213	50.1%	8/31/2002
Comprehensive Development Guidance	$117,060	$61,806	52.8%	8/31/2002

Source: DISD Business Office, March 2002.

With much of the instructional year passed, and with many of these programs ending in June, DISD had only three months, or 25 percent of the grant period, to spend the remaining funds. As of March 2002, the district had not yet spent between 30 and 69 percent of these funds. The

deputy superintendent said that the district does roll funds forward into the next year if the program allows rollovers. In 2000-01, the district did not return any funds to the federal government, but did send back $72,365 in 1999-2000 and $38,448 in 1998-99.

Some school districts include timelines for the implementation of federal programs in their planning and budgeting processes. These timelines include a spending schedule reporting when the funds will best benefit the program participants.

Recommendation 60:

Establish timelines for the expenditure of federal funds.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The bookkeeper for special revenue funds prepares monthly budget and expenditure information for each.	October 2002
2.	The bookkeeper for special revenue funds distributes the monthly reports to program managers, the deputy superintendent and the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.	October 2002
3.	The deputy superintendent and assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction review planned expenditures for the remainder of the year with the program managers.	November 2002
4.	The program managers establish an annual plan and timeline for spending the funds.	December 2002
5.	The deputy superintendent and assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction monitor funds expenditure monthly.	December 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD's Payroll Office employs students, providing them with access to confidential employee information. These students file payroll documents on a part-time basis. These documents contain confidential information such as pay rates and Social Security numbers.

Many schools and businesses make efforts to limit access to confidential information. TSPR found no indication of any wrongdoing, but it remains possible that student workers might inadvertently disclose confidential information or be pressured into obtaining it for a third party. Safeguarding confidential information is simply a good business practice.

Recommendation 61:

Discontinue using student workers to file payroll records.

This student should be assigned to another area work that does not involve confidential information, such as Accounts Payable. Only Payroll workers should be responsible for filing confidential payroll records.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance receives permission from the superintendent to quit using student help in the Payroll Office.	October 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance discontinues the practice.	October 2002
3.	Payroll Office staff file all payroll documents.	October 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

E. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDITING

TEC § 44.008 requires school districts to undergo an annual external audit performed by a certified public accountant. This financial audit is designed to assure the public that that the district's financial statements accurately represent its financial condition. The external audit also reviews internal controls for material weaknesses and checks for compliance with laws, rules and regulations.

The internal audit function also tests for compliance with laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures; it also reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of district operations. The internal and external audit functions complement each other.

DISD solicits bids for audit services on an informal basis. The district released its last request for proposals in 2001, and subsequently changed its external auditor. The district requested a two-year proposal to guarantee continuity during the implementation of GASB 34.

DISD's annual audit fees fell from $120,694 in 1996-97 to $18,800 in 2000-01. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said the fees had declined due to requesting proposals for new external auditorsand improved accounting operations.

Orozco & Reyna performed DISD's annual financial and compliance audit for fiscal 2001; Patillo, Brown & Hill, L.L.P. performed it for the 1999 and 2000 fiscal years. All three reports endorsed the district's financial statements and found no material weaknesses in its internal controls. The audits did, however, highlight a number of concerns.

FINDING

DISD's board did not approve the 2000-01 audit until January 22, 2002, nearly one month late. Section 44.008(d) of the TEC requires school districts to file a copy of the approved annual audit report no later than 120 days after the end of each fiscal year (generally December 29). Although the audit was completed on time, the report was submitted to the district after the board's regular monthly meeting; the board did not convene a special meeting to approve the audit.

For fiscal years beginning after September 1, 2001, the annual audit report is due to TEA no later than 150 days after the end of the fiscal year. For

school districts with an August 31 year end, such as DISD, the annual external audit report must be filed before January 28 of each year.

The new statewide financial accountability rating system, School FIRST, will provide a financial rating of superior achievement; above standard achievement; standard achievement; substandard achievement or suspended-data quality based upon 21 indicators of financial performance. Failing to pass five particular indicators of the 21 indicators will result in an automatic failing grade. Failing to file the annual financial report within one month after the deadline is one of the five automatic failure indicators.

Recommendation 62:

Require the board to meet to approve the annual audit in time to meet the statutory deadline.

Once the auditor has completed the report, the superintendent should include its approval as an agenda item for the next regular board meeting. If the audit has not completed prior to the regular January board meeting, the board should meet in a special meeting to approve it.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The auditing firm completes the annual audit and submits it to the district for approval.	January 2003
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews the audit and prepares the district's response to any findings.	January 2003
3.	The superintendent presents the audit to the board. If the regular January board meeting has already taken place, a special meeting is called specifically for this purpose.	January 2003
4.	The school board approves the audit.	January 2003
5.	The superintendent files the annual audit with TEA.	January 2003
6.	The district adopts this schedule for each subsequent year's external audit report.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD does not act effectively to ensure that the external auditor's recommendations are implemented. Specifically, district managers do not report to the board on their progress towards implementing these recommendations, which are designed to ensure that the district operates within the law and with adequate internal controls over its assets.

In most years, the district responds to such recommendations with a corrective action plan, but these plans do not assign responsibility for implementation. Repeated comments and recommendations in the external auditors' financial report concerning the same issues demonstrate that the district has not fulfilled its "corrective" plans. The 2000-01 audit report did not contain a plan of corrective action, and the district had not provided the review team with such a plan as of June 2002.

Exhibit 7-13 summarizes auditor comments for 1998-99 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 7-13
DISD External Auditor Comments
1998-99 through 2000-01

Year Audited	Comments
Year Ended August 31, 2001	• Regarding budget amendments: recommends the district develop written procedures addressing the closing of the books for year-end. • Regarding physical inventories: recommends the district update the warehouse supplies inventory during the year to properly reflect the perpetual inventory. • Regarding student activity funds: recommends the district require schools to follow the activity funds accounting manual and monitor the schools' adherence to the manual. • Regarding stale (old) checks: recommends the district review outstanding checks periodically and adjust its books accordingly. • Regarding purchase-order processing: recommends the purchase order be written for the estimated amount of the purchase instead of a lower amount. • Regarding general fixed assets: recommends the district reconcile the general fixed-asset group in a timely fashion.
Year Ended August 31, 2000	• Regarding rollback taxes: recommends the district establish procedures to document the calculation and collection of rollback taxes. • Regarding the payroll-clearing fund: recommends the district monitor and allocate expenditures properly. • Regarding nepotism forms: recommends the district have

	the forms completed by employees and filed in the employees' files.
	• Regarding student activity funds: recommends the district close dormant accounts.
	• Regarding student activity funds: recommends the district keep the activity fund checkbook in a secure location.
	• Regarding outstanding checks: recommends the district identify checks more than 120 days old and write them off to the appropriate account.
	• Regarding payroll files: recommends the district review the files to ensure they contain proper authorization forms.
	• Repeated prior-year comments regarding warehouse inventory, student activity funds (documentation and internal controls) and year-end closing.
Year Ended August 31, 1999	• Regarding warehouse inventory: recommends periodic counts to ensure accuracy of warehouse inventory.
	• Regarding employment forms: recommends the district review employee files and obtain and file I-9 forms as necessary.
	• Regarding account coding: recommends revenues be properly recorded to ensure their recognition.
	• Regarding student activity funds: recommends implementing internal controls to segregate sensitive duties.
	• Regarding student activity funds: recommends checks be released only after the school principals documents proper authorization.
	• Regarding student activity funds: recommends supporting documentation be maintained as required by district policy.
	• Regarding student activity funds: recommends parent funds not be commingled with student funds, in accordance with TEA guidelines.
	• Regarding year-end closing: recommends all transactions be posted and adjustments made during the year.

Source: External Audit Report, Schedule of Findings, 2000-01; External Auditor's Management Letters, 1998-99 and 1999-2000.

The external auditors made comments about the adequacy of internal controls over the warehouse inventory in 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-01. In the response to the 1998-99 comment, the district responded with a

corrective action plan to reconcile the inventories with the general ledger and conduct random test counts of 10 percent of the inventory items. The same finding was repeated in the 1999-2000 management letter and management responded with the same corrective plan. The 2000-01 audit report contained the same findings *again*. Similar patterns can be observed in the areas of outstanding checks and year-end closing procedures.

The external auditor's recommendations are intended to help ensure that DISD complies with all applicable laws, rules and regulations. DISD runs a considerable risk by ignoring the audit findings.

Some school districts use a formal reporting system to track their responses to audit recommendations. These systems assign responsibility for each to a specific district employee, who becomes accountable for the corrective action plan. The corrective action plans provide specific steps that must be taken by the responsible individual. These districts also provide the board and administration with progress reports on the status of the corrective action plans.

Recommendation 63:

Adopt a policy assigning responsibility for corrective action plans and require progress reports to the board on their implementation.

The policy should provide for the assignment of responsibility to specific individuals in the departments that are responsible for implementing the audit recommendations. The corrective action plans developed in response to the findings should include specific steps to be taken by the responsible individual to correct the reported finding and implement the auditor's recommendation.

The policy also should require progress reports to the board on a periodic basis, such as quarterly. These progress reports should document the implementation of the recommendations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent, deputy superintendent and assistant superintendents determine the content, format and requirements for progress reports on the implementation of audit recommendations.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent drafts a policy containing the reporting requirements and presents it to the board for discussion.	November 2002
3.	The superintendent revises the policy as needed and presents it to the board for adoption.	December 2002

4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents responses to the audit recommendations to the board for the prior fiscal year.	January 2003 And Annually
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents progress reports on the implementation of the corrective action plans to the board.	Quarterly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD does not have an internal auditor, or any other independent person or body to monitor compliance with board policies, regulations or laws. Without an internal auditor, the district cannot, for instance, be sure that its activity funds are being maintained properly; its warehouse inventory controls are working; and its vendor purchases and bids comply with competitive procurement laws.

Internal auditing is an independent appraisal function that evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's operations and makes recommendations, based on its evaluations, to improve district processes, policies and procedures. The internal auditor monitors district compliance with laws, regulations and policies and provides special reports and analyses to the board and administration.

School district internal audit functions usually have a board-adopted charter explaining their general purpose and objectives, their authority and their responsibilities. This charter generally follows the Institute of Internal Auditors' *Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* and *Code of Ethics*. The internal auditor generally is responsible for:

- reviewing district operations to ensure efficient use of resources;
- reviewing district safeguards to protect its assets;
- reviewing the district's school activity funds;
- conducting special reviews requested by the board or administration;
- evaluating compliance with laws, rules, regulations and policies;
- planning and executing an internal audit schedule based on risk assessments; and
- acting as district liaison for the external auditor and coordinating district audit activities.

The Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO) recommends that districts with annual expenditures of more than $20 million or 5,000 or more students have an internal auditor. San Benito CISD and Mission CISD, two of the three peer districts that responded to a TSPR request for information on this point, reported that they have an internal audit function.

Internal auditors can generate savings through improved efficiencies and a reduction in losses due to theft or fraud. They also assist the district in improving its operations by monitoring its response to the external auditor's recommendations.

Recommendation 64:

Hire an internal auditor who reports directly to the board.

The district should hire an internal auditor who develops an audit plan based on an assessment of the district's areas of highest risk. In addition, the internal auditor should coordinate the district's internal and external audit activities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent requests approval from the board to hire an internal auditor and amend the budget to provide funding for the position.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent directs the director of Personnel to develop and post a job description.	October 2002
3.	The superintendent develops and recommends a charter or guidelines for the internal auditor to the board for approval.	November 2002
4.	The superintendent selects and recommends a candidate to the board for approval.	November 2002
5.	The board votes to hire the auditor and amends the budget to provide funding for the position.	December 2002
6.	The internal auditor conducts a risk assessment of the district and develops an internal audit plan.	January 2003
7.	The internal auditor develops procedures to implement the audit plan.	February 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The estimated fiscal impact of this recommendation is based on the midpoint of pay grade 3 of the district's Administrative and Professional

Job Classification. The annual cost to the district would be $60,122
($49,672, midpoint of Pay Grade 3, + $49,672 x .16 benefit rate = $7,948
+ $2,502 fixed benefit rate). The fiscal impact for 2002-03 would be
$45,092 ($60,122 x 9/12.)

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Hire an internal auditor who reports directly to the board.	($45,091)	($60,122)	($60,122)	($60,122)	($60,122)

Chapter 7
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

F. TAX COLLECTION

Local school district property taxes generally include a maintenance and operations (M&O) component and an interest and sinking (I&S) component. In most school districts, the M&O component of the tax cannot exceed $1.50 per $100 of assessed property value. Voters authorize the I&S component of the tax to pay bonded debt when they approve a bond issue.

County appraisal districts appraise all property that school districts tax. School district tax rates are applied to assessed property values, minus tax exemptions, to determine the amount of taxes to be levied. Some school districts collect their own taxes and others contract for the service with another entity. A tax attorney usually collects delinquent taxes.

Due to the relationship between property wealth and state funding, poorer districts rely more heavily on state revenues than wealthy districts. **Exhibit 7-14** presents the amount and percentage of local taxes (including penalty and interest), other local revenue and state revenue for the general fund that DISD received for the years of 1997-98 through 2001-02. General fund tax collections have risen as a percentage of local and state revenue, from 8.6 percent in 1997-98 to 11 percent in 2001-02. State revenue fell from 90.6 percent of local and state general revenue in 1997-98 to 88.4 percent in
2001-02. This is a result of rising property values in DISD.

Exhibit 7-14
DISD Comparison of Tax Collections, Other Local Revenue
And State Revenue to Total Local and State Revenue for the General
Fund
1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	1997-98 (Actual)	1998-99 (Actual)	1999-2000 (Actual)	2000-01 (Actual)	2001-02 (Budget)
Tax collections	$4,583,658	$5,013,213	$5,544,536	$6,553,902	$7,010,022
Percent of total local and state revenue	8.6%	9.5%	9.2%	10.7%	11.0%

Other local revenue	$405,710	$435,404	$751,006	$1,137,224	$401,600
Percent of total local and state revenue	0.8%	0.8%	1.2%	1.9%	0.6%
State revenue and pass-through	$48,028,562	$47,516,170	$54,130,085	$53,498,402	$56,334,711
Percent of total local and state revenue	90.6%	89.7%	89.6%	87.4%	88.4%
Total local and state revenue	**$53,017,930**	**$52,964,787**	**$60,425,627**	**$61,189,528**	**$63,746,333**

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

DISD receives the majority of its general fund revenue from the state. The percent of property tax contributions to total local and state revenue has risen by 27.2 percent since 1997-98, and making local tax collection efforts increasingly important.

The district collects its own taxes. The Tax Office employs a tax assessor-collector, secretary and two clerks. The initial mail-out of tax statements is performed by a tax software company. The Tax Office:

- receives all tax payments, issues receipts to the taxpayer and deposits funds for the district;
- enters all value changes into the database;
- prepares tax certificates;
- calculates agriculture exemption rollbacks; and
- mails delinquent tax statements to taxpayers.

The tax assessor-collector is DISD's elections administrator who is responsible for administering the board elections. The position reports to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. The tax assessor-collector presents a monthly report to the board on tax collections, including current and delinquent collections and percentage of each collected. As of March 31, 2002, the district had collected 80.1 percent of the current year's levy.

As of August 31, 2001, DISD was owed total delinquent taxes of $4.3 million, an amount equivalent to 59.7 percent of the 2000-01 levy. Of that levy, $1.2 million of the $7.2 million total or 16.7 percent was outstanding at August 31, 2001.

FINDING

DISD's tax collection rate is low as compared to its peer districts. The tax assessor-collector said that 2001-02 was the first year in which the district foreclosed on property to collect delinquent taxes. Local board policy does not provide for aggressive tax collections or set any goal for tax collection rates. To assist employees with paying their taxes, Board Polic y CCG (Local) states, "District employees may pay taxes in installments through payroll deductions. An installment plan may also be set up for anyone who wishes to pay current taxes through this process." In 2001-02, 111 employees of the district took adva ntage of the payroll deductions.

Exhibit 7-15 presents DISD's change in property values and tax rates for 1997-98 through 2001-02. Assessed property values have risen by 37.9 percent and the tax rate has increased by 5.7 percent since 1997-98. The 2001-02 tax levy was 46.8 percent higher than the 1997-98 tax levy. DISD 2000-01 tax collections as a percentage of the levy have risen by 1.5 percent since 1997-98.

Exhibit 7-15
DISD Change in Property Value and Tax Rate;
Percentage of Taxes Collected to Total Levy
1997-98 through 2001-02

Description	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Assessed property value	$328,161,884	$337,885,534	$382,093,786	$434,397,673	$452,511,767
M&O Tax Rate	$1.410	$1.480	$1.439	$1.480	$1.490
I&S Tax Rate	$0.000	$0.082	$0.061	$0.120	$0.000
Total tax rate per $100 value	$1.410	$1.562	$1.500	$1.600	$1.490
Tax levy	$4,756,107	$5,509,332	$5,909,166	$7,159,540	$6,982,987
Total tax	$4,358,885	$5,067,366	$5,536,018	$6,659,403	N/A *

collections					
Percent collected to levy	**91.6%**	**92.0%**	**93.7%**	**93.0%**	**N/A ***

Source: External Audit Reports, 1997-98 through 2000-01 and DISD Tax Office, 2001-02. * Total tax collections and a percent collected to total levy are not shown for 2001-02 due to the timing of the report.

DISD did not levy an I&S component of the total tax rate for 2001-02. The district had $364,242 in its debt service fund on August 31, 2001. The district will use excess tax collections, current collections of delinquent taxes and the state instructional facilities allotment to pay the 2001-02 principal and interest due on its debt.

Exhibit 7-16 compares DISD's property value, tax rate, tax levy, tax collections and percentage of tax collections to tax levy with those of its peer districts for 2000-01. DISD was second-lowest in tax collections as a percentage of tax levy.

Exhibit 7-16
DISD vs. Peer Districts
Property Value, Tax Rate
And Percentage of Tax Collections to Total Levy
2000-01

Description	Rio Grande City Consolidated	Donna	San Benito Consolidated	Eagle Pass	Mission Consolidated	Edgewood
Assessed property value	$416,107,860	**$434,397,673**	$425,103,794	$812,253,490	$721,295,956	$480,100,194
M&O tax rate	1.4693	**1.4800**	1.4700	1.1800	1.4000	1.5000
I&S tax rate	0.0753	**0.1200**	0.1763	0.0667	0.1300	0.0600
Tax rate per $100 value	1.5446	**1.6000**	1.6463	1.2467	1.5300	1.5600
Tax levy	6,427,202	**7,159,540**	6,146,434	9,901,895	10,777,430	7,483,499
Total tax	5,856,979	**6,659,403**	5,737,129	9,387,386	10,385,212	7,550,722

collections					
Percent collected to levy	**91.1%**	**93.0%**	**93.3%**	**94.8%**	**96.4%**	**100.9%**

Source: Audited Financial Statements, 2000-01.

Exhibit 7-17 compares DISD's tax collections with those of the peer districts as of March 31, 2002. DISD had the lowest collection rate among the peer group that responded to TSPR's request for information.

Exhibit 7-17
DISD vs. Peer Districts
Percentage of Tax Collections to Total Levy
March 31, 2002

Description	Donna	Mission Consolidated	San Benito Consolidated	Edgewood
2001-02 Tax Levy	**$6,982,987**	$11,551,858	$6,754,845	$7,819,978
Collections through March 31, 2002	**5,590,210**	9,682,255	5,692,079	6,646,566
Percent of collections to tax levy	**80.1%**	**83.8%**	**84.3%**	**85.0%**

Source: DISD Tax Office and Peer Districts, May 2002.

The Tax Office's 2001-02 budget is $229,427, including $8,000 used to pay costs associated with school district elections and $97,000 for appraisal district costs. The office's net budget is $124,427 ($229,427-$8,000-$97,000) and includes salaries and benefits for the Tax Office employees. The Tax Office budget represents a 1.9 percent charge to collect the district's taxes. This is calculated by dividing the Tax Office budget less the amounts for the elections and tax appraisal by tax collections for 2000-01 ([$229,427-$8,000-$97,000]/$6,659,403).

Many county governments collect taxes for other local governments for a percentage of the taxes collected or a fixed cost per account. Hidalgo County collects taxes for a number of government agencies including several school districts. Hidalgo County does not levy a fixed fee but instead charges only for its costs.

Exhibit 7-18 presents information on Hidalgo County's school district tax collections.

Exhibit 7-18
Hidalgo County Tax Collections for School Districts
2000-01

Description	La Villa	Mission Consolidated	Weslaco	Edinburg Consolidated	McAllen	Total
Total tax collections	$647,767	$10,836,974	$11,772,231	$31,626,835	$53,259,475	$108,143,281
Fee charged	$7,600	$60,000	$75,000	$142,500	$124,901	$410,001
Fee as a percent of collections	**1.2%**	**0.6%**	**0.6%**	**0.5%**	**0.2%**	**0.4%**

Source: Hidalgo County Tax Assessor Collector, May 2002.

In 1999, Kingsville ISD outsourced its tax collection services to the Kleberg County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office. The district was able to reduce its internal costs by $87,545 annually, eliminating three full-time positions plus associated operating costs, while assuring that its collection rate remained high.

Recommendation 65:

Enter into an interlocal agreement with Hidalgo County to collect the district's property taxes.

This recommendation would eliminate four positions. Election administration should be assigned to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. The district also should consider contracting with the city of Donna or Hidalgo County to administer its elections.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance to develop a plan to outsource district tax collection efforts.	April 2003
2.	The superintendent submits the plan to the board for approval.	May 2003
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance contracts with the Hidalgo county tax assessor-collector to provide tax billing and collection services.	June 2003

4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance monitors contract performance and reports monthly to the superintendent and the board.	Monthly

FISCAL IMPACT

Outsourcing the district's tax collection functions would allow it to eliminate four positions: those of the tax assessor/collector, one secretary and two clerks. The fiscal impact of this recommendation was calculated by subtracting the anticipated cost of contracting tax collections from the Tax Office's salary expenditures.

The 2001-02 Tax Office's salaries and benefits expenditures were $127,278, including $120,727 in salaries and $6,551 in benefits. The calculation is shown below:

Eliminate tax assessor/collector:		
Annual salary	$40,050	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16	
	$46,458	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$48,960
Eliminate secretary position:		
Annual salary	$26,641	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16	
	$30,904	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$33,406
Eliminate clerk position:		
Annual salary	$19,636	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16	
	$22,778	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$25,280
Eliminate clerk position:		

Annual salary	$14,768	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16	
	$17,131	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$19,633
Total fiscal impact for eliminating the four positions:		**$127,279**

Hidalgo County's estimated charge for collecting DISD's taxes was based on the fees charged to the other school districts with similar tax collections as with Mission CISD and Weslaco ISD, as presented in **Exhibit 7-18,** and assumes 2001 collections as a baseline. Based on this percentage and 2001 tax collections, Hidalgo County would charge $39,956 to collect the district's taxes ($6,659,403 total tax collections for 2000-01 x .006 collection fee).

The estimate assumes that no cost or savings would be realized in 2002-03; in subsequent years, a savings would amount to $87,323 annually ($127,279 - $39,956).

Collecting a higher percentage of taxes by the county, the district also would benefit from enhanced cash collections.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Enter into an interlocal agreement with Hidalgo County to collect the district's property taxes.	$0	$87,323	$87,323	$87,323	$87,323

Chapter 8
PURCHASING AND WAREHOUSING

This chapter reviews the purchasing and warehousing functions of Donna Independent School District (DISD) in the following sections:

A. Purchasing
B. Warehousing
C. Textbooks
D. Contracting Process

An effective purchasing and warehousing program provides districts with quality materials, supplies, services and equipment in a timely manner at the lowest price. Purchasing includes those activities associated with the acquisition of supplies, materials, services and equipment. Warehousing includes those activities associated with the storage and delivery of the goods needed by the schools and departments. Textbook operations include the acquisition, delivery and inventory of textbooks to the schools. The contracting process includes activities involved in the procurement and evaluation of services from external entities.

Chapter 8
PURCHASING AND WAREHOUSING

A. PURCHASING

Section 3 of the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (*FASRG*) describes purchasing as a major management process with links to overall accountability initiatives. The *FASRG* describes these links as:

"*Strategic Link.* The overall mission of purchasing is to use available fiscal resources to obtain the maximum product or service for the resources expended.

Operational Link. Purchasing supports instructional delivery, administration, and other services. Performance and goal achievement throughout the school district depend on its effectiveness.

Tactical Link. The purchasing process influences day-to-day financial functions including budget management, accounting, and accurate financial reporting."

The *FASRG* underscores the importance of an effective purchasing program. The *FASRG* also enumerates several factors that present challenges to the purchasing function in public schools, including numerous compliance requirements.

Texas school districts must comply with the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 44, Subchapter B regulations in the procurement of goods and services. **Exhibit 8-1** presents a summary of the purchasing requirements in TEC Chapter 44.

Exhibit 8-1
TEC Chapter 44 Purchasing Requirements

	Purchases of $25,000 or More	**Purchases of Personal Property Between $10,000 and $25,000**
Procurement methods	- Competitive bidding - Competitive sealed proposals - Request for proposals - Catalog purchases	Use methods for purchases at or more than $25,000 OR Obtain quotes from the vendor list established by the district

	• Interlocal contracts	
Exceptions	• Produce and vehicle fuel • Sole source • Professional services • Emergency repairs	Produce and vehicle fuel must be purchased using the purchasing methods above
Factors to consider	• Purchase price • Vendor reputation • Quality of goods or services • District's needs • Vendor's past performance • Historically underutilized businesses • Long-term cost • Other relevant factors	Lowest responsible bidder

Source: Texas Education Code (TEC), Sections 44.031 through 44.033.

DISD board policy CH (Legal) includes the legal requirements of the TEC in addition to other methods of purchasing allowed by the Texas Government Code. DISD board policy CH (Local) provides additional governance to the purchasing function and delegates the board's authority to determine the purchasing method to the superintendent or designee and allows district staff to make budgeted purchases of less than $25,000. The board reserves the authority to approve purchases of $25,000 or more. **Exhibit 8-2** presents the DISD thresholds for obtaining quotes and bids for purchases.

Exhibit 8-2
DISD's Purchasing Requirements Based on Purchase Price

Amount	Method	Responsibility	Procedure
$0 to	No quotes	Principal,	No quotes required.

$500	required	Department Head, Purchasing	
$501 to $4,499	Three written quotes	Principal, Department Head, Purchasing	School or department obtains three written or faxed quotes from approved vendors and attaches the quote sheet to the requisition.
$4,500 to $10,000	Three vendor quotes	Purchasing	Purchasing obtains three written or faxed quotes from vendors.
$10,000 to $24,999	Three vendor quotes or bid	Purchasing	Purchasing obtains three written or faxed quotes from vendors on the general vendor list, catalog vendor or from purchasing cooperatives vendor or uses the same process for purchases of $25,000 or more.
$25,000 or more	Sealed bids or proposals or quotes from purchasing cooperatives	Purchasing and Board	Purchasing receives the specifications from the requestor or develops specifications with the requestor. Purchasing advertises, issues bids, receives bids, opens bids, tabulates bids, requestor recommends and board approves. Obtain three written or faxed quotes from purchasing cooperative vendors.

Source: DISD Purchasing agent, April 2002.

The district uses Comprehensive Information Management for Schools (CIMS) software for purchasing and other business functions. The purchasing module and the finance module have a shared database for Purchasing to check budget balances, encumber funds and access vendor information. CIMS controls the ability of individuals to change information based on their access to the system. The system prepares and numbers purchase requisitions and purchase orders, as well as preparing vendor listings, outstanding purchase order listings and vendor histories. The Purchasing agent said the system adequately meets the needs of the Purchasing Department.

DISD's Purchasing Department includes a Purchasing agent, two clerks and a part-time student employee who assists the department by distributing purchase orders, looking up account balances and performing other tasks on an as-needed basis. The Purchasing agent is responsible for

supervising the staff, writing specifications for bids, monitoring the copiers in the district, preparing agenda items for board consideration, training school and department staff, meeting with vendors and approving requisitions. The clerks process requisitions, generate purchase orders, assist with bid development, obtain quotes and maintain the general vendor list. The two clerks in the department are cross-trained and can perform all tasks associated with each other's jobs.

The department receives requisitions for purchases and verifies that funds are available and that the account coding is appropriate for the items being purchased. Requisitions with insufficient funds in the budget are returned to the requestor. Budgeted funds are encumbered when the purchase order is issued. Purchase orders require the signatures of the person preparing the purchase order, a principal or department head and the chief accountant or assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. During 2000-01, Purchasing issued 10,838 purchase orders. By January 31, 2002, the department had issued 5,291 purchase orders. On average, the district issued 48 purchase orders every working day in 2000-01.

TSPR surveyed teachers and staff to obtain input about district purchasing operations. The majority, or 60 percent, of principals agreed or strongly agreed that Purchasing provides items in a timely manner, through a process that is easy to follow and not cumbersome. Forty percent of the principals had no opinion on the quality of goods that Purchasing acquires. However, 56.7 percent of teachers and 52 percent of district administrators and support staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement about the timeliness of purchasing efforts. Also, 50.7 percent of district administrators and support staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement on quality. These results indicate that stakeholders have problems with the timeliness of acquisition and the quality of products acquired by Purchasing (**Exhibit 8-3**).

Exhibit 8-3
Survey Results for Purchasing

Teachers						
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**No Response**
Purchasing gets me what I want when I need it.	0.0%	36.7%	6.7%	26.7%	30.0%	0.0%
Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and	0.0%	43.3%	23.3%	23.3%	10.0%	0.0%

equipment at the lowest cost.						
Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0.0%	43.3%	20.0%	26.7%	10.0%	0.0%
Vendors are selected competitively.	0.0%	50.0%	33.3%	13.3%	3.3%	0.0%
The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	6.7%	46.7%	16.7%	23.3%	6.7%	0.0%

Administrators						
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**No Response**
Purchasing gets me what I want when I need it.	1.3%	26.7%	20.0%	25.3%	26.7%	0.0%
Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	5.3%	34.7%	9.3%	30.7%	20.0%	0.0%
Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	2.7%	32.0%	18.7%	29.3%	17.3%	0.0%
The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	2.7%	29.3%	26.7%	26.7%	14.7%	0.0%

Principals						
Survey	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly	No

Questions	Agree		Opinion		Disagree	Response
Purchasing gets me what I want when I need it.	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: TSPR surveys of DISD stakeholders, April 2002.

FINDING

By monitoring the use and purchase of district copiers, the DISD Purchasing agent has saved nearly $290,000 on copiers since 1997. The Purchasing agent began monitoring the district's copy machines in 1995. At that time, the district leased and purchased copiers from a wide variety of vendors, and the principals had the authority to sign contracts for copiers at their schools. Starting in 1997, the Purchasing agent issued the first district bid for copiers and since has bid a portion of the copiers annually. The Purchasing agent bases the bid award recommendation for each year on the total cost per copy.

The Purchasing agent reviewed the district volume of all copiers and developed specifications for a high-speed copier and a mid-size copier. The high-speed copiers run approximately one to two million copies a year on average and are ready to be replaced at the end of the second year. Because of the cost of maintaining older copiers and the low value of used copiers, the district will eventually move to a total lease program. **Exhibit 8-4** illustrates the 50 percent increase in the number of copiers at the district between 1997 and 2001. In 1997, the district owned 69 percent of its copiers; by 2001, the district owned 9.5 percent of the copiers.

Exhibit 8-4
DISD Copier Inventory
1997 through 2001

Description	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2001 Difference From 1997
Owned Copiers	29	28	15	15	6	(23)
Leased Copiers	13	18	37	37	57	44
Total Copiers	42	46	52	52	63	21

Source: DISD Purchasing agent, May 2002.

By monitoring the copiers in the district and bidding a portion of the copiers annually, the district has saved $289,776 on the cost of copiers from 1997 through 2001. The district also has been able to obtain additional leased copiers to serve the district (**Exhibit 8-5**).

Exhibit 8-5
DISD Copier Savings
1997 through 2001

Description	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Leased Copier Cost	$40,116	$52,680	$156,564	$157,608	$264,192
Total Copier Cost	$396,396	$396,312	$312,096	$309,456	$277,932
Prior Year Costs	N/A	$396,396	$396,312	$312,096	$309,456
Cumulative Savings	**N/A**	**$84**	**$84,384**	**$171,324**	**$289,776**

Source: DISD Purchasing agent, May 2002.

COMMENDATION

DISD effectively monitors the use and acquisition of copiers, which has resulted in savings of nearly $290,000 in the past five years.

FINDING

DISD participates in five different purchasing cooperatives to reduce costs. By participating in purchasing cooperatives, the district takes advantage of the buying power provided by the volume of a wide range of governmental units.

The purchasing cooperatives in which DISD participates include the Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) Purchasing Cooperative, Regional Education Service Center IV (Region 4) Purchasing Cooperative, Texas Local Government Statewide Purchasing Cooperative, Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments (HGAC) Purchasing Cooperative and the Texas Building and Procurement Commission (TBPC) Purchasing Cooperative. In order to obtain the best products at the lowest possible cost to the district, the Purchasing agent recommended the districts participation in each of the cooperatives to the board for approval. Participating in purchasing cooperatives eliminates the cost and administrative burden of obtaining bids on items.

The Purchasing agent estimates that 19 to 25 percent of the district's purchases are made through the purchasing cooperatives. The district purchases food products, tires, vehicles, computers and technology equipment from the various cooperatives.

COMMENDATION

DISD participates in purchasing cooperatives to obtain the best products at the lowest possible cost to the district.

FINDING

DISD's purchasing process is paper intensive and cumbersome. Although the CIMS purchasing system has an electronic purchase order approval function, the district does not use it. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance explained that the district obtained this function of the software in December 2001 and had not yet implemented the feature. However, the district intends to use this function in 2002-03. Without this feature, the district's purchasing process is largely a manual one. The following describes the purchasing process at DISD.

- Initiate requisition: The school or department inputs the vendor name, item(s) requested, quantity and price into the purchasing system and prints out the requisition. The requestor signs the requisition and forwards it to his or her supervisor for approval. The supervisor at the department or school signs the requisition and forwards it to the Purchasing Department.

- Initiate purchase order:The Purchasing clerk checks the account code, verifies the availability of funds, checks for proper administrative signature, determines if the requested goods or items are available from the warehouse and signs the requisition. The clerk forwards the requisition to the Purchasing agent for review and approval. The Purchasing agent returns the requisition

to the clerk who then issues the purchase order and signs it. The school or department comes to the Purchasing Department to sign the purchase order or has it picked up to be signed by the administrator.

- Distribute purchase order and order item:The purchase order is forwarded to accounting for review and approval. The chief accountant or the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance signs the purchase order and returns it to Purchasing for distribution. Purchasing distributes the purchase order to the vendor, accounts payable, the warehouse, fixed assets and to the school or department requesting the item. The copy of the purchase order sent to accounts payable has the requisition attached to it.

Although the Purchasing Department issues purchase orders for requisitions with all supporting documents within one to two days, the entire process may take five to six days from the time the requisition was initiated by the school or department. The Purchasing agent said it is possible to walk a requisition through the process to obtain a purchase order in about one to two hours. As a result, many district employees send a requisition directly to Purchasing. The Purchasing agent estimated that, on average, about one requisition is walked through the process each day. Based on 226 contract days in the year, this equates to more than 50 workdays for one employee of the district. This does not include the time spent by employees retrieving the purchase orders from Purchasing to have them signed by the school or department administrator. The inefficiency and time delays related to the current purchasing process results in lost work time since the employees are not performing their primary function for the district in order to speed up the receipt of their requested items.

Many school districts use the online approval option in their software's purchasing module. These districts have reduced the time and amount of paper necessary to complete a purchase by using the following procedures:

- the school or department inputs the requisition into the system;
- the system puts a hold on the budgeted funds for the purchase and if funds are not available the system will not accept the requisition;
- the principal or department head approves the requisition online;
- the requisition is electronically transmitted to Purchasing;
- Purchasing reviews the purchase to determine if the warehouse carries the items, that an approved vendor is used and that the purchase does not need to be quoted or bid;
- Purchasing approves the requisition online; and
- the purchase order is printed and distributed and the funds are encumbered.

Recommendation 66:

Use the online approval function of the district's purchasing system to reduce the time and effort required to issue a purchase order.

This option exists in the software the district uses and the Technology staff can activate the option in the software for online approvals.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the Purchasing agent to implement use of the software's purchasing module to issue purchase orders.	September 2002
2.	The Purchasing agent and Technology director review the purchasing module to determine the appropriate levels of security necessary to implement the electronic signature option.	September 2002
3.	The Purchasing agent and Technology director report their recommendation to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance for approval.	October 2002
4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews, revises as necessary and approves the recommendation of the Purchasing agent and the Technology director.	October 2002
5.	The Purchasing agent and Technology director prepare the appropriate training materials for staff members on the implementation of electronic signatures and use of the purchasing module.	November 2002
6.	The Purchasing agent and Technology director train staff and implement electronic signatures and the use of the purchasing module.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district's Purchasing handbook contains outdated materials and information. The Purchasing Handbook details the requirements for requisitions, the accounting code structure, approved vendors for supply items, thresholds for price quotations, thresholds for bids and copies of board policies related to purchasing. Although the information concerning requirements for requisitions, approved vendors and thresholds for price quotations are current, the accounting code structure and board policies

are outdated. Information from TEA Bulletin 679 that was replaced by the *FASRG* is used to demonstrate the account code structure. The board policies listed in the handbook date back to 1993.

The purpose of a procedures manual is to provide accurate and up-to-date documentation of how a process works and the related regulations that govern the process. Because DISD's handbook is outdated, an individual using the manual would be following incorrect information.

Many districts update their procedures manuals on an annual or biannual basis. This provides the districts an opportunity to include changes in the law, policies and regulations that occur over time.

Recommendation 67:

Update the Purchasing handbook every two years or when a major change in the law or district policy occur and post it on the district Web site.

Current, relevant and useful information is important to assist employees in performing their duties. As such, the Purchasing handbook should be updated to include the requirements of the *FASRG* and board policy. The handbook should also reference the Web site for the online policy service to ensure employees know the district's current policies on purchasing. The handbook should be updated at least every two years or when major changes in the law or policy occur. The handbook could be posted on the district's Web site to reduce the cost of distributing the handbook to employees.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the Purchasing agent to update the Purchasing handbook.	October 2002
2.	The Purchasing agent gathers the information necessary to make the handbook current.	October 2002
3.	The Purchasing agent and staff review the procedures and other information in the handbook to determine if they are truly reflective of the current process.	November 2002
4.	The Purchasing agent presents the updated handbook to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance for review and approval.	December 2002
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance approves the handbook and directs the Purchasing agent to post the handbook on the district's Web site.	January 2003

6.	The Purchasing agent, with assistance from the Technology director, posts the Purchasing handbook on the district's Web site.	February 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 8
PURCHASING AND WAREHOUSING

B. WAREHOUSING

An effective warehouse provides for the storage, delivery and safekeeping of the goods commonly used by the schools and departments.

The DISD supply warehouse, which is located across from Donna High School, provides services to the 15 schools and 20 administrative departments. When the review team visited the warehouse, the warehouse was clean, stock items were stored neatly on shelves with stock numbers for the items and bulk items were stored on pallet racks. The Warehouse Department stocks paper, office supplies, art supplies and custodial supplies. The schools and administrative departments order supplies and materials from the warehouse using the district's computer system. The orders are picked from stock by warehouse staff, charged to the budget specified on the requisition and delivered to the appropriate location. The department staff inventory warehouse stock monthly and the accounting records are adjusted to reflect the inventory. Warehouse staff also picks up and delivers interschool and U.S. mail to the schools and administrative departments.

The warehouse falls under the direction of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. In addition to the Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager who oversees the daily operations of the warehouse functions, the department is staffed with an assistant supervisor, inventory clerk and foreman, as well as four individuals who handle receiving, stocking and mail distribution. **Exhibit 8-6** presents the organization of the Warehouse Department.

<div align="center">

Exhibit 8-6
Warehouse Organization

</div>

April 2002
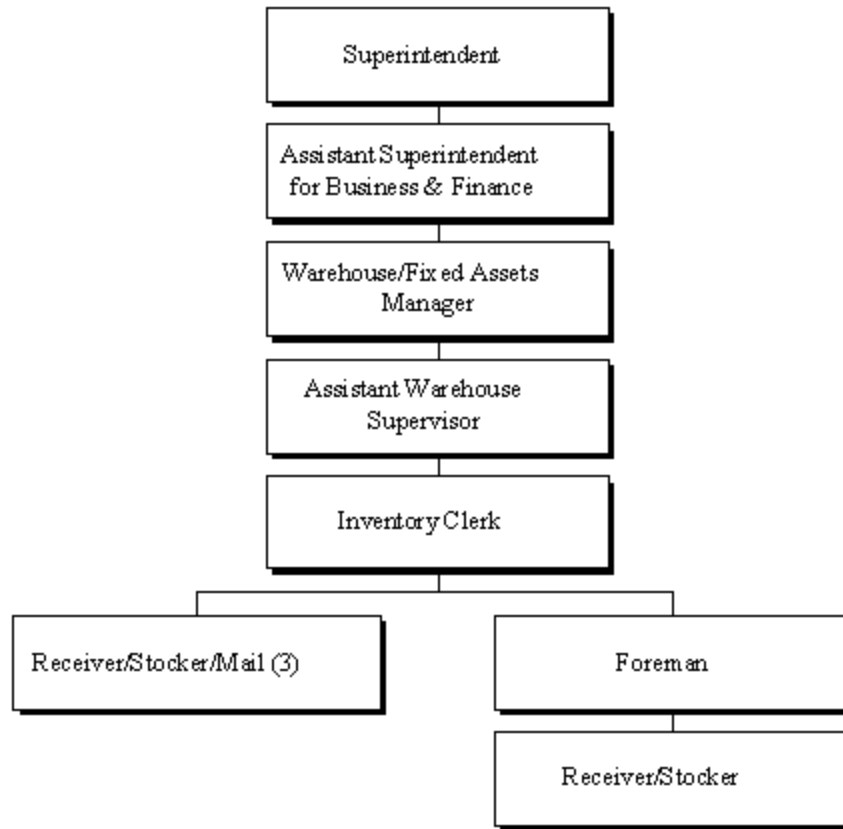
Source: DISD Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager, April 2002.

FINDING

Between May 2001 and April 2002, the Warehouse inventory of supplies increased by more than $120,000. Based on the Warehouse month-end inventory report, the beginning inventory for May 2001 was $152,661 and the ending inventory in April 2002 was $272,846; an increase of 78.7 percent. The supplies inventory as of May 2002 represents 5.3 percent of the district's general fund balance. This percentage amounts to an investment of district funds that does not generate any revenue for the district.

Some governmental entities, including school districts, use just-in-time inventory systems to reduce the amount of district inventories and maximize the amount of funds available to invest. A just-in-time inventory system means that district schools or departments order supplies to be delivered on an as-needed basis.

Robstown ISD (RISD) has implemented just-in-time delivery of supplies and materials. It does not operate a central warehouse facility for the storage of supplies or materials. Items are ordered when the need arises

and are delivered directly to the originator of the request or to the central administration office where the mail clerk delivers them to the respective school or facility. This practice avoids the personnel, maintenance and utilities costs associated with the operation of a warehouse facility.

Recommendation 68:

Develop procedures to phase-in the purchase of supplies on a just-in-time basis.

Moving to just-in-time purchases of supplies will allow the district to invest monies previously tied up in inventory.

With the exception of paper, the district should stop ordering supplies immediately and gradually reduce inventory by using the supplies in the Warehouse through May 2003. The district should liquidate the remaining inventory items at that time. Once these supplies have been liquidated, the district should begin purchasing supplies from discount vendors as needed. The discount vendors should deliver all supplies directly to schools and departments.

The district should continue to store copier paper in the Warehouse for delivery to the schools and departments. The personnel located at the warehouse who deliver mail to the district's facilities should deliver copier paper to the schools and departments, as needed.

The assistant Warehouse supervisor should assume responsibility for mail delivery and the remaining supply distribution and inventory functions at the Warehouse. The Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager, who also oversees fixed assets and custodial operations for the district should be assigned to only those duties.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance to develop procedures to implement just-in-time purchasing.	October 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager to stop ordering supplies for warehouse stock, except copier paper.	December 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the Purchasing agent to obtain contracts for the district to purchase supplies on a just-in-time basis.	January 2003
4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the	July 2003

	Warehouse/Fixed Assets manager to liquidate the remaining supplies inventory.	
5.	The superintendent recommends the elimination of the inventory clerk, foreman, one receiver/stocker/mail position and one receiver/stocker position to the board and receives approval.	July 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The total annual savings realized by implementing this recommendation is based on the salaries of $94,904 for the positions eliminated and the liquidation of supplies. First-year salary savings are prorated.

The calculation for this fiscal impact is shown below:

Eliminate inventory clerk position:		
Annual salary	$14,973	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16	
	$17,369	
Fixed benefits	$2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$19,871
Eliminate foreman position:		
Annual salary	$20,820	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.23	
	$25,609	
Fixed benefits	+ $2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$28,111
Eliminate stocker/receiver and stocker/receiver/mail positions:		
Annual salary (average salary for positions of $17,040 x 2)	$34,080	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.23	
	$41,918	
Fixed benefits times two	+ $5,004	

Total annual salary and benefits		$46,922
Savings from eliminating the three positions:		**$94,904**
Current value of inventory	$272,846	
Estimated percentage of inventory consumed by May 2003	x .50	
	$136,423	
Estimated return on value of liquidated inventory	x .10	
One-time Savings from liquidating the inventory:		**$13,642**

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Eliminate positions.	$7,909	$94,904	$94,904	$94,904	$94,904
Liquidate warehouse inventory.	$13,642	$0	$0	$0	$0
Net Savings/(Costs)	**$21,551**	**$94,904**	**$94,904**	**$94,904**	**$94,904**

Chapter 8
PURCHASING AND WAREHOUSING

C. TEXTBOOKS

An effective textbook operation includes the acquisition of appropriate textbooks, delivery of the textbooks to the schools and maintaining an inventory of textbooks issued to the schools and held centrally by the district.

The textbook administration division of the TEA is responsible for overseeing the selection and distribution of textbooks for all public schools in Texas. According to the textbook administration division, "Texas is one of 22 states with a process for approval or adoption of instructional materials. The Texas Constitution, Article VII, Section 3, requires that the State Board of Education (SBOE) set aside sufficient money to provide free textbooks for children attending the public schools in the state."

Textbooks that are free from factual errors and contain material covering each element of essential knowledge and skills are available from TEA for selection by local school districts. These textbooks are provided to the districts at no cost. The textbooks are the property of the state for as long as they remain in adoption by the state. The districts are responsible to the state for lost textbooks. Once the textbooks go out of adoption, the district may return the textbooks to the state or dispose of them in a manner approved by the state. DISD policies about textbooks mirror the state laws and regulations on textbooks.

School districts must comply with Chapter 31 of the TEC in the adoption, use and disposition of textbooks. TEC Section 31.104(a) states, "The board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school may delegate to an employee the authority to requisition, distribute, and manage the inventory of textbooks in a manner consistent with this chapter and rules adopted under this chapter." DISD has designated a textbook custodian to perform these duties.

DISD's textbook custodian reports to the deputy superintendent. The textbook custodian has a secretary to assist with the responsibilities of managing the textbooks, valued at $4.7 million for the 10,451 district students. The district maintains a central warehouse for textbooks not issued to students. Two-part time employees assist the textbook custodian, who is responsible for the receipt, marking and delivery of the textbooks to the schools as well as the annual textbook inventory. The district

provides temporary help during the summer to assist with the textbook inventory.

The deputy superintendent is responsible for the textbook adoption process. Board Policy EFAA (Local) states, "...the District textbook adoption committee shall make recommendations to the Board regarding the selection of instructional materials to be adopted at each textbook adoption cycle. All members of the textbook adoption committee shall be selected from the appropriate subject areas which are a part of the current adoption cycle." The textbook committee also includes the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, program directors and principals, as appropriate. DISD adopts textbooks from the conforming list provided by TEA. The district selects and adopts a single textbook for each subject and grade level. The adopted textbook is used for the entire period of the adoption cycle. Each student in DISD is issued textbooks for all subjects.

DISD's Board Policy CMD (Local) makes students accountable for lost or damaged textbooks. However, the policy also states, "No student shall be excluded from classes or activities or have grades withheld for failure to pay costs due for textbooks." The textbook custodian said that the schools are required to pay for lost and damaged textbooks for which students do not pay.

Exhibit 8-7 presents opinions from students, parents and staff about textbook functions in DISD.

Exhibit 8-7
Survey Results for Textbooks

Students						
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**No Response**
There are enough textbooks in all my classes.	12.6%	44.7%	6.8%	24.3%	9.7%	1.9%
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	11.7%	55.3%	9.7%	16.5%	4.9%	1.9%
Textbooks are in good shape.	4.9%	26.2%	13.6%	30.1%	24.3%	1.0%
Parents						

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	11.5%	53.0%	11.0%	15.5%	9.0%	0.0%
Textbooks are in good shape.	11.0%	49.5%	11.0%	15.5%	13.0%	0.0%

Teachers

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	6.7%	30.0%	10.0%	36.7%	16.7%	0.0%
Textbooks are in good shape.	6.7%	60.0%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%	0.0%

Administrators

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	5.3%	49.3%	18.7%	17.3%	9.3%	0.0%
Textbooks are in good shape.	2.7%	33.3%	6.7%	30.7%	26.7%	0.0%

Principals

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Textbooks are in good shape.	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: TSPR surveys, April 2002.

While students, administrators and parents agreed or strongly agreed that textbooks are issued in a timely manner, 53.4 percent of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

FINDING

DISD does not have an automated system for tracking textbooks. The textbook custodian uses a spreadsheet for each school to track inventory. There is no spreadsheet used to keep track of the textbooks in the textbook warehouse. The textbook custodian must update the school's spreadsheet each time textbooks are issued to a school; update each school's spreadsheet for transfers between schools; review each school's spreadsheet for textbooks that are out of adoption; and manually add the quantity of each textbook at the schools to determine the district's inventory of a particular textbook.

A manual system for tracking textbooks is time intensive and subject to errors due to the number of spreadsheets that must be updated. The district is at risk of not having an accurate inventory of the textbooks in the schools. The district does not know how many textbooks it has in total during the year, since the district does not maintain a spreadsheet for the central warehouse. Previously, the district used the Hayes Software System to maintain and track textbook inventories, but the license was not renewed.

Robstown ISD (RISD) uses Hayes Software Systems to maintain and track textbook inventories. The automated inventory system contains the textbook name, edition and current costs and is constantly updated with current TEA textbook information. As part of the annual fee, software updates are sent any time TEA adds or deletes textbooks from its list, or when textbook prices change. The district tallies the number of each textbook it has and records what school has how many of each assigned textbook. RISD also conducts random checks to verify that students have the textbooks they are supposed to have and that certain textbooks are not lost or damaged.

Recommendation 69:

Purchase an automated textbook tracking system.

The district should purchase one license for the textbook custodian. The textbook custodian should use the system and include all textbooks in the inventory tracking system for the district's inventory. This will provide the district with an automated system to assist in textbook inventories and control.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The deputy superintendent directs the textbook custodian to work with the Technology Department and the Purchasing	October 2002

	Department to research automated textbook systems.	
2.	The textbook custodian recommends a system to the deputy superintendent.	November 2002
3.	The deputy superintendent authorizes the purchase of the recommended system using the appropriate procurement method.	November 2002
4.	The Technology Department installs the system and prepares training for all appropriate district employees.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This fiscal impact of this recommendation includes the estimated cost of the system and the annual maintenance fee. The initial system cost is based on purchasing one license at $1,295. Future years annual cost is based on the annual maintenance fee of $200.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Purchase an automated textbook tracking system.	($1,295)	$0	$0	$0	$0
Annual Maintenance Fee.	$0	($200)	($200)	($200)	($200)
Net Savings/(Costs)	**($1,295)**	**($200)**	**($200)**	**($200)**	**($200)**

Chapter 8
PURCHASING AND WAREHOUSING

D. CONTRACTING PROCESS

School districts with effective contracting processes monitor and evaluate services received from external entities. The contracting process includes activities involved in the procurement and evaluation of services from external entities. School districts must perform a myriad of activities in order to support its primary function, educating students. Many school districts contract for services they do not have the expertise, workers or equipment to perform. Examples of these types of services are transportation, food service, pest management services and landscaping services. Other services, such as audit services, are contracted because of state laws or rules. Districts evaluate the services received based on evaluation criteria included in the contract for services.

Comptroller Rylander says, "all goods and services should be put 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. Whether a district has decided to contract out the operation of some function in its entirety, contract for management services, or conduct all phases of the operation in-house, regular evaluation is necessary to ensure that the highest quality services are delivered at the lowest price. Simply put, when analyzing the operations of the various functional areas, regular cost/benefit analyses are needed to evaluate whether there are goods or services that can be obtained from the private sector at a lower cost, higher quality or both."

DISD uses contracted services for waste disposal, food service equipment repair, pest control, termite treatment, telephone maintenance, uniform cleaning and mail sorting services. The district also uses contracted services for auditing, financial advice, bond counsel, architectural services and legal services. Various other services are contracted on an as needed basis. The district does not contract any major support services such as transportation, food service, maintenance or custodial services.

The review team analyzed the contracts for waste disposal, food service equipment repair, pest control, termite treatment, telephone maintenance and uniform cleaning. The district's legal counsel prepared the contracts for all of these services except waste disposal, which is a standard form contract. The contracts' terms are between one and three years. The terms specify the services to be provided and the cost to be paid by the district. DISD bid all of the services except the mail sorting service within the last

two years. The district has requested proposals for audit, legal services and financial advisory services in the last two years.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the department requesting the service and Purchasing are involved in the procurement and negotiation process for the services. The individual departments monitor the contract performance and submit the requests for payment for the services.

The district has entered into a number of significant contracts for the construction and renovation of facilities. The district uses the American Institute of Architects (AIA) standard form agreements as modified by its legal counsel as the basis for construction contracts. The following summarizes the bid process for construction contracts:

- the architect of record provides the specifications for the project;
- the district advertises the bid;
- the district receives and opens the bids;
- the district provides a tabulation of the bids;
- the architect and district review the bids;
- the architect and assistant superintendent for Business and Finance make a recommendation to the superintendent;
- the superintendent recommends the bid to the board for approval; and
- the board approves the bid.

The district uses a construction manager-at-risk method for construction projects. A construction manager-at-risk is a company that assumes the risk for the construction of a facility at a contracted price. The company acts as a general contractor and provides consultation to the district regarding construction during and after the design of the facility. This method provides the district with a cap on the construction costs for the project. The construction manager-at-risk assumes all responsibility for costs that exceed the contract price.

FINDING

DISD does not have a contract calendar and continues to use vendors with expired contracts. In 1997, the district issued a request for proposal (RFP) for architectural services. The architect selected continues to provide architectural services to the district even though the contract expired in 1999. DISD also continues to use a contractor for presort mail service whose contract has expired. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance was not aware the contract had expired.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance administers contracts for the district but relies on the department heads to keep contracts current. The architect of record contract, providing that a retainer be paid for architectural services, expired in 1999 and was not renewed since the architect bills the district on a project basis and a separate contract is issued for each project with the terms and fees specified at that time.

Without contracts, the district puts itself at risk of not receiving appropriate services from the vendors. The district is also at risk of paying more for the services than agreed since the price for the services is not established in writing.

Some school districts have contract management processes that include a contract calendar. The contract calendar includes the vendor name, contracted service, initial contract date, contract price and contract expiration date. The contract administrator reviews the calendar monthly to determine which contracts will expire in the next 90 days. This provides the time necessary to renegotiate the contract or issue an RFP or bid, if necessary.

Recommendation 70:

Develop a contract calendar and ensure that it is monitored and updated as necessary.

The contract calendar will help the district ensure it has current contracts for all contracted services. The district also will benefit from having a contract calendar by having a contract to ensure the district pays the negotiated cost.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance develops a contract calendar.	October 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews all district contracts and includes the vendor name, contracted service, initial contract date, contract price and contract expiration date on the contract calendar.	October 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews the contract calendar monthly to determine which contracts will expire in the next 90 days and to ensure any new contract that was executed during the prior month has been included in the calendar.	Monthly
4.	The assistant superintendent renegotiates the contract or issues a	Ongoing

	request for proposal or bid, if necessary.	

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 9
COMPUTERS ANS TECHNOLOGY

This chapter reviews the Donna Independent School District's (DISD's) use of computers and technology in the following sections:

A. Organization, Staffing and Budgeting
B. Policies, Procedures and Planning
C. Infrastructure, Software, Hardware and Operations

The responsibilities of the information technology (IT) departments in school districts vary. Some IT departments support administrative functions only. Others, such as DISD's, support administration and classroom instructional programs. School district IT offices are generally responsible for a number of duties, including:

- the district's information technology infrastructure, including the implementation, support and administration of the district's wide area network (WAN);
- support for Local Area Networks (LANs) in schools and administrative offices;
- maintenance of the district's Internet Web site;
- operation and support of Management Information Systems, including programming services and custom database and report-writing services;
- management of computer security, power backup and electronic file storage procedures;
- operation of technical support or help desks;
- management and operation of computer repair;
- support for classroom computer laboratories;
- support for the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and other state and federal reporting;
- creation of standards for computer hardware and software;
- preparation of classroom teachers to use and integrate technology;
- instructional technology technical support;
- management and technology upgrades to support applications; and
- defining the technical infrastructure for instruction, including training teachers to use technology in their classrooms, integrating technology into the curriculum, supporting technologies used for instruction and developing and delivering technology training.

BACKGROUND

From 1999-2001, the DISD spent more than $4.25 million in grant funding to build the technology infrastructure and improve the quality of

technology equipment in the district. DISD received the majority of its grant funding from E-Rate funding. A federal grant available through the Telecommunications Act of 1996, E-Rate funding offers nonprofit, K-12 schools discounts of 20 to 90 percent on telecommunications services, Internet access and internal connections.

Since 1999, the district also received significant funding from the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF). TIF grants pay for an advanced telecommunications infrastructure and technology training (**Exhibit 9-1**).

Exhibit 9-1
Grant Funds Received by DISD
1999-2001

Year	Source	Amount
1999	TIF Grant	$159,999
1999	E-Rate Grant	$1,900,000
2000	TIF Grants	$400,000
2000	E-Rate Grant	$1,200,000
2001	TIF Grants	$200,000
2001	E-Rate Grant	$400,000
Total		**$4,259,999**

Source: DISD Technology Department, April 2002.

The district spent more than $2 million on technology-related expenditures from 1999-2000. **Exhibit 9-2** lists DISD budgeted technology expenditures for the three-year period of 1998-99 through 2000-01. The $783,322 spent in 2000-01 translates into $76 per student.

Exhibit 9-2
DISD Technology Expenditures
1998-99 through 2000-01

Object Description	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Salaries or Wages-Teachers and Other Prof Personnel	$38,629	$92,397	$117,043
Salaries or Wages for Support Personnel	$265,978	$307,825	$363,458

Social Security/Medicare	$3,143	$4,438	$5,531
Group Health and Life Insurance	$29,245	$30,340	$47,162
Workers' Compensation	$2,959	$3,885	$4,660
Teacher Retirement/TRS Care - On-Behalf Payments	$17,030	$26,035	$23,819
Unemployment Compensation	$770	$1,009	$1,210
Teacher Retirement/TRS Care	$3,177	$4,701	$3,199
Employee Benefits	$113	$15	$30
Professional Services	$42,622	$19,681	$1,525
Education Service Center Services	$15,288	$10,594	$1,035
Contracted Maintenance and Repair	$5,797	$17,817	$14,441
Rentals-Operating Leases	$2,850	$3,016	$3,027
Miscellaneous Contracted Services	$29,296	$32,621	$10,185
Reading Materials	$1,068	$1,014	$976
General Supplies	$40,905	$38,908	$53,180
Travel and Subsistence-Employee Only	$8,762	$26,051	$21,767
Miscellaneous Operating Costs	$38,387	$38,265	$47,066
Capital Lease Principal	$3,475	$2,391	$0
Capital Lease Interest	$415	$84	$0
Furniture, Equipment, and Software	$0	$0	$5,582
Fixed Assets-Other-Locally Defined Groupings	$35,772	$89,887	$58,426
Total	**$585,681**	**$750,974**	**$783,322**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 1998-99 through 2000-01.

On average, DISD spent nearly twice as much on technology per student as its peer districts in 2000-01. DISD spent almost six times as much per student as San Benito.(**Exhibit 9-3**).

Exhibit 9-3
Technology Actual Expenditures
DISD vs. Peer Districts
2000-01

	San Benito	Eagle Pass	Rio Grande City	Edgewood	Mission	Donna
Total Expenditures	$117,593	$376,320	$308,381	$487,636	$522,393	**$783,322**
Enrollment	8,864	12,515	8,512	12,983	12,464	**10,332**
Per Student	$13.27	$30.07	$36.23	$37.56	$41.91	**$75.82**

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2000-01.

Grant funding and local technology funds allowed the district to attain a 2.9:1 student-to-computer ratio. The district also has a staff-to-computer ratio of 1.6:1 that includes a computer in every classroom.

Exhibit 9-4 compares DISD's student-to-computer ratio to its peer districts.

Exhibit 9-4
Student to Computer Ratio
DISD vs. Peer Districts
May 2002

District	Students	Instructional Computers	Student-to-Computer Ratio
Donna	**10,451**	**3,620**	**2.9:1**
Edgewood	13,435	4,023	3.3:1
Eagle Pass	12,778	3,200	4.0:1
Rio Grande City	8,906	2,875	3.1:1
Mission Cons.	13,122	5,000	2.6:1
San Benito Cons.	9,102	3,438	2.6:1

Source: Peer districts, DISD documentation 2002 and TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.

An inventory report created by the district highlights the assortment of computer brand names. With the exception of two Apple MacIntosh computers, the district computer inventory contains Intel-chip computers. **Exhibit 9-5** lists the brand name and inventory count of computers at DISD.

Exhibit 9-5
DISD Computer Brand and Count
May 2002

Brand	Number
Dell	2,874
IBM	608
Acer	235
Compaq	141
Gateway	73
Other PC	42
MacIntosh	2

Source: DISD Technology Department Inventory Summary, May 2002.

The assortment of computer brand names does not pose a support problem for the Technology Department. With the exception of the two Apple computers, every computer in the district uses the same operating system design and similar components.

DISD uses a variety of software packages to assist in the educational process in the district such as Accelerated Reader, Compass Learning, A+ Advantage, Reader Rabbit and Learn to Type. The Special Education Department uses the Comprehensive Learner Adapted Scope and Sequence (CLASS) program to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students enrolled in special education.

Teachers, district administrators and department personnel use technology to help accomplish their jobs in the district. All schools use the Comprehensive Information Management System (CIMS) and Student Discipline Management software to manage student information. CIMS software also manages the business and financial information for the district. The School Nutrition Services Department uses the Bon Appetit software to manage its processes. The Transportation Department uses Edulog to help optimize its operations.

In addition to specialized software packages available to DISD departments, standard software packages are used to enhance district operations, such as Lotus Notes, Microsoft applications and several computer graphics packages.

Chapter 9
COMPUTERS ANS TECHNOLOGY

A. ORGANIZATION, STAFFING AND BUDGETING

To ensure that a Technology Department is well staffed, well managed and carries out its goals and objectives, it must report to a senior level within an organization. In DISD, the Technology Department reports to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.

The DISD Technology Department is divided into two support groups as shown in **Exhibit 9-6**.Most management duties for the Technology Department rest with the two support group supervisors.

Exhibit 9-6
DISD Technology Department
2001-02
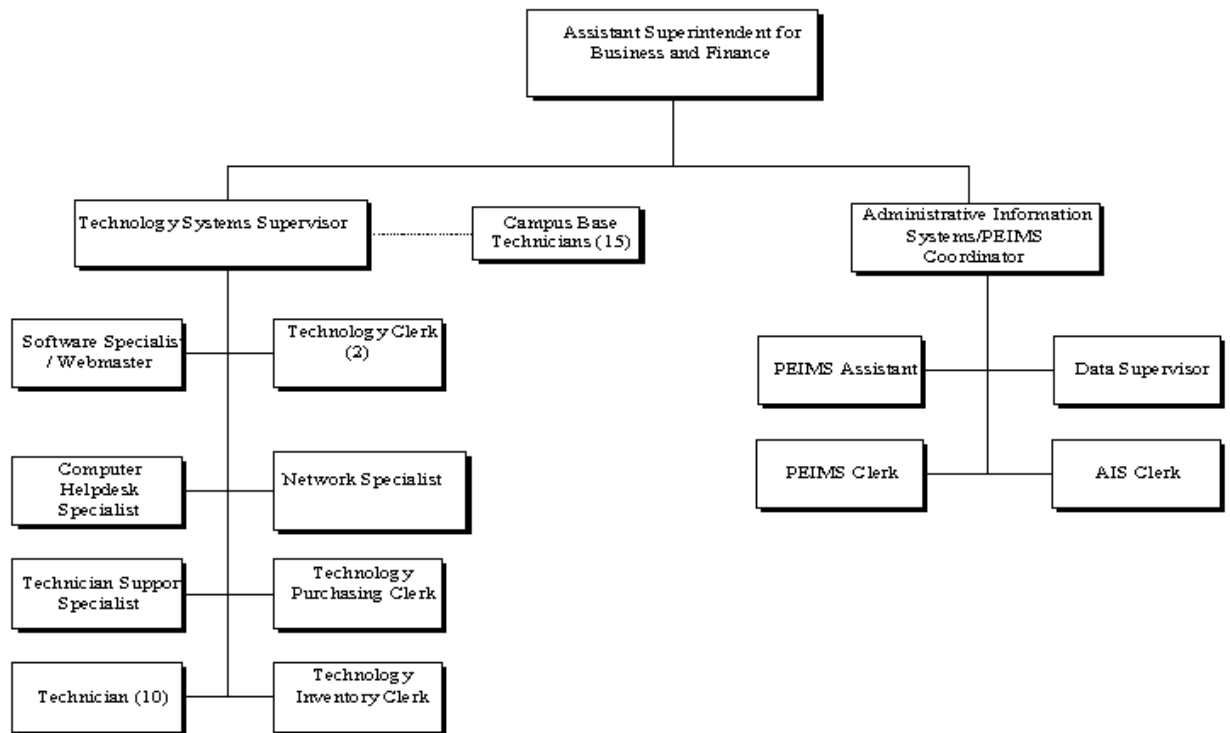
Source: DISD Technology Department, April 2002.

The larger group, Technology Support, supports all areas of technology in the district including infrastructure, district users, software and hardware. In addition to the district technicians, each school has a campus-based technician (CBT), a teacher or administrator who provides the first level of technology support. CBTs review all technology problems in a school and,

on average, can solve about 50 percent of the problems. The 10 field technicians, combined with the efforts of the CBTs and other support personnel, provide an adequate level of support for the district.

The Technology Systems supervisor leads Technology Support. A Technician Support Specialist assists the Technology Systems supervisor with the daily management of the group. The Technician Support Specialist's role is to support the field technicians by making manufacturer service calls, managing technology parts and specialized tools and coordinating the support schedule.

The Software Specialist/Webmaster creates and hosts technology training for teachers and administrators. The Help Desk specialist, who receives 30 to 40 calls a day, answers users' questions and provides additional user support.

Administrative Information Systems (AIS), which consists of an AIS/PEIMS coordinator, two application developers and two administrative assistants, supports and manages the PEIMS data. PEIMS data are comprised of the financial, attendance and demographic information the Texas Education Agency (TEA) requires school districts to report. The state uses PEIMS data to determine funding levels for school districts, and many grant programs use PEIMS data to determine program eligibility. The group manages the district's PEIMS training, data collection and reporting process. DISD's Technology Department employs 24 people, a number considerably larger than any of its peer districts (**Exhibit 9-7**).

Exhibit 9-7
Technology Department
DISD vs. Peer Districts
April 2002

District	Administrative	Technology Support	School-Based Technology Assistants
Donna	**1 Administrative Information Systems Coordinator** **1 PEIMS Assistant** **1 PEIMS Clerk** **1 AIS Clerk** **1 Data Supervisor**	**1 Technology Systems Supervisor** **1 Software Spec. - Webmaster** **1 Network Specialist** **1 Computer Helpdesk Specialist** **1 Technology Inventory Clerk**	**15 Campus Technology Specialist**

		1 Technician Support Specialist 10 Technicians 2 Technology Clerks 1 Technology Purchasing Clerk	
Edgewood	1 Director of Technology 1 Secretary/Help Desk Administrator	1 Network Administrator, 1 LAN Technician, 1 QC/QA Inspector - LAN Tech, 2 Senior Technician - Trainer, 2 Technicians	None
Mission	1 Technology director 1 Coordinator for Instructional Tech. 1 Secretary	1 Network Specialist, 6 Technicians	None
Eagle Pass	1 Technology Coordinator 1 Technology Clerk	4 Computer Technicians	None
Rio Grande City	1 Technology Supervisor 1 Administrative Assistant	3 Technicians	15 School-Based Tech.
San Benito	1 Director of Technology 1 Office Manager/Helpdesk	5 Technicians 1 Network Administrator 1 Telecommunications Specialist	15 Campus Technology Representatives

Source: Peer district surveys and DISD organization chart, April 2002.

FINDING

By creating a Technician Support Specialist position, DISD's Technology Department has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of its field technicians. Created by redefining the job duties of a field technician, the Technician Support Specialist assists field technicians with inventory management and the coordination of service repairs for warranty equipment. In addition, the Technician Support Specialist's role reduces the number of administrative tasks for field technicians, allowing them to

focus on technical issues and problem resolution. This creates a faster response time to technology problems facing the district.

In one day, the Technician Support Specialist ordered 18 replacement parts in three hours for six field technicians. The specialist said on average, it takes a technician 30 minutes to order just one part. Ordering multiple parts during the same phone call improves district efficiency.

The Technician Support Specialist also performs three or four warranty checks a day, saving field technicians a trip back to the Technology Center. The specialist follows up with vendors on a daily basis to resolve outstanding service issues. The Technician Support Specialist is in radio contact with all field technicians, which allows the direction of resources to the appropriate location.

COMMENDATION

The creation of a Technician Support Specialist position increases the service level of the Technology Department.

FINDING

A lack of coordinated management causes important management functions in the Technology Department to be overlooked. In addition to many other duties, the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance is responsible for the Technology Department. His job description states the position is to "direct and manage the operation of all financial and business affairs of the district" and to "serve as the chief financial advisor" to the district. The job description does not include any reference to the management of technology in the district. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance said 85 to 90 percent of his time is spent managing the financial duties of the position, leaving 10 to 15 percent of his time to manage the Technology Department. This situation not only limits his attention to the Technology Department, but also takes away from his primary responsibility of managing district business operations.

Two supervisors share the management of daily technology activities in the Technology Department. Both supervisors have other primary responsibilities, so no single individual has the responsibility for managing the department full-time. Many districts employ a full-time Technology director who, besides providing daily coordinated supervision of district technology, is also responsible for:

- developing a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for the department;

- reviewing department efficiency and identifying areas of improvement;
- reviewing the integration of technology into the classroom;
- advocating more training for district personnel; and
- ensuring the Technology Department follows industry best practices.

Each of DISD's peer districts have a Technology director who is directly responsible for the day-to-day management of the Technology Department.

The mid-point salary for a department-level director (grade level 6) in DISD is $63,885. Mission ISD and Rio Grande ISD are the peer districts DISD selected as peer districts for this report based on similar enrollment, percent of economically disadvantaged student population and property wealth. Mission ISD Technology director earns a salary between $60,000 and $70,000, while Rio Grande ISD Technology director earns between $50,000 and $71,000. Peer district salary ranges indicate that the $63,885 salary for a Technology director in DISD is comparable to peer districts.

Recommendation 71:

Create a Technology director position that reports directly to the superintendent.

A Technology director will provide the leadership to restructure the Technology Department. The Technology director provides managerial guidance for the department and assumes responsibility for the findings of this report. Strong managerial direction will enable the department to address the needs of the district.

A good job description for a Technology director position should include the following list of performance criteria:

- coordinates instructional technology systems;
- applies the findings of research and district studies to improve the use of instructional technology;
- provides guidance in the selection of technology equipment;
- facilitates the incorporation of existing technology;
- provides instructional resources and materials to teachers;
- designs methods to streamline district processes;
- works in collaboration with others to develop and support DISD's technology infrastructure and implementation;
- monitors various school improvement plans; and
- uses evaluative findings to determine which goals and objectives of the technology plan are met.

Due to the important financial duties of the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the Technology director should report directly to the superintendent. This will allow the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance to focus on his primary job responsibilities. Reporting to the superintendent also ensures direct support from the highest level.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and the Personnel director create a job description and salary range for a Technology director.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent gains the approval of the school board to hire a Technology director and to make a budget amendment to fund the position.	December 2002
3.	The Personnel Department initiates the search process for a qualified Technology director.	February 2003
4.	The superintendent interviews qualified candidates and recommends a candidate to the board.	February - March 2003
5.	The board votes to approve the candidate.	March 2003
6.	The newly hired Technology director begins work in the district.	April 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of adding a Technology director is $76,609 annually. This fiscal impact is estimated by taking the mid-point salary for a department-level director (grade level 6) of $63,885 and adding annual benefits ([$63,885 x 1.16] + $2,502 = $76,609). The fiscal impact for the first year of implementation (April through August 2003) is $31,920 ([$76,609/12] x 5 months).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Create a Technology director position that reports directly to the superintendent.	($31,920)	($76,609)	($76,609)	($76,609)	($76,609)

Chapter 9
COMPUTERS ANS TECHNOLOGY

B. POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PLANNING

The Texas Education Code, Section 11.252, 3 (D), requires each school district improvement plan to include provisions for integrating technology into instructional and administrative programs. Some districts compile these plans with few of the elements required to improve its technology effectively. For example, technology plans normally contain goals and strategies for instructional technology but contain little about the effective use of technology to automate or streamline administrative functions. The best plans contain clear goals, objectives and action plans for technology projects, assign individual responsibility for implementation steps and identify milestone dates for completion.

Planning for the use of new technologies is particularly important to education due to the factors listed below.

- **Equity:** The level of technological resources available to each school in a district can vary. Poorly planned introductions of new technology can serve to further increase the inequities between schools. Careful planning at the district level ensures all schools receive adequate, appropriate and consistent support and helps guarantee that no student is excluded from the benefits of new technology.

- **Rapid Change:** The pace of technological change continues to accelerate. The district must allow for an adequate time period of three to five years to implement new technology.

- **Funding:** Funding can be the greatest barrier to using technology effectively in the classroom. Unless planning addresses whether and how projects will be funded, limited funding can have a greater impact than it should.

- **Credibility:** Thorough planning makes it possible to demonstrate proposed strategies and acquisitions of technological resources are carefully considered and every aspect of the implementation is cost effective.

To implement information technology in administrative offices or classrooms, a school district must have an extensive computer network connecting modern computers; comprehensive, administrative and instructional software; up-to-date operating systems; ongoing training;

adequate technical support; and a professional staff capable of administering a technology-rich environment. Each of these components should be addressed in a district's technology plan.

DISD developed a four-year technology plan in 2000 that outlines the development and further introduction of technology for the district between 2001 and 2004. The plan lists the objectives, responsible personnel, timelines, projected costs and the evaluation standards for four goals designed to meet the state's long-range criteria. The goals listed in the long-range technology plan for DISD include:

- provide for the instructional needs of teachers and the learning needs of students;
- provide district personnel with the preparation and professional development needed to demonstrate proficiency in using technologies effectively;
- establish a technological infrastructure that promotes communication and learning with the district and community; and
- provide administrative and support staff with the technological tools needed to accomplish their planning and strengthen administrators' role in technology decision-making.

The DISD long-range technology plan has met the standards set forth in the April 2000 report *Helping Schools Make Technology Work*. The report states, "The most effective technology plans contain clear goals, objectives and action plans for technology projects. They assign individual responsibility for implementation steps and set deadlines."

The district has a long-range technology plan. The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the AIS/PEIMS coordinator and the technology systems supervisor meet annually to determine the implementation strategies for the approaching school year.

Additionally, DISD has a well-defined purchasing and inventory process for technology. District staff and departments start the purchasing process by completing a purchase request form and submitting it to school administrators for approval. Administrators rely on local technology committees to assess the need and benefit of purchasing the requested technology. The administrators send the approved request to the Technology Department for review. After the final specifications for the request are defined, the Technology Department enters the information into a purchasing database shared with the Purchasing Department. The Purchasing Department combines similar purchase requests to take advantage of better pricing available for larger orders and releases bid request every two weeks. The Technology Department reviews all technology related bids to ensure the vendors' bids meet specifications.

When purchases arrive, the Purchasing Department directs the technology items to the Technology Department. This allows the Technology Department to inspect the equipment, add it to inventory, set up the equipment and install it for the user.

The Technology Department assists the Fixed Assets Department with inventory control throughout the year. The Technology Department maintains an inventory list and performs an inventory check at the beginning and end of each school year. The campus-based technicians assist the Technology Department with the inventory check.

The comprehensive purchasing and inventory system in place tracks the location of technology assets. When assets are lost or stolen, the Technology Department provides a complete description, including serial numbers, of any missing equipment to the district police department.

FINDING

The Technology Department hosts biennial computer "Trade Shows" to educate district personnel about technology issues and assist with purchasing decisions. Potential vendors are invited to display and represent their computers in the Technology Department. Designated teachers, librarians, administrators and Technology Department staff review the technology and ask questions.

Trade shows present several benefits to the district: personnel involved in the purchasing process obtain hands-on experience with technology products on display, and exposure to competing products enables the district to choose the best products at the best price.

Another benefit of the trade show is to determine "added value." Many times the only distinguishing product characteristic is the vendor's commitment to quality, support and satisfaction. District personnel can ask technology representatives about the products on display and learn about available training, discount options and vendor-sponsored events.

COMMENDATION

Technology "Trade Shows" hosted by the Technology Department provides district personnel the opportunity to review various vendors' technology at the same time in one location.

FINDING

Technology training is not well attended by district personnel. The Technology Department has a staff member assigned to develop and

provide technology training. The software specialist developed basic training materials for commonly used software applications including Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point and Lotus Notes. The software specialist surveys district personnel to determine training needs and develops training classes.

The department conducts training classes in the 18-computer training lab located in the Technology Department offices. The department offers training classes after school from 4-7 p.m. and during teacher in-service days. The training classes held during the four in-service days are well attended. To ensure that training sessions are cost-effective, the Technology Department sets a five-participant minimum to hold a training class. The software specialist received three requests for training in April, so no classes were held that month.

Several factors contribute to low attendance of after school training. Teachers said after-school training competes with existing professional and personal responsibilities, while in-service training fits better with their schedules. Teachers also said they had only been to in-service training and had not been asked to go to after-school training. Other teachers said the training offered was too basic for their skill level. These teachers also said some technologies they are interested in learning are not offered by the Technology Department. One teacher said a web page development training class would be well attended.

Without proper emphasis on mastering the existing technology, classroom integration of technology and the skill levels of the teachers and staff suffer. Smithville ISD (SISD) increased the use of technology in the classroom by establishing three levels of technology skill development and a timeline for achieving proficiency. SISD monitored staff development in basic technology operation, personal and professional use of technology tools and how social, ethical and human issues related to technology. Principals reviewed staff development and ensured teacher competency.

Recommendation 72:

Establish minimum standards of technological proficiency for district teachers and administrators.

With administration support, the technology skill level in the district will improve. The school board and other administrative officials should develop minimum standards for staff proficiency, provide training and encourage continued skills improvement. An evaluation tool should be created to measure competency.

The software specialist and the technology systems supervisor must adapt to the conditions in the district. The specialist should survey teachers and other district personnel to gather information on the best times and locations to schedule training. Scheduling training opportunities outside of the training lab and at the school sites would be more convenient for district staff.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the technology systems supervisor, school principals and teacher representatives review and establish technology core competency standards for district staff.	January - February 2003
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents the standards to the school board for approval.	March 2003
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance amends the district technology plan to include the competency standards.	March 2003
4.	The technology systems supervisor, principals and teacher representatives' review and update district technology training schedules.	March 2003
5.	The technology systems supervisor and Technology Department staff modify the skills assessment survey to include questions about training schedules and locations.	March 2003
6.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance distributes the skill assessment instrument to district staff.	April 2003
7.	District staff completes the skills assessment and returns it to the Technology Department.	April 2003
8.	The Technology Systems supervisor and Technology staff review skills assessment results.	April - May 2003
9.	The technology systems supervisor and technology staff review and update summer training schedule.	May 2003
10.	The technology systems supervisor and technology staff administers skills assessments and update training class schedules and topics.	Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The Technology Department does not document short-term strategies created to meet the long-range technology plan. The district has a five-year technology plan and annually reviews the plan to set short-term goals for the Technology Department.

Exhibit 9-8 summarizes the goals in the DISD long-range plan that have an implementation during the 2001-02 school year.

Exhibit 9-8
DISD Long-Range Technology Plan
2001-02 School Year Objectives
May 2002

Objective	Timeline	Evaluation
Develop strategies to meet TEKS technology.	August 2001	Evidence of curriculum documents and lesson plans.
Pilot nine-week assessment instrument to report the extent students meet TEKS technology applications.	November 2001	Nine-week assessment instrument.
Use video conferencing and distance learning to provide parents and community members information about educational services.	September 2001 - May 2002	Participant evaluation form.
Identify and communicate to the community district technology practices.	September 2001 - January 2002	Mail logs and agendas of community meetings.
Establish technology proficiencies for educators.	August 2001	List of proficiencies.
Develop a set of proficiencies for technicians in the Technology Department.	August 2001	List of sequential skills.
Design and implement online staff development to meet expectations for technician proficiency.	August 2001	List of skills mastered.
Provide high-speed access to the Internet for students and staff.	February 2002	Records of purchases and purchasing documents.

Source: DISD Long-Range Technology Plan, May 2002.

The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the technology systems supervisor and the AIS/PEIMS coordinator set the short-term strategies to implement the annual objectives in the long-range technology plan, but do not document these strategies. Lack of documentation makes the dissemination of the strategies difficult, creates staff confusion and leaves objectives open to interpretation at risk of being overlooked. As a result, the district has not completed all of its goals. For example, the district has not developed its strategies for meeting TEKS technology or designed and implemented online staff development.

To ensure that long-range goals are met, the interim steps developed to accomplish objectives need to be documented. The staff needs to be assigned to specific tasks needed to complete short-term objectives and be held accountable for completion. An important phase in the implementation of Crystal City ISD's (CCISD) long-range technology plan is identifying short-term objectives and analyzing the strategies and resources needed. The analysis is presented to the school board for approval.

Veribest ISD (VISD) documents implementation strategies and plans for achieving each goal in the long-range technology plan. This document includes the name or position responsible for the goal, a timeline, a cost estimate and an evaluation component. This process helped VISD make significant progress on their technology plan.

Recommendation 73:

Document and publish an annual technology plan designed to implement specific goals from the long-range technology plan.

On an annual basis, the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the Technology Department and other interested staff members should document and publish the short-term implementation strategies of the long-range technology plan. The short-term strategies document will help the department communicate its goals to the district and the community. The document will also help each member of the Technology Department understand how their contributions assist the district in achieving short and long-term goals.

The short-term implementation document should:

- identify the items in the long-range plan the Technology Department will achieve for that school year;
- identify the financial and personnel resources needed to accomplish each goal;
- list the steps required to achieve success; and

- list a measurable outcome to determine success.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the technology systems supervisor and the AIS/PEIMS coordinator determine which long-range technology plan objectives the district should achieve during the 2003-04 school year.	February - March 2003
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance documents the short-term implementation strategies.	March 2003
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, Technology Department staff and other contributors review the short-term implementation strategies.	April - May 2003
4.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents the short-term implementation strategies to the school board for its approval.	May 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance publishes the short-term implementation strategies for the district.	August 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The Technology Department does not review problem-tracking software reports to determine whether certain technology problems continue to occur. Support Magic, the Technology Department's problem-tracking software, contains a powerful reporting module used on a limited basis. The technology systems supervisor prints reports listing open support issues by assigned technician, but does not regularly review historical data to identify trends in support calls or equipment failures. An evaluation of Support Magic data indicated 33 percent of the open issues were more than 45 days old. **Exhibit 9-9** shows the age of open problem tickets.

Exhibit 9-9
Open Problem Tickets By Age
April 2002

Month Problem Reported	Number of Problems with Status of Open
August 2001	4

September 2001	9
October 2001	10
November 2001	22
December 2001	12
January 2002	34
February 2002	54
March 2002	129
April 2002*	161
Total	**435**

Source: Snapshot of DISD Support Magic data taken April 15, 2002.
* Through April 15, 2002.

Exhibit 9-10 shows a detail of open hardware tickets.

Exhibit 9-10
Open Hardware Problems
April 2002

Problem Category	Number of Problems with Status of Open	Percent of Total Open Hardware Problem Tickets
Monitor	26	29%
Hardware recall	17	19%
Printer/Scanner	13	14%
Undetermined	11	12%
CD/DVD	9	10%
Floppy drive/Zip drive	8	9%
Keyboard/Mouse	6	7%
Hard drive	1	1%
Total	**91**	**100%**

A review of 91 open tickets revealed 29 percent of all hardware problems involve monitors. A high percentage of problems in a single category are the type of problems a trend analysis can identify for further research and evaluation. The district has difficulty getting parts to make repairs because the monitor manufacturer preferred that monitors be returned to the vendor for repairs.

The Technology Department requires all problems and resolutions to be entered into the tracking software. The department does not have enough licenses to for all of the support staff. The lack of licenses prevents information from being recorded in the problem tracking software. Without all problems entered, the reports generated will not be as valuable. The Technology Department needs 18 additional Support Magic licenses to ensure that all staff have the ability to enter the data into the tracking system. The estimated cost for the needed licenses is $47,250.

The technology problems Support Magic captures and manages can be used as an effective tool in guiding the efforts for trouble shooting, isolation and resolution. The use of reporting for the purpose of historical analysis can:

- identify failure patterns of defective equipment;
- pinpoint software deficiencies and hardware incompatibilities;
- detect the misuse of equipment; and
- indicate training deficiencies in standard desktop software.

The department employs 10 service technicians, a network specialist and other support and administrative staff to support 4,255 computers and servers at 16 district buildings. Technology departments in many other school districts prepare reports that analyze districtwide technology problems. By using trend analysis, Technology Department resources could be deployed quickly to resolve issues and to prevent recurrences of known issues.

Top consulting companies use trend analysis to improve their customer's business processes. Using trend analysis for performance-based management, Electronic Data Systems clients improved productivity by 25 percent. The improvements clients made include a realignment of resources and pinpointing areas to improve work processes. Identifying and analyzing key performance indicators gives organizations the ability to make adjustments based what the analysis uncovers. The results of

trend analysis are improved operational focus, effectiveness and efficiency, a reduced call volume and a reduction in associated costs.

Recommendation 74:

Use problem-tracking software to better manage technology support.

The Technology Department should review existing reports available through its problem-tracking software or create new reports to identify and understand problem trends. The department should also review problem resolution response times and priority/severity reports to help manage service delivery.

With comparable problem-tracking software available at significantly less cost, the Technology Department should purchase a new software solution rather than invest in additional software licenses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The technology systems supervisor researches alternative software packages to track technology problems.	October 2002
2.	The technology systems supervisor purchases and installs the best problem-tracking software for the district.	November 2002
3.	Technology Department staff members report on a timely basis all technology problems and their resolutions.	November 2002
4.	The technology systems supervisor reviews and modifies existing reports and creates custom reports in the problem-tracking software.	November 2002
5.	The technology systems supervisor reviews and analyzes the reports.	December 2002 and Ongoing
6.	Based on report analysis, the technology systems supervisor adjusts policies, procedures and organization.	December 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of purchasing a comparable problem tracking software package is $9,910. The calculation for this fiscal impact is show below:

Core software package with five user licenses	$995	
Additional five-user license packs	$990	
Number of five-user license packs needed	x 8	

	$7,920	
Web access module with 100 user licenses	$995	
Total fiscal impact for purchasing new software:		$9,910

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Use problem-tracking software to better manage technology support.	($9,910)	$0	$0	$0	$0

Chapter 9
COMPUTERS ANS TECHNOLOGY

C. INFRASTRUCTURE, SOFTWARE, HARDWARE AND OPERATIONS

Technology infrastructure consists of cabling, phone lines, hubs, switches, routers and other devices that connect the various parts of an organization through LANs and a WAN. A high-speed infrastructure allows users to access people and information inside and outside of the organization.

Exhibit 9-11 shows the technology infrastructure for DISD.

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Exhibit 9-11
Technology Infrastructure for DISD

</div>

2002
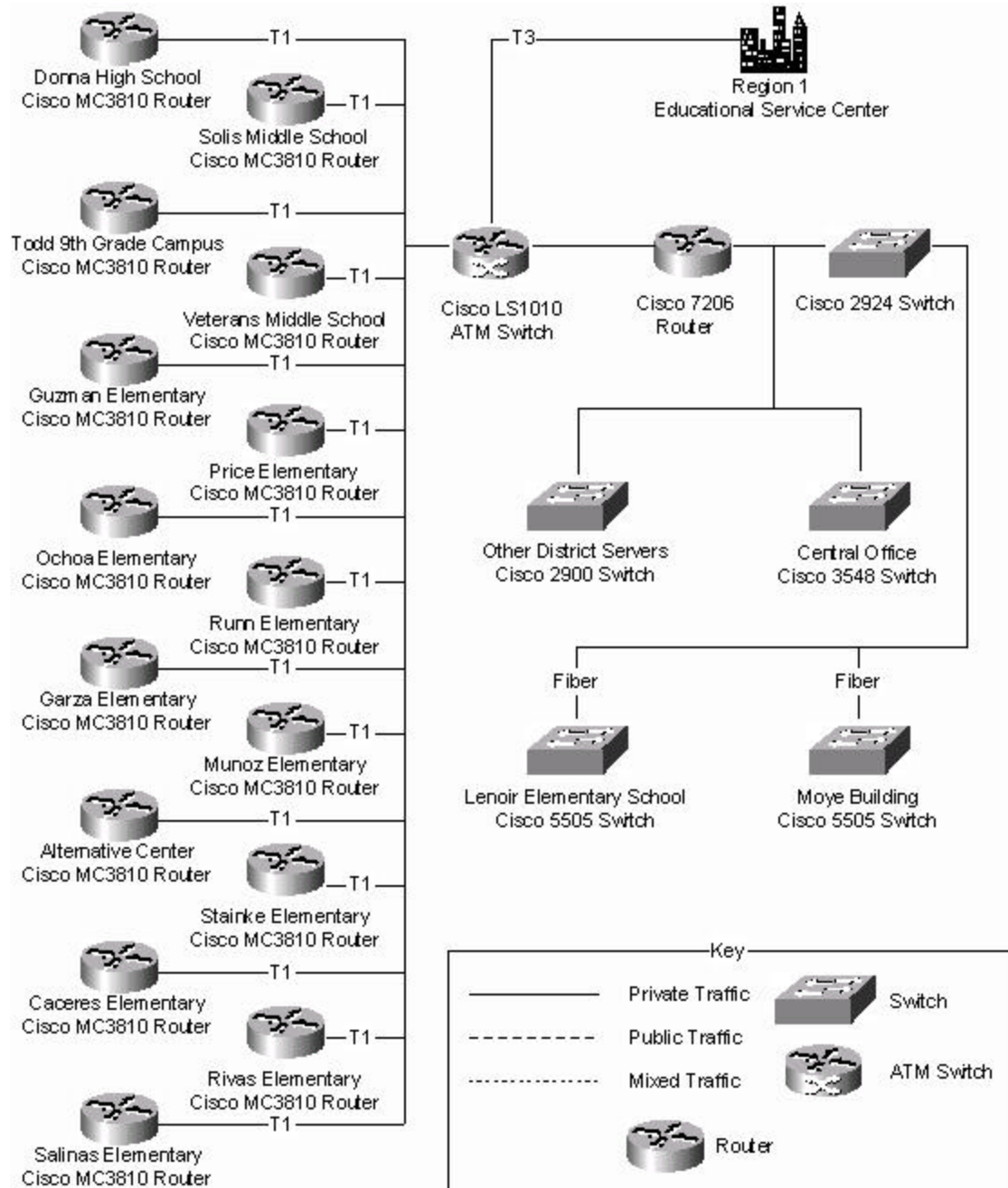
Source: DISD Technology Department, 2002.

A WAN generally provides users with tools such as electronic mail systems and links to the Internet. WANs are usually "closed," meaning security measures prevent persons outside the WAN from obtaining information housed inside the WAN without a user identification assignment and password.

A key function of a WAN is connecting LANs throughout an organization. A LAN connects users within a single building to one network. This is accomplished by running wires in ceilings throughout a building. The wires connect individual computers to each other through central computers called file servers; the rooms containing the file servers and termination points for all of the wires are called telecommunication closets. By connecting the LAN to a WAN, all LAN users gain access to others in the organization. An organization that has every user connected must have the infrastructure necessary to take full advantage of both present and future telecommunications capabilities.

While the hardware infrastructure provides the connections that permit communications and the capability to retrieve, process and disseminate information, the software makes these tools powerful resources. Software is a critical technology resource that requires close attention to serve an organization effectively. Productivity tools, such as spreadsheets and databases, make it possible for people with limited technical capabilities to perform sophisticated data manipulation that previously could only be performed on a larger mainframe.

Any analysis of a school district's technology should include the type of hardware available to staff, teachers and students. While computers are the predominant hardware resource, other resources include televisions, scanners, digital cameras, color printers, probes and calculators.

Computers used for instruction should have sufficient speed to support recently developed multimedia courseware and provide access to the Internet. Computers used for administrative purposes need sufficient memory and speed to use the advanced software tools available for data storage, manipulation and analysis. Administrative computers should be networked. The speed and memory of a computer should fit its role. For instance, a computer to be used to teach keyboarding in an elementary school does not need to be Internet-capable and multimedia-ready.

FINDING

Documentation and labeling of the network configuration are insufficient. The Technology Department does not have complete documentation for either the physical configuration of the network equipment or the software configuration of the network equipment. Without proper documentation, the Technology Department is unable to provide accurate information needed for audits or minimize the risks associated with network changes. As a result of not having complete network documentation, the district is at significant risk of extended network outages due to component failure.

When a network component needs replacement, the network specialist configures the new component's settings. Network component documentation provides the network specialist with a reliable picture of what the settings should be. Replacing a well-documented router, a network device used to connect multiple LANs, should take about an hour. Depending on the complexity of the settings, replacing a router without documentation can take between two and four hours.

Industry standards stipulate that network documentation details the physical connections between devices at each facility, and recommends all connections and devices be clearly labeled. The standards call for documenting the Internet Protocol (IP) address allocation for each network device and advise a policy requiring a backup file for each network device configuration.

Incomplete labeling of network wiring risks extending service times. A computer is typically connected to the network through a series of cables. The cabling segments of a typical network include:

- a connection between the computer and a network outlet, usually on a wall;
- a connection between network outlets and a patch panel, usually using cables inside walls and through ceilings. A patch panel is a piece of hardware that collects an average of 40 network outlet connections; and
- a connection between the patch panel and network hardware, like a router.

If a user experiences a network outage, incomplete cable labeling can increase the time needed to identify the problem. If a network outage is narrowed to a network-wiring problem, identifying the bad wiring is difficult without proper labeling. A technician cannot easily match the network outlet experiencing the problem with the corresponding outlet on the patch panel. The technician would need to identify the wire through a process of elimination. This requires interrupting network service for other users connected to the patch panel.

According to a configuration-management report published by Cisco, a leading network infrastructure company, creating documentation standards for the network configuration reduces network complexity, the amount of unplanned downtime and exposure to adverse events that impact a network's operation.

Recommendation 75:

Document the district's network configuration.

With a diagrammed network, DISD would be better able to recover from a network component failure in a timely manner. This document would enable the network specialist and other personnel to quickly install and configure network hardware and assist in upgrading the network.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The network specialist diagrams the entire network structure, including the physical configuration and each individual component setting.	October 2002
2.	The technology systems supervisor reviews the network configuration documentation.	January 2003
3.	The network specialist updates the network configuration documentation.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The Technology Department does not have a disaster recovery plan. The Technology Department backs up stored data with an automated tape system on a weekly basis. However, the tapes are not removed from the tape drive and could be destroyed or damaged during an unforeseen event such as a fire. The existing process does facilitate data recovery and system restoration due to hardware malfunction. If a more catastrophic event, such as a hurricane, flood, fire, or vandalism occurred, the data would be lost.

Standard industry practice involves removing the backup medium from the server and storing the medium off site. Storing backup tapes off site ensures that backup tapes are in a safe, climate-controlled and secure environment. Off site storage provides greater reliability for rapid data restoration in the event of a disaster. Bank safety deposit boxes are acceptable alternatives to commercial data storage services. Thorough backup procedures involve multiple sets of backups to increase recovery odds if a problem is discovered in one set of backups.

Exhibit 9-12 presents the key elements of a comprehensive disaster recovery plan.

Exhibit 9-12
Key Elements of a Disaster Recovery Plan

Build the disaster recovery team.	• 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.	• 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 time frame for starting initial operations after a security incident. • Develop a list of key personnel and their responsibilities.
Perform and/or delegate key duties.	• Develop an inventory of all computer technology assets, including data, software, hardware, documentation and supplies. • Set up a reciprocal agreement with comparable organizations to share 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 operations are resumed as soon as possible. • 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 priority delivery with vendors for emergency orders. • Identify data recovery specialists and establish emergency agreements.
Specify details within the plan.	• Identify individual roles and responsibilities by name and job title. • Define actions to be taken in advance of an occurrence or undesirable event. • Define actions to be taken at the onset of an undesirable event to limit damage, loss and compromised data integrity. • Identify actions to be taken to restore critical functions. • Define actions to be taken to re-establish normal

	operations.
Test the plan.	• Test the plan frequently and completely. • Analyze the results to improve the plan and identify further needs.
Deal with damage.	• If a disaster occurs, document all costs and videotape the damage. • Be prepared to overcome downtime on your own; insurance settlements take time to resolve.
Give consideration to other significant issues.	• Do not make a plan unnecessarily complicated. • Make one individual responsible for maintaining the plan, but have it structured so that others are authorized and prepared to implement if needed. • Update the plan regularly and whenever changes are made to your system.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Safeguarding Your Technology." (Modified by TSPR).

Recommendation 76:

Create a disaster recovery plan and improve the data backup process.

The Technology Department should update the data backup policies and procedures for school-based servers. The policies and procedures should include the use of multiple backups and off site storage of all backups.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The network specialist reviews and updates server backup policies and procedures.	October 2002
2.	The technology systems supervisor contacts local banks to research services and costs associated with obtaining a safety deposit box.	October 2002
3.	The network specialist implements new server backup policies and procedures.	November 2002
4.	The technology systems supervisor works with the purchasing supervisor to contract with a bank to obtain a	November 2002

	safety deposit box.	
5.	The Technology Department staff stores weekly data archive tapes off site.	November 2002 and Ongoing
6.	The technology systems supervisor establishes a disaster recovery team composed of department representatives from finance, payroll, purchasing, student accounting and technology.	November 2002
7.	The disaster recovery team develops a disaster recovery plan.	December 2002 - January 2003
8.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents the plan to the superintendent and school board for approval.	January 2003
9.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance communicates the plan to the appropriate personnel.	February 2003
10.	The technology systems supervisor runs a scheduled test of the plan.	February 2003
11.	The technology systems supervisor reports the results to the superintendent and school board.	March 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of adhering to best practices for disaster recovery is $893 for the first year and $85 each successive year. The first year fiscal impact is estimated by adding the cost of an additional backup tape ($3.41), multiplied by the number of additional tapes needed (237) to the $85 annual cost of a 10-inch by 10-inch safety deposit box at a local bank ([$3.41 x 237] + $85 = $893).

With 79 servers located at the school sites and implementing a 4-tape rotation for each server, the Technology Department will require 237 new tapes in addition to the existing 79 backup tapes.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Create a disaster recovery plan and improve the data backup process.	($893)	($85)	($85)	($85)	($85)

FINDING

The Technology Department has not fully implemented network management tools and does not monitor the district's bandwidth for traffic type and utilization. Network management tools allow network administrators to monitor the status of a network and to configure network components, such as routers and switches, remotely. Network monitoring tools allow network administrators to identify bandwidth slowdowns and other performance problems.

In December 2001, the district purchased a network management solution, CiscoWorks 2000, but has not installed the software. The Technology Department runs the risk of extending network outages or downtime because of a lack of resources to identify problems. A network management tool speeds the recovery from a network problem by automatically identifying failed components or isolating the cause of congestion. A network management tool also allows network administrators to manage the settings for network components from a central location. This procedure ensures consistency throughout the network and ease of recovery once a defective component has been repaired.

The district has developed a high-speed infrastructure using T1 lines and fiber optic cable to enable the fast and efficient transfer of information within the district and through the Internet. By not monitoring network performance, the Technology Department is unable to identify bandwidth slowdowns or other performance problems. Failing to properly monitor the network may allow a collection of small problems to persist and degrade network performance.

Exhibit 9-13 compares the expected and actual connection speeds from various district locations.

Exhibit 9-13
Expected and Actual Network Connection Speeds
April 2002

Location and Time	Connection Type	Maximum Connection Speed	Average Connection Speed Observed
Donna High School - 2:50 pm	T1	1.544 Mbps	.066 Mbps
Guzman Elementary - 11:45 am	T1	1.544 Mbps	.693 Mbps

Source: DSLReports.com.

Tests conducted on district computers using an Internet bandwidth meter indicate the high school connection to the central office is saturated.

The Technology Department relies on a firewall provided by Regional Education Service Center I (ESC) to block inappropriate content from district computers. The acceptable use policy for the district states the educational opportunity the network affords also comes with responsibility. The policy includes rules for appropriate use and states that district accounts are to be used for educational purposes. Limited personal use is permitted and users are held responsible for the appropriate use of their account.

Inappropriate uses are also listed and include:

- using the system for illegal purposes;
- posting personal information;
- copyright violation;
- posting inappropriate material or information; and
- wasting school resources through the improper use of the computer system.

The district reported a number of instances where teachers were downloading, copying and selling films from the Internet to district staff at a cost of $2 a piece. This is a violation of copyright law. The Technology Department has been unable to effectively stop this process without management support, even though it is a clear violation of the district's acceptable use policy.

The consequences of violating the acceptable use policy are suspension of access to the system, account revocation and other disciplinary or legal action. All students must sign the acceptable use policy and have parent consent to receive an account.

The lack of bandwidth monitoring and control allows questionable content and non-educational material, such as music and streaming audio and video data, to be downloaded. This consumes significant bandwidth and reduces the overall performance of the network. Network administrators equipped with the proper management tools can manage vast networks and preempt network problems and events.

Recommendation 77:

Use industry standard tools to efficiently manage and monitor the network.

The Technology Department should install the network management software and use it to monitor and manage network performance on a regular basis. The software provides access to network maps, network hardware configurations and the ability to monitor network performance. The software allows the network specialist to access the tools from anywhere in the network.

The network specialist should review and purchase the network-monitoring software. The software solution must provide the department with the ability to monitor school bandwidth usage by network segment, to identify utilization by ports, to identify the type of network traffic and the ability to terminate inappropriate activities. The solution should also provide automated data collection for trend analysis, dynamic alerts and alarms when unexpected events occur or thresholds are exceeded.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The network specialist installs the district's network management software.	October 2002
2.	The network specialist begins using the solution to manage the district's network.	October 2002
3.	The network specialist reviews network-monitoring software packages and recommends a solution.	October 2002
4.	The Technology Department purchases and installs the recommended network-monitoring solution to the superintendent.	November 2002
5.	The superintendent presents the solution to the board for approval.	December 2002
6.	The network specialist creates a baseline of network activity.	December 2002
7.	The network specialist configures solution components to automatically monitor network activity.	December 2002
8.	The Technology Department reviews monitoring data.	December 2002 and Monthly
9.	The Technology Department responds to network alerts.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of implementing a network monitoring solution is $20,029 for the first year and $15,034 annually thereafter. The fiscal

impact is estimated by adding the initial hardware cost to the annual subscription cost for the filtering service ($4,995 + $15,034 = $20,029).

An industry standard subscription service offers web-security applications, including user management, virus scanning, content security, web usage monitoring, content filtering and network protection.

The service helps conserve bandwidth by automatically determining which Web sites to block and updating lists of restricted sites. The district can exercise local control by defining the parameters for:

- content categories: integrates filtering databases from leading vendors, such as SmartFilter and Websense;
- content type: the ability to block certain types of real-time content within web pages;
- identity: customize policy based on who the users are; and
- network conditions: customize based on real-time conditions.

Bandwidth monitoring services are more effective than manual methods because of the size and evolving nature of the Internet. In addition, most widely used filtering methods negatively impact the quality of experience for the end-user's Internet service.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Use industry standard tools to efficiently manage and monitor the network.	($20,029)	($15,034)	($15,034)	($15,034)	($15,034)

FINDING

The Technology Department has not fully implemented the process of creating standard desktop configurations for the district. In June 2002, the Technology Department began using Norton Ghost software to configure 11 district servers and create images for repair purposes. With only 11 software licenses, the complete benefits of using the software are not realized by the Technology Department.

Each new computer the district purchases must be manually configured and have standard software installed by a technician. This practice delays the delivery of a new computer to the classroom and extends the outage time for a system repair. The installation process must be performed when a technician repairs a hard drive or installs a new one. This process can take up to four hours to complete.

The industry best practice for supporting a large number of distributed systems is to create a standard desktop configuration that minimizes support effort, details the operating system, identifies a standard suite of productivity software packages and preserves registry settings and core system settings.

Many departments use software to create images of the standard desktop configurations for their organizations to efficiently implement the configuration policy. The images contain the operating system, software packages and configuration settings that are standard for the organization, department or group. In less than one hour, the images can rebuild a computer suffering a hard drive failure. Imaging also reduces the time technicians need to configure a new computer and deploy it to the user.

Recommendation 78:

Establish and efficiently apply standard desktop configurations.

Industry standard imaging software provides fast and safe backup and recovery components that write computer hard-drive images directly to compact disc (CD) and other media. The software allows users to transfer entire hard drive images from CD or the network to new computers in less than an hour.

The Technology Department should review the various configurations needed in the district based on different computer makes and models. The department should create standard desktop configurations for all personal computers from the same vendor, starting with the vendor that benefits the most users. This process should be repeated for each group until there is no reduction in effort or time to manage a particular computer group.

Each unique computer make and model requires a separate image. Given the district's variety of computers, the Technology Department needs to manage the imaging process carefully to ensure that each set of computers has a viable image available. Based on the total number of models in the district and the age of the machines, the department needs to evaluate the risks and benefits of imaging each group of computers. The number of images decreases as the district standardizes their computer inventory.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Technician Support Specialist identifies the number of each computer model in the district.	October 2002
2.	The Technician Support Specialist determines the number of images required based on the number of models and	October 2002

	different installations.	
3.	The superintendent presents the recommended purchase to the board for approval.	November 2002
4.	The Technician Support Specialist purchases software to facilitate desktop standardization.	December 2002
5.	The Technician Support Specialist creates the standard computer configuration images.	December 2002 - January 2003
6.	The Technology Department creates needed images for each new computer model the district purchases.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of purchasing software to facilitate desktop standardization is $28,070. This fiscal impact is estimated by multiplying the number of licenses needed by the cost of the licenses. Licenses are available in bundles of 1,000 licenses for $6,090 and 500 licenses for $3,710. To purchase the requisite number of licenses, the district will need four 1,000-license bundles and one 500-license bundle ([4 x $6,090] = $24,360 + $3,710 = $28,070).

During the first year, the district does not need to purchase imaging software licenses for all district computers because the software is not required until the image is used on a computer. The district can purchase blocks of licenses as needed for new computers and for hard drive repairs. The district should purchase 1,000 licenses a year for four years and 500 the following year to have a license for each district computer.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Establish and efficiently apply standard desktop configurations.	($6,090)	($6,090)	($6,090)	($6,090)	($3,710)

FINDING

The Technology Department does not use software to facilitate remote management of the district's computers. To resolve the technology problems assigned to them, field technicians must travel to the school or administrative building where the problem exists. Field technicians are not assigned to a particular school and support all schools in the district. This requires technicians to travel to district buildings to resolve reported problems.

Software issues accounted for 32 percent of all trouble tickets in April 2002. Since a technician is needed to install software and address other software related tasks, a trip to a district building was required.

Technology departments responsible for supporting large user communities, like those at AOL and
JC Penney, employ remote control software to provide timely support with fewer resources. Dell's support department not only uses remote control software to support their employees' computers, but also offers a similar support option to their customers. The ability to solve technical problems from a remote location increases user satisfaction and reduces the burden on support technicians.

Recommendation 79:

Purchase and install software to enable remote control of district computers.

Remote control software enables support technicians to provide support to users without ever leaving the technology center. From their computers, technicians will have complete control of any computer on the network, allowing them to remotely:

- install software;
- upgrade software;
- watch a user perform a task to identify user error and gain a clearer understanding of the problem;
- turn on and reboot computers;
- schedule districtwide software installations to occur at night.

Remote control of district computers would reduce the length of time needed to fix many problems and increase the efficiency of the Technology Department.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The technology systems supervisor reviews available remote control solutions.	October 2002
2.	The technology systems supervisor recommends a solution to the superintendent and gets approval to purchase a remote control solution.	November 2002
3.	The Technology Department implements the remote control solution.	November 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact for implementing a remote control support solution is $4,975. This fiscal impact is estimated by multiplying the number of 100 license bundles for the remote control software needed by the per bundle cost (5 x $995 = $4,975).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Purchase and install software to enable remote control of district computers.	($42,785)	$0	$0	$0	$0

Chapter 10
TRANSPORTATION

This chapter discusses the Donna Independent School District (DISD) transportation functions in the following sections:

A. Organization and Management
B. Routing and Scheduling
C. Safety and Training
D. Fleet Maintenance

The primary goal of every school district transportation department is to transport eligible students to and from school and approved extracurricular functions in a timely, safe and efficient manner.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 34 of the Texas Education Code authorizes, but does not require, Texas school districts to provide transportation for students in the general population to and from home and school, school and career and technology training locations and 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 special education services. In 2000-01, DISD provided a total of 60 routes: 52 regular program routes and eight special program routes. Sixty-three drivers and nine bus aides operate routes.

Texas school districts are eligible for state reimbursement for transporting regular program, special program and career and technology education (CATE) program students. The Legislature sets funding rules and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) administers the program. TEA requires each eligible school district receiving state reimbursement to provide two annual school transportation reports, the School Transportation Route Services report and the School Transportation Operations report. The Route Services report documents miles traveled and number of riders by program and subprogram. The Operations report documents total miles, costs and fleet data. The mileage numbers used in this chapter are derived from these TEA reports. Five different types of mileage are referenced in this chapter: standard regular miles, odometer miles, reimbursable route miles, route miles with deadhead and extracurricular miles. These types of mileage are described in the chapter as they are used.

State funding for regular program transportation is limited to transportation of students living two or more miles from the school they attend. The state does not reimburse districts for transporting students living within two miles of the school they attend unless they face hazardous walking conditions on the way to school, such as the need to cross a four-lane roadway without a traffic signal or crossing guard. The state will reimburse districts for transporting students on hazardous routes within two miles of school; however, the reimbursement for transporting students on hazardous routes may not exceed 10 percent of the total annual reimbursement for transporting only two-or-more-mile students. A school district must use local funds to pay for transportation costs the state reimbursement does not cover.

For the regular program, the state reimburses districts for qualifying transportation expenses based on linear density, which is the ratio of the average number of regular program students transported daily on standard routes to the number of route miles traveled daily for those standard routes. Standard route miles and riders are a subprogram of the regular program and do not include miles or riders for alternative, bilingual, desegregation, magnet, parenting, year-round or hazardous area service. TEA uses this ratio to assign each school district to one of seven linear density groups. Each group is eligible to receive a maximum per mile allotment.

Exhibit 10-1 shows the linear density groups and the related allotment per mile.

Exhibit 10-1
Linear Density Groups 2001

Linear Density Group	Allotment / Mile
2.40 and above	$1.43
1.65 to 2.40	$1.25
1.15 to 1.65	$1.11
0.90 to 1.15	$0.97
0.65 to 0.90	$0.88
0.40 to 0.65	$0.79
Up to 0.40	$0.68

Exhibit 10-2 shows the linear densities for DISD and a peer group of four Texas school districts. Edgewood ISD is not included as a peer school district in this chapter because the Edgewood student transportation function is significantly smaller than DISD and the other peers and skews the peer average calculations.

Exhibit 10-2
DISD and Peer Districts Linear Density Comparison
2000-01

District	Standard Regular Riders*	Standard Regular Miles	Linear Density	Allotment/ Mile Based on 1999-2000**	Eligible Allotment / Mile for 2001-02**
San Benito	464,220	387,862	1.197	$1.11	$1.11
Mission	242,100	124,434	1.946	$1.43	$1.25
Rio Grande City	787,680	684,360	1.151	$0.97	$1.11
Eagle Pass	661,860	449,992	1.471	$1.11	$1.11
Peer Average	538,965	411,662	1.441	$1.16	$1.11
Donna	**856,800**	**419,220**	**2.044**	**$1.25**	**$1.25**

In 2000-01, DISD was in the second highest linear density group, which entitled the district to a reimbursement of $1.25 for each route mile for regular program miles. The district's actual operations cost (total annual costs less debt service and capital outlay) in 2000-01 was $3.31 per odometer mile in 2000-01. Odometer miles are all miles traveled, including mileage for maintenance, extracurricular miles and miles driven to and from a route, known as deadhead. Donna has the highest linear density of all of the districts.

Reimbursement for special program transportation is not based on linear density. The per mile allotment rate for special programs is set by the Legislature. All transportation for special program students, except certain extracurricular trips, is eligible for state reimbursement at $1.08 each route mile. In 2000-01, DISD actual cost for special program transportation was $1.59 per odometer mile.

The reimbursement per mile for the CATE program is based on the cost for regular program miles for the previous fiscal year as reported by the district in the TEA School Transportation Operations report. DISD did not operate any CATE miles in 2000-01.

Reimbursable route miles are defined as the verified mileage for serving eligible student riders between their respective residences and their respective schools of regular attendance, beginning and ending at the last school served. DISD operated 454,680 regular program reimbursable route miles and 119,880 special program reimbursable route miles in 2000-01. **Exhibit 10-3** shows a comparison of reimbursable route miles for DISD and the peer districts.

Exhibit 10-3
DISD and Peer Districts Reimbursable Route Miles by Category
2000-01

District	Regular Reimbursable Route Miles	Special Reimbursable Route Miles	CATE Reimbursable Route Miles
San Benito	486,304	160,985	3,026
Mission	249,300	50,040	18,702
Rio Grande City	733,376	138,240	8,439
Eagle Pass	567,774	110,022	0
Peer Average	509,189	114,822	7,542
Donna	**454,680**	**119,880**	**0**

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Report and School and Transportation Route Services Reports 2000-01.

In 2000-01, the state allocated a total of $697,820 in transportation funding to DISD. **Exhibit 10-4** compares total annual operations cost and the state allotment for regular program and special program transportation in 2000-01 for DISD and the peer districts. Peer district operation cost and

state allotment include the CATE program. DISD receives the second-highest percent reimbursement for regular program and special program transportation.

Exhibit 10-4
DISD and Peer Districts State Allotment Comparison
2000-01

| District | Regular Program | | | Special Program | | |
	Operations Cost*	State Allotment	Percent State	Operations Cost*	State Allotment	Percent State
San Benito	$1,203,842	$547,393	45%	$468,161	$173,864	37%
Mission	$2,029,877	$312,139	15%	$111,007	$54,043	49%
Rio Grande City	$2,287,147	$719,952	31%	$161,107	$115,376	72%
Eagle Pass	$2,309,278	$620,319	27%	$375,929	$118,824	32%
Peer Average	$1,957,536	$549,951	28%	$279,051	$115,527	41%
Donna	**$1,693,634**	**$568,350**	**34%**	**$192,792**	**$129,470**	**67%**

*Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Report and School Transportation Route Services Reports, 2000-01. *Operations cost excludes capital outlay and debt service.*

Exhibit 10-5 shows the annual riders, total annual odometer miles and number of total buses for DISD compared to peer districts for 2000-01. Annual riders include the CATE program for applicable districts (DISD did not operate any CATE miles in 2000-01).

Exhibit 10-5
DISD and Peer Districts Operating Statistics
2000-01

| District | Regular Program | | | Special Program | | |
	Annual Riders*	Total Odometer	Total Buses	Annual Riders*	Total Odometer	Total Buses

		Miles			**Miles**	
San Benito	648,540	584,840	49	27,720	191,008	19
Mission	720,720	419,852	51	17,100	102,320	8
Rio Grande City	898,740	1,088,127	71	36,900	163,545	9
Eagle Pass	942,120	942,879	84	23,040	156,697	14
Peer Average	802,530	758,925	64	26,190	153,393	13
Donna	**1,042,200**	**511,033**	**61****	**23,940**	**121,092**	**11****

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Report and School Transportation Route Services Report, 2000-01. * Annual riders calculated by multiplying average daily riders by 180 school days. **2000-01 Data - At the time of the review, the district had 68 buses.

Exhibit 10-6 compares 2000-01 transportation cost efficiency and effectiveness indicators for DISD and the peer districts based on TEA data. Cost per odometer mile is determined by dividing total annual operations cost, less debt service and capital outlay, by total annual odometer miles. Cost per rider is determined by dividing total annual operations cost, less debt service and capital outlay, by total annual riders. Total annual riders are determined by multiplying average daily riders by 180 school days.

Exhibit 10-6
DISD and Peer Districts Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness Indicators
2000-01

District	Regular Program			Special Program	
	Cost/ Odometer Mile	**Cost/Rider**	**Cost/ Odometer Mile**	**Cost/Rider**	
San Benito	$2.06	$1.86	$2.45	$16.89	

Mission	$4.83	$2.82	$1.08	$6.49
Rio Grande City	$2.10	$2.54	$0.99	$4.37
Eagle Pass	$2.45	$2.45	$2.40	$16.32
Peer Average	$2.86	$2.42	$1.73	$11.02
Donna	**$3.31**	**$1.63**	**$1.59**	**$8.05**
Percent Different from Peer Average	16%	(33%)	(8%)	(27%)

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Report and School Transportation Route Services Report, 2000-01.

The DISD cost per regular program odometer mile is 16 percent higher than the peer average and the cost per regular program rider is 33 percent lower than the peer average. The DISD cost per special program odometer mile is 8 percent lower than the peer average and the cost per special program rider is 27 percent lower than the peer average.

Exhibit 10-7 compares service effectiveness, or productivity, indicators for DISD and peer districts based on TEA data. The riders per reimbursable route mile are determined by dividing total annual riders by total annual reimbursable route miles. The reimbursable route miles include miles for the CATE program. Total annual riders are determined by multiplying average daily riders by 180 school days. The riders per bus are determined by dividing average daily riders by the total number of buses.

Exhibit 10-7
DISD and Peer Districts Service Effectiveness Indicators
2000-01

District	Regular Program		Special Program	
	Riders/ Reimbursable Route Mile	Riders/Bus	Riders/ Reimbursable Route Mile	Riders/Bus
San Benito	1.32	74	0.16	8
Mission	3.18	79	0.17	12
Rio Grande City	0.96	70	0.27	23
Eagle Pass	1.33	62	0.15	9

Peer Average	2.00	71	0.19	13
Donna	**2.29**	**95**	**0.20**	**12**
Percent Different from Peer Average	35%	33%	7%	(7%)

*Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Report and School Transportation Route Services Report,
2000-01.*

DISD regular program riders per reimbursable route mile are 35 percent higher than the peer average and riders per bus is 33 percent higher than the peer average. DISD special program riders per reimbursable route mile are 7 percent higher than the peer average, and riders per bus is 7 percent lower than the peer average.

Exhibit 10-8 documents a five-year history of student riders per reimbursable route mile for DISD.

Exhibit 10-8
DISD Regular and Special Program Transportation Riders per Reimbursable Route Mile
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change 1996-2001
Regular Program						
Annual Riders	984,240	1,084,140	1,051,020	1,026,900	1,042,200	6%
Reimbursable Route Miles	516,965	604,952	602,380	657,428	454,680	(12%)
Riders per Reimbursable Route Mile	**1.90**	**1.79**	**1.74**	**1.56**	**2.29**	**20%**
Percent Change	N/A	(6%)	(3%)	(10%)	47%	N/A
Special Program						
Annual Riders	19,620	19,440	23,580	23,580	23,940	22%

Reimbursable Route Miles	68,927	88,970	81,863	100,948	119,880	74%
Riders per Reimbursable Route Mile	**0.28**	**0.22**	**0.29**	**0.23**	**0.20**	**(30%)**
Percent Change	N/A	(23%)	32%	(19%)	(15%)	N/A

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

Regular program riders per reimbursable route mile dropped from 1.90 to 1.56 from 1996-97 to 1999-2000, then recovered to 2.29 in 2000-01. Regular program riders per reimbursable route mile increased 20 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Special program riders per reimbursable route mile decreased 30 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. The number of special program riders increased 22 percent compared to a 74 increase in reimbursable route miles from 1996-97 to 2000-01.

Exhibit 10-9 documents a five-year history of transportation riders per bus for DISD.

Exhibit 10-9
DISD Regular and Special Program Transportation Riders per Bus
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change 1996-2001
Regular Program						
Daily Riders	5,468	6,023	5,839	5,705	5,790	6%
Buses	57	57	58	60	61	7%
Riders/ Bus	**96**	**106**	**101**	**95**	**95**	**(1%)**
Percent Change	N/A	10%	(5%)	(6%)	(0%)	N/A
Special Program						
Daily Riders	109	108	131	131	133	22%
Buses	9	9	10	9	11	22%
Riders/Bus	**12**	**12**	**13**	**15**	**12**	**(0%)**

Percent Change	N/A	(1%)	9%	11%	(17%)	N/A

Regular program riders during the five-year period ranged between 95 and 101 riders a bus. The percent growth in regular program riders is approximately the same as the percent increase in number of buses. Special program riders ranged between 12 and 15 riders a bus during the five-year period. The percent growth in special program riders is equal to the percent increase in number of buses.

Exhibit 10-10 documents a five-year history of the total miles of transportation service provided by DISD by category of service. The five-year history includes route miles with deadhead. Route miles with deadhead are a subset of odometer miles. Routes miles are all miles operated to provide student transportation between home and school and for career and technology programs. Route miles are not limited to reimbursable route miles. Route miles include deadhead, but exclude extracurricular miles. Extracurricular miles include student transportation for field trips and extracurricular activities such as athletics, band and University Interscholastic League (UIL) events.

Exhibit 10-10
DISD Annual Miles of Service
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change 1996-2001
Route Miles (with deadhead)	516,965	604,952	602,380	657,428	454,680	(12%)
Extracurricular Miles	74,984	76,782	61,587	87,049	56,353	(25%)
Other Miles*	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Annual Regular Miles	**591,949**	**681,734**	**663,967**	**744,477**	**511,033**	**(14%)**
Route Miles (with deadhead)	68,927	88,970	81,863	100,948	119,880	74%
Extracurricular	5,469	3,528	4,323	3,927	1,212	(78%)

Miles						
Other Miles*	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Annual Special Miles	**74,396**	**92,498**	**86,186**	**104,875**	**121,092**	**63%**
TOTAL	**666,345**	**774,232**	**750,153**	**849,352**	**632,125**	**(5%)**

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Reports, 1996-97 through 2000-01.
* "Other" miles consist of all miles other than route miles, mileage to and from routes and extracurricular miles.

From 1997-97 to 2000-01, total regular program miles decreased 14 percent, route miles decreased 12 percent and extracurricular miles decreased 25 percent. From 1996-97 to 2000-01, total special program miles increased 63 percent, route miles increased 74 percent and extracurricular miles decreased 78 percent.

Exhibit 10-11 shows the percent of students transported compared to total enrollment. DISD transports a high percentage of students compared to the peer average. DISD transports the second-highest percentage of students compared to total enrollment.

Exhibit 10-11
Percent of Enrolled Students Riding the Bus
2000-01

District	Enrollment	Average Daily Riders	Percent of Enrolled Students Riding the Bus
San Benito	8,864	3,757	42%
Mission	12,464	4,099	33%
Rio Grande	8,512	5,198	61%
Eagle Pass	12,515	5,362	43%
Peer Average	10,589	4,604	43%
Donna	**10,332**	**5,923**	**57%**

Exhibit 10-12 compares the total and extracurricular transportation miles of peer districts with DISD. Compared to peer districts, DISD provides a lower percentage of extracurricular miles.

Exhibit 10-12
Transportation Peer Districts Extracurricular Miles
2000-01

District	Total Odometer Miles*	Extracurricular Miles*	Percent Extracurricular
San Benito	775,848	106,954	14%
Mission	522,172	171,769	33%
Rio Grande City	1,251,672	177,423	14%
Eagle Pass	1,099,576	208,232	19%
Peer Average	912,317	166,095	18%
Donna	**632,125**	**57,565**	**9%**

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Report, 2000-01.
*Includes both regular and special program transportation.

Exhibit 10-13 compares the transportation cost of the peer districts with DISD as a percentage of total district expenditures. DISD spends a lower percentage on student transportation than the peer average.

Exhibit 10-13
Peer Districts Transportation Cost as a Percentage of
Total Budgeted Operating Expenditures
2000-01

District	Total District Expenditures	Transportation Operations Cost*	Percent of Total Expenditures
San Benito	$59,907,447	$1,672,003	2.8%
Mission	$81,403,328	$2,140,884	2.6%
Rio Grande City	$53,516,592	$2,448,254	4.6%

Eagle Pass	$74,798,117	$2,685,207	3.6%
Peer Average	$67,406,371	$2,236,587	3.3%
Donna	**$68,502,269**	**$1,886,426**	**2.8%**

Sources: Total expenditures from AEIS data, 2000-01; Transportation operations cost from TEA School Transportation Operations Report, 2000-01.
*Includes both regular and special program transportation.

A five-year history of transportation cost data for DISD, provided by TEA, is shown in
Exhibit 10-14.

Exhibit 10-14
DISD Regular and Special Program Transportation Cost Data
1996-97 through 2000-01

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change 1996-2001
Operation Cost*						
Regular Program	$1,226,074	$1,445,332	$1,463,223	$1,591,784	$1,693,634	38%
Percent Change	N/A	18%	1%	9%	6%	N/A
Special Program	$154,733	$124,391	$124,675	$217,427	$192,792	25%
Percent Change	N/A	(20%)	0%	74%	(11%)	N/A
Total	**$1,380,807**	**$1,569,723**	**$1,587,898**	**$1,809,211**	**$1,886,426**	**37%**
Odometer Miles						
Regular Program	591,949	681,734	663,967	744,477	511,033	(14%)
Percent Change	N/A	15%	(3%)	12%	(31%)	N/A

Special Program	74,396	92,498	86,186	104,875	121,092	63%
Percent Change	N/A	24%	(7%)	22%	15%	N/A
Total	**666,345**	**774,232**	**750,153**	**849,352**	**632,125**	**(5%)**
Cost per Odometer Mile*						
Regular Program	$2.07	$2.12	$2.20	$2.14	$3.31	60%
Percent Change	N/A	2%	4%	(3%)	55%	N/A
Special Program	$2.08	$1.34	$1.45	$2.07	$1.59	(23%)
Percent Change	N/A	(35%)	8%	43%	(23%)	N/A
Annual Riders						
Regular Program	984,240	1,084,140	1,051,020	1,026,900	1,042,200	6%
Percent Change	N/A	10%	(3%)	(2%)	1%	N/A
Special Program	19,620	19,440	23,580	23,580	23,940	22%
Percent Change	N/A	(1%)	21%	0%	2%	N/A
Total	**1,003,860**	**1,103,580**	**1,000,080**	**1,050,480**	**1,066,140**	**6%**
Cost per Rider						
Regular Program	$1.25	$1.33	$1.50	$1.55	$1.63	30%
Percent Change	N/A	7%	12%	3%	5%	N/A
Special Program	$7.89	$6.40	$5.29	$9.22	$8.05	2%
Percent Change	N/A	(19%)	(17%)	74%	(13%)	N/A

Regular program operation costs increased 38 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Regular program odometer miles increased 26 percent from 1996-97 to 1999-2000, then decreased 31 percent in 2000-01. Overall, regular program odometer miles decreased 14 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Ridership increased 6 percent during the same five-year period. Regular program cost per odometer mile and cost per rider increased 60 percent and 30 percent respectively from 1996-97 to 2000-01.

Special program operation costs varied during the five-year period, from a low of $124,391 in 1997-98 to a high of $217,427 in 1999-2000. Overall, special program operation costs increased 25 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Special program odometer miles and riders have both increased. Odometer miles increased 63 percent during the five-year period and riders increased 22 percent. Cost per odometer decreased 23 percent during the five-year period and cost per rider increased 2 percent.

Exhibit 10-15 summarizes five-year DISD transportation operation costs by object of expenditure.

Exhibit 10-15
DISD Transportation Operation Cost by Type of Expenditure
1996-97 through 2000-01

Object	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent of Total 2000-01	Percent Change
Salaries and Benefits	$1,063,652	$1,256,144	$1,273,835	$1,485,966	$1,665,856	88%	57%
Percent Change	N/A	18%	1%	17%	12%	N/A	N/A
Purchased Services	$22,081	$35,149	$35,382	$49,329	$26,657	1%	21%
Percent Change	N/A	59%	1%	39%	(46%)	N/A	N/A

Supplies and Material	$172,856	$140,714	$140,809	$226,638	$189,616	10%	10%
Percent Change	N/A	(19%)	0%	61%	(16%)	N/A	N/A
Other Expenses	$122,218	$137,716	$137,872	$47,278	$4,297	0%	(96%)
Percent Change	N/A	13%	0%	(66%)	(91%)	N/A	N/A
Total Cost	**$1,380,807**	**$1,569,723**	**$1,587,898**	**$1,809,211**	**$1,886,426**	N/A	**37%**

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

Total operation costs increased 37 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. This increase is attributable to a 57 percent increase in salaries and benefits from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Salaries and benefits comprise 88 percent of all transportation expenses. The high salaries and benefits are the result of providing additional work to drivers above and beyond driving routes.

Chapter 10
TRANSPORTATION

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Transportation Department is responsible for providing student transportation between home and school and for extracurricular trips. The Transportation Department is also responsible for maintaining and servicing all school buses and the general-services fleet. Transportation is part of the larger DISD Maintenance and Transportation Department, which includes building maintenance and custodial functions. The supervisor for the Transportation Department reports to the director of the Maintenance and Transportation Department. The director of Maintenance and Transportation reports to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.

Exhibit 10-16 shows the organization of the Transportation Department.

Exhibit 10-16
Transportation Organization
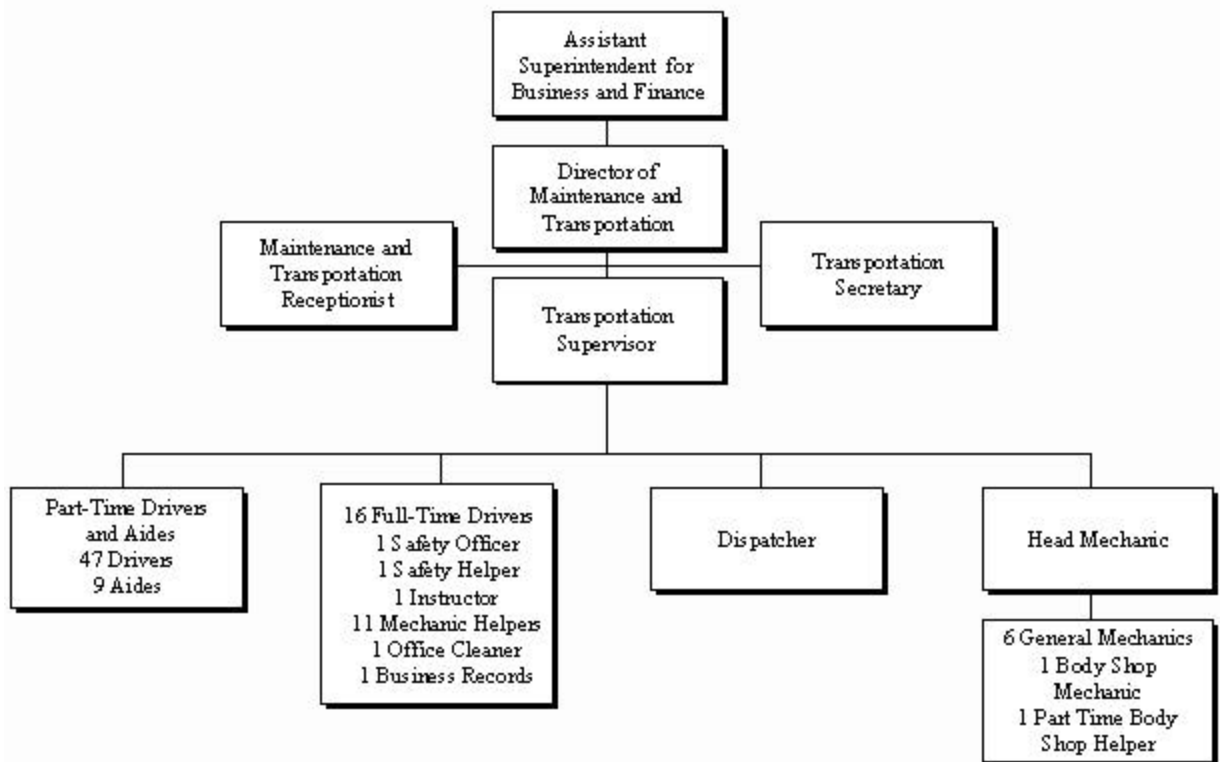
The Transportation supervisor is responsible for the overall management and operation of the Transportation Department, including all driver supervision.

Transportation staff includes a dispatcher. The dispatcher is responsible for designing regular and special-program routes. The dispatcher also serves as a substitute driver. Although the job description lists dispatching as a duty, the dispatcher does not actually dispatch drivers or monitor bus operations on the radio.

The Maintenance and Transportation Department has a Maintenance and Transportation receptionist and a Transportation secretary. The receptionist is the primary dispatcher for the Maintenance and Transportation Department and dispatches for transportation, maintenance and custodial functions. The Transportation secretary is responsible for payroll, purchasing, invoicing for the Transportation Department and some dispatching for the Transportation Department.

The Transportation vehicle maintenance personnel include a head mechanic, six full-time general mechanics, one full-time body shop mechanic and a part-time body shop worker. The head mechanic reports to the Transportation supervisor. The vehicle maintenance staff reports to the head mechanic. In 2000-01, five of the general mechanics were assigned to drive a daily route.

The Transportation Department has a total of 63 bus drivers and nine bus aides. Bus aides ride on special program routes to assist drivers with loading, unloading and managing students. The drivers include 16 full-time drivers and 47 part-time drivers.

Each of the 16 full-time drivers has an additional duty in the Transportation Department. Additional duties for full-time drivers include 11 assignments as driver/mechanic helpers, one office cleaner, one business records clerk, one safety officer, one safety helper and one instructor. The driver/mechanic helpers generally assist with fueling and washing vehicles, performing oil and lube jobs, running parts and assisting in the body shop. The office cleaner cleans the Maintenance and Transportation Department offices and the Transportation vehicle maintenance shop daily. The business records clerk is responsible for maintaining and updating vehicle maintenance records. The safety officer is responsible for training, shop safety and accident investigation. The safety helper assists by training drivers. The instructor does not actually train drivers, but follows up with school administrators to resolve student

discipline reports. A job description was not provided for the instructor to determine if training was part of the position's job duties.

Part-time employees have a guarantee of four hours a day driving a route. These employees also have the option to work up to an additional three hours a day in another function, such as working as a custodian for the Maintenance and Transportation Department. The three additional hours are not guaranteed, and are paid according to actual hours worked. All part-time drivers participate in this program.

All Transportation employees, including part-time employees, receive payroll and medical benefits. Payroll benefits are 23 percent for Transportation workers and 16 percent for professional and paraprofessional staff. Medical and life insurance benefits are $2,502 a year for each employee.

The starting driver wage is $7.26 per hour. The average wage for part-time drivers is $8.55 per hour and $9.90 per hour for full-time drivers. The starting bus aide wage is $5.66 per hour and the average wage for bus aides is $7.53 per hour. The starting wage for a general vehicle mechanic is $7.26 per hour and the average wage is $9.23 per hour.

FINDING

Transportation management is fragmented. Although there is a director of Maintenance and Transportation, much of the day to day management is carried out by the Transportation supervisor.

The Transportation supervisor is responsible for managing and administering all student transportation and vehicle maintenance activities. In addition, a total of 76 individuals report to the Transportation supervisor, including 63 drivers and nine bus aides. The span of responsibility assigned to the Transportation supervisor in his job description is too broad to accomplish all of these management tasks and supervise drivers effectively.

Many of these typical management and supervisory responsibilities are not taking place or not being done effectively in the DISD Transportation Department:

- Standards and procedures - formal, documented procedures do not exist for the Transportation Department. The department does not have an employee handbook. During focus group discussions, drivers and bus aides said they are not always sure of when they are not following rules.

- Monitoring and controlling costs - operating costs increased 37 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Riders and odometer miles have not experienced similar increases to justify the increase.
- Monitoring performance - performance is not monitored. Performance measures for safety, cost efficiency, cost effectiveness, service effectiveness and maintenance are not in place and tracked on a regular basis to gauge performance and identify areas of improvement.
- Safety and training - driver and bus aide training programs are not adequate to ensure student safety and quality service. No written curriculum or training manuals exist and no formal classroom training is provided to new drivers outside of the state-mandated driver certification class provided by Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1). During a focus group, drivers and aides said they feel training is inadequate. Region 1 does not have a trainer for special-education drivers, so drivers do not receive training in this area.
- Staff development - staff is not provided development opportunities. For example, mechanics are not certified or provided opportunities for additional training.
- TEA reporting - according to TEA, the 2000-01 Transportation Operations Report for DISD was not turned in on time. The report was due December 1, 2001. A TEA representative said the report was not received until March 8, 2002.
- Communication with staff - during focus groups, drivers and bus aides said communication between staff and management is poor. Drivers and bus aides said the Transportation supervisor is frequently very busy or out of the office and department meetings are infrequent. During the building visit by the review team, the supervisor was frequently away from the department for meetings. Neither the supervisor nor the Transportation staff specified the nature of these meetings.
- Field supervision - the Transportation supervisor said he performs field supervision only about once a week.

The Transportation supervisor said that when he is not available, the head mechanic is responsible for the department. This designation is informal and is not reflected in the head mechanic job description. Supervision of drivers and aides by the head mechanic is inappropriate and does not allow the head mechanic to focus on his primary duties of supervising mechanics and vehicle maintenance. In addition, school bus routes and bus operations are outside of the expertise and knowledge of the head mechanic.

Recommendation 80:

Reassign Transportation management duties to the director of Maintenance and Transportation and refocus the Transportation supervisor on staff supervision.

Management responsibilities for the Transportation Department should be reassigned to the director of Maintenance and Transportation. The purpose of a supervisor is to supervise staff; too many management responsibilities can distract a supervisor from this primary function.

The director of Maintenance and Transportation should be held accountable for deficiencies in the department, such as unmonitored performance, lack of training, poor staff communication, lack of formal procedures, and untimely reporting of data to TEA, and should be responsible for implementing improvements. The director of Maintenance and Transportation should also be accountable for ensuring that the Transportation supervisor is properly supervising Transportation staff.

With fewer management responsibilities, the Transportation supervisor should be able to spend the majority of his time supervising drivers and observing operations in the field more frequently. The Transportation supervisor should be available to drivers and other staff as much as possible to encourage effective communication.

With a full-time supervisor available, the head mechanic will not be expected to supervise drivers and can focus on supervising mechanics and repairing buses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance recommends to the superintendent the reassignment of management duties for the Transportation Department to the director of Maintenance and Transportation.	October 2002
2.	The superintendent approves the shift in management responsibility.	November 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, director of Maintenance and Transportation, Transportation supervisor and Personnel director meet to discuss the reassignment of duties.	November 2002
4.	Based on the meeting, the Personnel director rewrites the job descriptions for the director of Maintenance and Transportation and Transportation supervisor.	December 2002
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance directs the transition of duties from the Transportation supervisor to the	January 2003

director of Maintenance and Transportation.	

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The Transportation Department general mechanics are not as productive as they might be because they are required to drive school bus routes each day. The Transportation Department has six general mechanics. Based on a 2001-02 fleet list provided by the department, the Transportation Department maintains 68 school buses. The head mechanic estimated the Transportation Department also maintains about 30 vehicles in the general services fleet.

Based on 2000-01 route descriptions, five of the six general mechanics had an assigned daily route. These five mechanics spent an average of 2 hours and 45 minutes a day driving, plus time for pre-trip inspections. Assuming three hours a day were spent driving and an hour was spent for lunch and breaks, these five mechanics worked four hours a day on vehicle maintenance in 2000-01.

The review team conducted an analysis of total possible mechanic labor hours. Total possible mechanic hours assume six mechanics work seven hours a day on vehicle maintenance (one hour is assumed for lunch and breaks). Six absences were assumed for each mechanic a year during a 261-day year. Using these assumptions, the review team estimated the general mechanics could work a possible 10,710 hours a year, or 1,785 hours per mechanic a year.

The review team then conducted an analysis of actual hours worked. Actual hours worked assumes five mechanics work four hours a day on vehicle maintenance, with three hours assumed for driving routes and one hour for lunch and breaks. One mechanic is not required to drive and works seven hours per day with one hour assumed for lunch and breaks. Six absences were assumed for each mechanic a year for a 261-day year. The number of actual hours worked was estimated to be 6,788 - 1,020 hours a year per driving mechanic and 1,785 hours a year per non-driving mechanic - for an average of 1,148 hours a year for each of the six mechanics.

The vehicle fleet was estimated to require 6,345 hours of maintenance a year for preventive maintenance and repairs. When mechanics are fully productive and can work seven hours a day on maintenance, four mechanics are needed to provide this level of maintenance (6,345

maintenance hours needed / 1,785 hours per mechanic = 3.6 mechanics needed). When mechanics must drive every day, six mechanics are required to provide this level of maintenance (6,345 maintenance hours needed / 1,148 hours per mechanic = 5.5 mechanics needed).

During the month of March 2002, drivers and bus aides averaged six absences per day. The Transportation Department is assumed to have an average of six absences per day for drivers and bus aides based on data from this sample month. For 60 routes, 66 drivers are needed to operate all routes, cover for absences and prevent mechanics from driving. The Transportation Department has 63 drivers.

Recommendation 81:

Create driver positions to cover all routes and driver absences and eliminate unnecessary general mechanic positions.

Mechanics should not drive school bus routes and should be removed from driving routes. A mechanic's primary duty is maintenance, and a mechanic cannot provide maintenance while driving a school bus. If mechanics do not have to drive, two general mechanic positions can be eliminated because all mechanics can devote all of their time each day to vehicle maintenance.

The Transportation Department does not have enough driver coverage for all routes and a 10-percent absentee rate. Additional bus driver positions should be created to staff these routes and driver absences so mechanics do not have to drive. A minimum of three new driver positions is required. The number of drivers, routes and driver absences should be evaluated annually to ensure enough driver positions exist each year so mechanics do not have to drive.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation recommends to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance that three driver positions are created and two general mechanic positions are eliminated.	November 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance recommends to the superintendent and the board that three driver positions are created and two general mechanic positions are eliminated.	December 2002
3.	The board approves the staffing changes.	January 2003

4.	The Personnel Department adds three driver positions to the Transportation Department.	February 2003
5.	The Transportation supervisor begins recruiting drivers to fill the driver positions.	April 2003
6.	Once three new drivers are hired, the Personnel department eliminates the mechanic positions.	Summer 2003
7.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation evaluates the number of drivers, routes and driver absences to ensure enough driver positions exist so mechanics do not have to drive.	Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

By hiring three additional part time drivers at an annual cost of $26,793 [$8,931 = ($7.26 per hour x 23 percent benefits x 4 hours x 180 days) x 3], the district will be able to eliminate two mechanic positions for a savings of $42,294 ($21,147 = ($7.26 per hour x 23 percent benefits x 8 hours x 261 days) x 2). This recommendation has a net savings of $15,501 the first year after implementation is complete. Costs or savings each additional year will vary depending on the number of driver positions needed to cover all routes and a 10-percent absentee rate.

In 2002-03, no costs are assumed. The new drivers will be hired during the summer but will not start work until the beginning of the 2003-04 school year. The mechanic positions will be eliminated in summer 2003. The savings from eliminating these positions are assumed to begin in the 2003-04 school year as well.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Create driver positions to cover all routes and driver absences and eliminate unnecessary general mechanic positions.	$0	$15,501	$15,501	$15,501	$15,501

FINDING

DISD is not maximizing its productivity by assigning part-time and full-time bus drivers to additional duties.

The Maintenance and Transportation Department offers part-time drivers and bus aides the option of working three hours a day in other departments. All of the part-time drivers exercise the option to work three additional hours. The purpose of this practice is to retain part-time staff by offering them additional work. Drivers appreciate the opportunity to work

additional hours to supplement their income from driving. However, this practice costs the department an estimated $266,909 a year (47 drivers x 3 hours a day x 180 day year x $8.55 per hour plus 23 percent payroll benefits) and the custodial department is already overstaffed according to industry standards.

The work of the part-time drivers is not managed well. The Transportation supervisor said the part-time drivers work primarily as custodians. However, the supervisor could not provide information on custodial assignments. The review team observed that these drivers do not appear on school custodial assignments.

The Transportation Department has 11 full-time drivers working as mechanic helpers in the maintenance shop for four hours a day. Two full-time drivers perform oil and lube jobs, one full-time driver runs parts, one full-time driver greases vehicles, one full-time driver assists in the body shop and the remaining full-time drivers wash and fuel vehicles.

The full-time drivers that run parts and grease buses perform specific duties that free mechanics to work on repairs. The full-time drivers that perform oil and lube jobs are not necessary; the Transportation Department has enough mechanics to conduct all preventive maintenance and repairs. The full-time driver that assists in the body shop is not necessary. The body shop already has a part-time body shop worker to assist the body shop mechanic. A transit industry rule of thumb is to have no more than one mechanic helper per mechanic.

The remaining six full-time drivers assist with fueling and washing vehicles. The Killeen ISD has 10 part-time fuelers for 229 buses, or 23 buses a fueler. DISD has 68 buses. Using a ratio of 23 buses per fueler, three fuelers are needed to fuel the DISD fleets.

Recommendation 82:

Discontinue the practice of assigning transportation staff to additional unproductive duties.

The practice of assigning part-time Transportation staff to work three hours in other departments is costly, unproductive and poorly managed. The Maintenance Department is already overstaffed and part-time help from drivers is unnecessary. The practice should be eliminated.

The shop duties assigned to six full-time driver positions are unnecessary. The Transportation Department has adequate mechanics to perform all preventive maintenance and repairs, so the maintenance shop duties of the two full-time driver positions that oil and lube buses can be eliminated.

The shop mechanic already has a part-time body shop worker to assist in the body shop, so the maintenance duties of the full-time driver position that assists the shop mechanic are not necessary. With 68 buses at a ratio of 23 buses per fueler, the duties of three of the six full-time driver positions that fuel and wash buses are unnecessary.

With their maintenance shop duties eliminated, the six affected full-time driver positions can be converted to part-time positions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation recommends removing part-time drivers from unnecessary work and reducing the duties of six full-time drivers that assist in the maintenance shop.	October 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance recommends to the superintendent removing part-time drivers from unnecessary work and reducing the duties of six full-time drivers that assist in the maintenance shop.	November 2002
3.	The superintendent approves removing part-time drivers from unnecessary work and reducing the duties of six full-time drivers that assist in the maintenance shop.	December 2002
4.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation informs drivers of the change, which will go into effect in the spring of 2003.	December 2002
5.	The new practice goes into effect.	January 2003
6.	The Personnel Department coverts six full-time driver positions to part-time.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

By reducing the part-time drivers' hours by three, the district can save $5,679 (3 hours x 180 days x ($8.55 per hour plus 23 percent in benefits)) annually per driver for a total of $266,913 (47 drivers x $5,679). Furthermore, by converting six full-time driver positions to part-time, DISD would realize savings of $52,602 each year [$8,767 = ($9.90 x 23 percent benefits x 4 hours x 180 days) x 6] for a total savings of $319,515 annually. In the first year of implementation, assuming implementation is complete by January 2003, the savings will be half.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Discontinuethe practice of	$159,758	$319,515	$319,515	$319,515	$319,515

assigning Transportation staff to additional unproductive duties.					

FINDING

Morale in the Transportation Department is low among drivers and bus aides. During interviews and focus groups, various staff members made many comments indicating that morale, communication and trust between staff and management are problematic. Specific comments included the following:

- Many staff feel department management practices favoritism.
- Some staff members feel they have been reprimanded unfairly while other staff members have not been reprimanded for serious infractions.
- Several staff members said the Transportation supervisor should provide more information as to what is expected of them and what rules they are expected to follow.
- Some staff said full-time job opportunities are not posted and drivers are not selected for full-time work based on seniority or skills. The Transportation supervisor said one full-time staff person has been hired in the last three years. The hire was for a mechanic position, which requires specific skills.
- Some staff said the Transportation supervisor does not provide explanations for activities and changes in the department. Many drivers cited a change in their pay rate and a decrease in their hours as examples. Staff said when they question the supervisor about specific items; the supervisor does not provide explanations or follow up with drivers as to how issues have been resolved. One staff member said in the past, the department had meetings frequently, but now meetings are rare. Staff would like to have meetings again. The Transportation supervisor said there are departmental meetings about once a month.

Staff members are clearly concerned about absence of procedures, lack of communication and lack of effective management tools to resolve problems.

In the Killeen ISD, the director of Transportation Services uses a team system to facilitate communication between staff and management. The team system is not a formal management structure, but a tool for improving department communication, performance and morale. The director of Transportation Services developed the team system in response to findings of a Gallup Work Place survey in which Transportation Services employees said they did not feel supervisors were listening to

them. All personnel in the department are assigned to one of 17 teams. Each team elects a team leader and is encouraged to meet once per month. All team leaders meet with the director of Transportation Services each Wednesday. During a focus group, many Killeen ISD drivers and monitors said the teams help them share ideas, provide a forum for experienced drivers to help new drivers and ensure they are being heard. In the focus group discussion, the drivers said the teams facilitate positive discussion between employees, build a supportive atmosphere and make personnel feel they are contributing to the achievements of the department.

Recommendation 83:

Develop staff teams in the Transportation Department to facilitate communication, increase trust and resolve problems and misunderstandings between staff and management.

All personnel in the Transportation Department should be assigned to a team. Each team should elect a team representative and should meet once per month. Part-time drivers and bus aides should be paid for their time in team meetings because the meetings are outside of their normal work hours. A time period of a half-hour per meeting a part-time driver and bus aide is recommended. Meetings can last longer than a half hour; however, only the first half hour will be paid. Full-time staff members should not be paid additional time because the meetings would be held during the full-time staff regular work hours.

All team representatives should meet with the Transportation supervisor one day a week to discuss employee concerns and other input. Once a month the director of Maintenance and Transportation should join the group to hear directly from team representatives. The meetings with team representatives will give the Transportation supervisor a forum to introduce new ideas, announce changes before implementation, discuss problems and develop solutions. The Transportation supervisor should document the proceedings of his meetings with team representatives and develop a procedure to follow through on action items. The Transportation supervisor should hear people out, consider ideas, explain his decisions and respond to suggestions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Transportation supervisor assigns employees to teams and announces the team meeting schedule.	October 2002
2.	The teams meet for the first time and select team representatives.	October 2002
3.	The teams meet once a month.	Ongoing

4.	Team representatives meet with the Transportation supervisor.	Weekly
5.	Team representatives meet with the Transportation supervisor and director of Maintenance and Transportation.	Monthly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation requires a half hour of paid time for a part-time driver and bus aide per team meeting and a half hour of time for team representatives to meet with department director and supervisor. To determine the most conservative fiscal impact, all team representatives are assumed to be part-time staff that will be compensated for their time. Assuming 10 team meetings a year (August to May) and 40 meetings with the director and supervisor a year, this recommendation will cost $4,375 ($2,491 + $414 + $1,470) a year. This is based on each part-time driver participating in a 30 minute meeting 10 times a year at a cost of $2,491 ($8.55 an hour x 23 percent benefits x 20 meeting at 30 minutes each x 47 part-time drivers). The cost for bus aides to participate in the meetings is $414 ($7.53 an hour x 23 percent benefit rate x 10 meetings at 30 minutes each x 9 bus aides). Also, seven team representatives will be reimbursed for 40 meetings lasting 30 minutes each, which will cost $1,470 ($8.55 an hour x 23 percent benefits x 20 hours). In the first year, the cost will be $3,500 because the program will only be in place for eight months instead of 10.

For the purpose of estimating cost, seven team representatives were assumed (about seven teams of ten employees). The seven-team representatives are assumed to be part-time drivers.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Develop staff teams in the Transportation Department to facilitate communication, increase trust and resolve problems and misunderstandings between staff and management	($3,500)	($4,375)	($4,375)	($4,375)	($4,375)

FINDING

The Transportation Department does not have standard operating procedures documented in an employee handbook. During focus groups, many drivers said they were sometimes reprimanded for rules that they did not know existed. The drivers said the Transportation supervisor needs to clarify the "dos and don'ts" so they know how to follow all rules. DISD

has an employee handbook for the district as a whole, but the handbook does not include procedures specific to the operation and administration of student transportation. The Transportation Department does not have written procedures for operations in the field, such as loading and unloading, radio codes, accident and other reporting procedures, evacuation procedures and operations on extracurricular trips.

Employee handbooks are a common practice in student transportation departments to ensure accurate communication with staff. The handbooks provide an easy reference for procedures for staff and ensure standard operating procedures are followed consistently. In addition, transportation departments can ensure that staff has read and understood the standard operating procedures in the handbook by having all employees sign a statement to that effect. The DISD Employee Handbook includes a signature sheet.

The Killeen ISD Transportation Services Handbook is an example of a particularly thorough departmental handbook. The handbook includes information on department organization and staffing, job descriptions and responsibilities, fleet maintenance descriptions and responsibilities, staff rules, reporting procedures and forms, discipline management and operations. The operations sections goes into great detail, covering operations and practices in the field such as radio use, loading and unloading, accident reporting procedures, wheelchair safety and pre-trip inspections. The handbook also covers such areas as employee dress code and conduct, guidelines for parent conferences, extracurricular trip operation and drug and alcohol testing procedures.

Recommendation 84:

Develop and distribute a Transportation Department employee handbook documenting standard operating procedures.

The director of Maintenance and Transportation should develop an employee handbook for the Transportation Department to document standard operating procedures, responsibilities and expectations for all staff members. The director of Maintenance and Transportation should begin by gathering samples of Transportation employee handbooks from peer districts to determine what practices and procedures the handbook should address. Drivers, aides, and vehicle maintenance personnel should be consulted to identify areas they would like to see covered in the handbook for their use and reference.

Once topics have been identified, the director of Maintenance and Transportation and the Transportation supervisor should begin drafting standard operating procedures specific to the DISD Transportation

Department. A draft of the handbook should be presented to employees during team meetings and discussed before finalized. Presenting employees with a draft will help ensure that staff has input into the handbook.

Each employee in the Transportation Department should receive a copy of the handbook, which should be written in both English and Spanish. New employees should receive the handbook as part of training. Employees should be given a few days to read the handbook and ask questions. Employees should each sign a form signifying their understanding of the handbook.

The handbook should be updated periodically to addresses changes in the department.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation contacts peer district Transportation departments and requests copies of their standard operating procedures.	November 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and Transportation supervisor review the peer standard operating procedures and develop a list of topics to be covered in the DISD standard operating procedures.	January 2003
3.	The Transportation supervisor presents the list of topics to Transportation employees and asks for feedback and suggestions on other topics that should be covered in the standard operating procedures.	February 2003
4.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and Transportation supervisor begin drafting standard operating procedures for the Transportation Department.	March 2003
5.	The draft Transportation employee handbook documenting standard operating procedures is presented to all employees during team meetings and discussed.	June 2003
6.	The Transportation handbook documenting standard operating procedures is presented to all employees. Employees sign statements saying they have read and understand the contents of the handbook.	September 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

Assuming 100 copies of a 100-page manual at seven cents a copy, producing the manuals would cost $700. Costs for updated handbooks are assumed every two years.

Translating the manuals into Spanish may also incur costs. The Transportation supervisor is bilingual and can translate the manual as part of his duties. The Transportation Department can also solicit help from other bilingual employees of the district.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Develop and distribute a Transportation Department employee handbook documenting standard operating procedures.	$0	($700)	$0	($700)	$0

Chapter 10
TRANSPORTATION

B. ROUTING AND SCHEDULING

The Transportation Department operated 60 routes in 2000-01: 52 regular routes and eight special education routes. Of the regular routes, three routes operate one trip, 43 operate two trips and six operate three trips each morning and afternoon. The Transportation Department develops routes manually.

In addition to daily routes, the Transportation Department operates extracurricular trips and has guidelines in place to control extracurricular trips. The Transportation Department does not operate long-distance, out-of-town trips because the buses are old and are needed for routes. The department does not operate trips that could interfere with daily school routes. School administrators charter buses for extracurricular trips when the Transportation department cannot provide buses.

FINDING

DISD does not operate bus routes on time and the Transportation Department does not have schedules for each route. As a result, students do not know when buses will pick them up in the morning or drop them off at home and on-time performance (schedule adherence) is not monitored. School bell times are not set far enough apart to accommodate effective multiple trips on regular routes. As a result, some students wait at schools for long periods of time after the bell rings.

Of the regular routes, three operate one trip, 43 operate two trips, and six operate three trips each morning and afternoon. Elementary school bell times are 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Secondary school bell times are 7:50 a.m. and 3:25 p.m. With only 10 minutes between the morning bell times and 25 minutes between the afternoon bell times, bell times are not far enough apart to allow routes to operate two or three trips.

Staggered bell times are a common practice in school districts. Staggered bell times allow routes to operate multiple trips, which reduces the vehicle and driver requirements and maximizes resources. DISD is already operating multiple trips per route, but bell times are not staggered. Districts that stagger bell times include Killeen ISD, Socorro ISD and Beaumont ISD.

In addition, the Transportation Department does not have schedules for each route. Designating time points (approximate times each bus should

be at a given pick-up area) on a route helps bus drivers identify and report when buses are running late and provides information to parents as to when they can expect the bus. Setting and monitoring schedules can help transportation staff identify when schedules are not reasonable and need to be modified. If a driver cannot possibly run a route within the planned schedule, the route and the schedule need to be reviewed.

Exhibits 10-17 and **10-18** present survey and public comments received by the review team about the DISD transportation function.

Exhibit 10-17
Survey Comments About DISD Transportation

Principals						
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**No Response**
Buses arrive and leave on time.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0%
Students						
Survey Questions	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**No Response**
Buses arrive and leave on time.	5.8%	20.4%	51.5%	13.6%	5.8%	2.9%

Source: TSPR Survey Responses, April 2002.

Exhibit 10-18
Public Input Comments About DISD Transportation

Comment Cards
Bus routing schedules need to improve because schools are too far from bus barn may need to do staggered time releases.
Some students wait for 1 hour to go to school and another hour to go back home. May be the district needs better planning in this area.
We have so many children riding on school buses in order to go to school or from school home and they attend a school that is combined with another elementary school. These children have to wait for the bus driver to go and drop off the first bunch of students at home, come back and pick them up. They do not arrive until 4:00pm when they have been out of school since 3:00pm. Yet at the bus barn

there are buses that have finished their route by 3:30pm and are not sent to pick these children up.
Parent Surveys
The bus drivers leave the students at the edge of the street because they didn't have time.
Buses come too early and too late.
I think the problem in this school district is that they do not have sufficient school buses because they arrive very early in the morning and very late after school because they have to do many routes because there aren't enough buses.
Administrative and Support Staff Surveys
Transportation is lacking in timely arrivals/departures. Some children miss out on 1st period an entire semester/year because there are no enough buses. Some children are picked up at 4:30. Imagine the time spent on the bus?

Source: TSPR Public Forum comments, March 26 and March 27, 2002; TSPR survey results, May 2002.

Recommendation 85:

Stagger school start times and establish bus route schedules to ensure students get to and from school on time.

Delivering and picking up students on time should be a district priority, and DISD and the Transportation Department should take steps to ensure students are transported to and from school in a timely manner. Two specific steps can help in this goal.

First, DISD should stagger bell times to sufficiently allow the Transportation Department to continue to run at least two trips per route. DISD can determine the needed spread based on the average route duration.

Second, the Transportation Department should develop schedules for each route, including time points during the route. Each schedule should be tested several times by both the dispatcher and drivers who operate the route each day to determine feasibility. Schedules should be adjusted accordingly.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent establishes a committee made up of the	January

	director of Maintenance and Transportation and school principals to determine bell times and a policy for delegating the authority to set bell times.	2003
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and dispatcher identify optimal bell times for the Transportation Department.	January 2003
3.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation reviews the suggested bell times with the committee.	February 2003
4.	The committee agrees to stagger bell times and forwards the recommendation to the superintendent and the board.	March 2003
5.	The board adopts the recommendation.	April 2003
6.	School administrators send notices of the new bell times to parents for the coming school year.	May 2003
7.	The dispatcher develops schedules for each route, including time points during the route.	May 2003
8.	The new bell times become effective.	August 2003
9.	The dispatcher tests and adjusts each schedule.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources. Routes already operate two runs to maximize resources, so the recommendation will not result in a savings. The primary goal of this recommendation is to ensure routes can operate two trips each and provide timely service.

Chapter 10
TRANSPORTATION

C. SAFETY AND TRAINING

FINDING

Bus driver and bus aide training are not adequate to ensure student transportation safety. Drivers generally come to the district with their commercial driver's license (CDL). In addition, drivers must also take a 20-hour course taught by Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) to earn the state-required bus driver certification. The safety officer or safety helper take new drivers out on each bus model to familiarize them with operating each model. The safety officer or safety helper also provides two or three days of driving to familiarize drivers with routes. During a focus group, drivers and aides said they feel training is inadequate. Some bus aides said their cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certifications expired years ago and have not been renewed.

The DISD Transportation supervisor said drivers on special program routes are not receiving required training. U.S. Public Law 101-476, Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997, requires specific training for personnel transporting special education students. The Transportation supervisor said Region 1 has a vacancy for the instructor position and training has not been taking place. A Region 1 representative verified this information.

DISD does not have a driver-training manual. Manuals provide structure to training, ensure all areas are covered thoroughly and ensure all elements of each training topics are addressed. A manual also provides a reference manual for drivers and aides after training.

Retraining is an important element of driver and aide training. Retraining reinforces past lessons and introduces new information. Retraining also provides an opportunity for management to focus on problem areas identified among drivers and aides. Retraining provides a chance for drivers and aides to renew certifications, such as CPR certification. The safety helper said he periodically shows videos and rides with drivers after the video to observe their performance.

At San Benito Cons., new drivers receive 40 hours of training and an evaluation to make sure they are ready to drive. A driver involved in an accident goes through 20 hours of retraining. Each driver with the Round Rock ISD spends 62 hours in training, 20 of which are spent on the road

with a trainer. Classroom training in Round Rock ISD includes defensive driving, crisis prevention and 20 hours of ESC training.

The Dallas ISD has developed partnerships with local organizations and other Dallas ISD departments to provide specialized training to its special program drivers and bus monitors. Developing partnerships for training opportunities is a best practice that districts of any size can adopt. Dallas ISD coordinates with internal divisions, such as the Health Professionals Department, Special Education Division and Risk Management Division. Outside organizations include partnerships with the Dallas Fire Department, Dallas Police Department and the Children's Medical Center.

San Benito Cons. provides nine days of retraining per year. Training includes four full days at the beginning of the year that are used to cover topics taught in the ESC certification course. The training also covers special education laws and procedures, student discipline, first aid/CPR recertification, new defensive driving techniques, district policies and new laws and programs that will affect operations. One day is used to meet parents and practice driving. The additional five days are used throughout the year to cover defensive driving topics and areas in which drivers need improvement. In Martin County, Florida, each bus driver is required to attend 16 hours of in-service training each year. Kerrville ISD also has two days of retraining each year. The Kerrville Transportation director usually brings in an outside organization, such as the local ESC, to conduct training.

Recommendation 86:

Expand the regular and special education driver and bus aide training program and create a training manual.

The Transportation Department should expand the programs for regular and special education drivers for both initial training and retraining. Classroom training is an important element of training, but DISD does not provide any classroom training outside of the bus driver certification class. DISD should provide 16 hours of classroom training to all new drivers. The training should cover such basic areas as pre-trip inspections, traffic regulations and driving procedures, defensive driving, safety and emergency procedures, first aid, procedures for loading and unloading, and awareness of the effects of alcohol and other drugs. The Transportation Department should provide eight additional hours of classroom and hands-on training for special program drivers and bus aides. Training manuals should be developed for initial driver training. Training manuals can be based on peer district training manuals or the Texas Department of Public Safety bus driver-training manual.

Two days of retraining should be provided to drivers and aides each year. Rather than depending on videos, the Transportation supervisor, safety officer and the safety assistant should develop retraining programs that reinforce the initial training curriculum and focus on areas of need. The safety officer could also arrange for outside training from Region 1 or develop partnerships in the region with local police and fire departments, transit providers and social service agencies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation contacts peer districts and the Texas Department of Public Safety to collect sample training curricula.	January 2003
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation, the Transportation supervisor and the safety officer review peer training curricula and identify topics that will be taught to new drivers and aides at DISD.	February 2003
3.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation, the Transportation supervisor and the safety officer develop training curricula and training manuals patterned after peer and Texas Department of Public Safety training manuals.	March 2003
4.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and the Transportation supervisor contact local police and fire departments, transit providers and social service agencies to pursue partnership opportunities and assistance with driver and bus aide training modules.	June 2003 and Ongoing
5.	The safety officer conducts classroom training for all drivers.	August 2003
6.	The Transportation supervisor and safety officer identify areas where drivers and aides require retraining.	Ongoing
7.	The safety officer conducts annual retraining based on identified needs.	Annually in August

FISCAL IMPACT

The costs associated with this recommendation include initial training costs and retraining costs for both drivers and bus aides. Initial driver training costs are estimated at $1,286 ($7.26 an hour x 23 percent benefit x 9 new drivers x 16 hours training) while the initial bus aide training would cost the district $56 ($5.66 an hour x 23 percent benefit x 1 new bus aide x 8 hours training). Retraining for drivers would amount to $7,908 ($8.55 an hour x 23 percent benefit x 47 part-time drivers x 16 hours retraining) and

the corresponding bus aide costs would be $1,334 ($7.53 an hour x 23 percent benefit x 9 aides x 16 hours retraining). The total expanded training curriculum will cost $10,584 ($1,286 + $56 + $7,908 + $1,334) a year. No costs are assumed for full-time drivers since training is considered part of their full-time duties.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Expand the regular and special education driver and bus aide training program and create a training manual.	$0	($10,584)	($10,584)	($10,584)	($10,584)

FINDING

The Transportation Department lack skilled mechanics. The department has two certified automobile mechanics. Other mechanics represent a variety of skill levels, with most skills being learned on the job. No mechanics have school bus maintenance certification and no incentives exist for staff to earn mechanic certification.

Two local community colleges - Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in Harlingen and South Texas Community College (STCC) in McAllen - offer programs for earning automobile mechanic certification. The STCC certification program is 41 credit hours over 11 classes and the TSTC program is 58 hours over 19 classes. STCC tuition ranges in price from $172 to $229 for three- and four-hour classes.

The National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of vehicle repair and service through the testing and certification of repair and service professionals. Prospective candidates register for and take one or more of the ASE 40-plus exams. Upon passing at least one exam and providing proof of two years of relevant work experience, the test taker becomes ASE certified. Certification, however, is not for life. To remain certified, those with ASE credentials must be retested every five years. ASE has seven certifications for school bus mechanics:

- body systems and special equipment (Test S1);
- diesel engines (Test S2);
- drive train (Test S3);
- brakes (Test S4);
- suspension and steering (Test S5);
- electrical/electronic systems (Test S6); and
- air-conditioning systems and controls (Test S7).

Mechanics meeting the experience requirement and holding certifications for tests S1 through S6 earn the certificate of Master School Bus Technician. ASE tests cost $28 for registration and $23 a test.

The DISD head mechanic said a few years ago the Transportation Department started a program for training mechanics through the STCC automotive certification program. The head mechanic said after one class, the program was not continued. The Transportation supervisor said the program was not continued because mechanics did not regularly attend classes.

DISD has three mechanic levels. Mechanic 1 is a general mechanic, mechanic 2 is a mechanic with specialization in a specific area and mechanic 3 is a mechanic with ASE certification. Job descriptions for these different mechanic types were not provided. The Transportation Department did not provide data identifying which mechanics are in each level. Given that mechanics are unskilled, all mechanics are assumed to be mechanic 1.

Mechanic 1 has the same pay grade as drivers, with a minimum wage rate of $7.26. Mechanic 2 is the same pay grade as drivers plus $1.00 per hour. Mechanic 3 is the same pay grade as drivers plus $2.00 per hour. Higher skilled mechanics will result in better maintenance of buses and the general services fleet.

Recommendation 87:

Develop incentives and procedures for obtaining and maintaining maintenance certifications.

The Transportation Department and DISD should develop incentives to encourage mechanics to expand their skills and earn certifications in automotive or school bus maintenance. The incentive program should be two-fold, with incentives for completing both certifications and increased skill levels.

Mechanics should be encouraged to study for ASE tests or enroll in automotive certification classes at STCC. The mechanics will pay for the tests or classes and attend them on their own time to avoid the cost of dropouts to the department. For each STCC class or ASE test passed, the Transportation Department would reimburse the cost of tuition or tests. The Transportation Department should also award a $200 bonus for successful completion of each class or test. Mechanics that successfully renew their ASE certification every five years can receive the bonus each time they renew their certifications.

After mechanics complete certification classes or tests, the director of Maintenance and Transportation and head mechanic should reevaluate the skill level of the employee for promotion to mechanic 2 or mechanic 3.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation recommends incentives for mechanic training and reimbursement for tuition and fees to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance.	January 2003
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance recommends incentives for mechanic training and reimbursement for tuition and fees to the superintendent and the board.	February 2003
3.	The board approves incentives for mechanic training and reimbursement for tuition and fees.	March 2003
4.	The Transportation supervisor develops procedures and guidelines for the new program.	April 2003
5.	The Transportation supervisor informs mechanics of the new program.	May 2003
6.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation and head mechanic evaluate mechanic skills. The director of Maintenance and Transportation promotes mechanics as they earn certifications and improve their skills.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The total costs for a mechanic to take two classes are estimated at $858 ($458 for two classes + $400 in bonuses) while the ASE certification costs amount to $502 ($51 per test x 2 tests+ $400 in bonuses). The district would then have the option to increase the mechanics salary which would cost $5,136 based on a $2 an hour raise ($2.00 an hour x 23 percent benefit x 8 hours a day x 261 days. The combined costs for STCC tuition, ASE registration fees, bonuses and salary increases would be $6,496 beginning in 2003-04.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Develop incentives and procedures for obtaining and maintaining maintenance certifications.	$0	($6,496)	($6,496)	($6,496)	($6,496)

FINDING

The Transportation Department does not take full advantage of opportunities to make presentations about bus safety to schools. The safety officer and the driver instructor are periodically asked to make presentations to schools on bus safety. The presentations cover evacuation in the event of an emergency, bus danger zones and behavior on the bus. The presentations generally take place both inside a classroom and outside on a bus. The safety officer said he generally makes presentations all day, speaking to about three classrooms at a time and passing out a handout on bus safety zones. The Transportation Department does not pass out bus safety information to students at the beginning of the year or provide information to schools to pass out to students. The Transportation supervisor said he did not know what information, if any, schools distribute to students on bus safety.

The safety helper said these presentations are conducted once or twice a year by request at specific schools. The safety officer and safety helper said all of the schools in the district were not aware that they could request a bus safety presentation at their school . The information is not distributed to schools that do not participate. The safety officer said the difference in discipline problems on buses between students who see the presentation and students who do not is not tracked.

San Marcos Cons. provides student-management training to students in addition to drivers. San Marcos Cons. student training is conducted twice a year and impresses upon students the effect that bad behavior can have on safety. Students participate in role-playing games in small groups; these exercises teach lessons such as demonstrating how distracting loud noises can be to the bus driver. The San Marcos Cons. training program caused a significant drop in reported discipline problems.

Recommendation 88:

Schedule annual bus safety presentations at all DISD schools.

Making presentations to schools is a method for conducting student-management training that should be pursued more aggressively by the Transportation Department. The Transportation Department should schedule a bus safety presentation at each school annually. The presentations should ensure students recognize the effect poor behavior has on bus safety. Role-playing and hands-on demonstrations on the bus can make the experience both educational and fun for students. Presentations should be designed to target different age students.

The presentations can also serve as a way to distribute information. Booklets on bus safety should be produced in English and Spanish for all students. Peer districts should be contacted for samples.

The instructor should be responsible for tracking student discipline to look for improvements.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The safety officer contacts peer school districts and requests copies of their safety information pieces provided to students.	April 2003
2.	The safety officer reviews the peer materials and develops a booklet for DISD students.	June 2003
3.	The safety officer contacts each school to schedule a bus safety presentation.	July 2003
4.	The safety officer, safety helper or designated personnel conduct safety presentations at all DISD schools annually.	Fall 2003 and Annually
5.	The driver instructor tracks student discipline to identify improvements.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The labor required for this recommendation is included in the existing duties of the involved staff members. The safety booklets will incur printing costs of $2,940 a year for 10,500 students. This cost assumes a four-page booklet at seven cents a page.

Translation of the booklet may have some costs. However, the safety officer and Transportation supervisor are bilingual and can translate the manual as part of their duties. The Transportation Department can also solicit help from other bilingual district employees, such as Spanish teachers.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Schedule annual bus safety presentations at all DISD schools.	$0	($2,940)	($2,940)	($2,940)	($2,940)

Chapter 10
TRANSPORTATION

D. FLEET MAINTENANCE

The Transportation Department is responsible for maintaining the school transportation fleet. Based on a fleet inventory list for the 2001-02 school year, the fleet consists of 68 buses, two vans, two trucks and one wrecker. All of the buses are assigned to routes. The Transportation Department also maintains the general services fleet, which consists of approximately 30 vehicles.

DISD reported 72 buses to TEA in 2000-01; however the 2001-02 fleet list provided by the Transportation Department includes more detailed information on the fleet and is therefore used for analysis in this section.

Transportation maintenance is performed in a shop with four interior maintenance bays. The facility also has a bay for lubricating buses and a body shop for minor body repairs. Mechanics also work on buses under covered outdoor areas next to the maintenance shop. The parking lot is paved and fenced. Twenty-four hour security is provided.

FINDING

The district does not have an adopted bus replacement plan. DISD disagreed with the statement that it does not have an adopted bus replacement plan, but failed to provide documentation to the review team to show otherwise. The district stated that they purchase three buses each year.

The average age of a bus in the DISD bus fleet is 12 years. Of the 68 buses in the DISD fleet inventory list 35 percent, or 24 buses, are 15 or more years-old. The age of the bus fleet is shown in **Exhibit 10-19**.

Exhibit 10-19
DISD Active Fleet Inventory By Model Year
2001-02

Model Year	Number of Buses	
1978	1	
1981	1	
1982	1	

1983	1
1984	6
1985	5
1986	7
1987	2
1988	4
1989	2
1990	3
1991	11
1992	4
1994	3
1995	5
1998	1
1999	5
2001	6
Total Fleet	**68**
Average Age	12

Source: DISD Transportation Department Fleet Inventory, 2001-02.

The life of a school bus is generally accepted to be 10 years of service or 200,000 service miles, whichever is longer. An average bus in the DISD fleet operates an estimated average of 13,800 miles a year. The service life at this rate is 15 years. A 15-year replacement schedule is therefore appropriate for DISD.

Based on **Exhibit 10-19**, DISD has purchased 12 buses, or an average of 2.4 buses a year, during the past five years. DISD did not provide documentation showing what was paid for these buses. The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), which has a purchasing cooperative, lists Type C 77-passenger buses ranging in price from $43,800 to $53,600, with an average of $48,700. DISD has spent an estimated $116,880 on buses a year for the past five years.

Older buses are generally more costly to maintain. According to a report from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services entitled "School Bus Replacement Considerations," two studies

in California and Washington identified that "after 12 years of use, the annual operating cost of Type C and D school buses began to increase significantly and continued to increase each year thereafter." The report also identifies safety as an issue with older buses. Older buses do not adhere to new requirements in the Federal Vehicle Motor Vehicle Safety Standards or follow federal requirements or recommendations with respect to fuel efficiency and vehicle emissions.

Recommendation 89:

Adopt a 15-year bus replacement policy.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation develops a proposal for a bus replacement plan that replaces six buses a year until 2010, then four or five buses a year thereafter.	October 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation recommends adoption of the bus replacement plan to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance	October 2002
3.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance recommends the adoption of the bus replacement plan to the superintendent and the board.	November 2002
4.	The board adopts the bus replacement plan.	December 2002
5.	The board commits the necessary funds to support the bus replacement plan starting with the 2003-04 budget.	August 2003 and Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

DISD will need to purchase six buses a year until 2010, then five buses a year thereafter. A Type C 77-passenger bus costs about $48,700. Using this figure as a standard, purchasing six buses a year will cost $292,200. DISD has purchased 2.4 buses a year the past five years, spending an average of $116,880 a year on buses. This recommendation will cost DISD an additional $175,320 a year until 2010.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Adopt a 15-year bus replacement policy.	$0	($175,320)	($175,320)	($175,320)	($175,320)

FINDING

The Transportation Department does not use a vehicle maintenance information system (VMIS). The Transportation Department tracks maintenance records manually. Each bus and general services fleet vehicle the Transportation Department maintains has a bound book containing the maintenance history of each vehicle. The information in the books includes work performed and parts used. Labor hours are not tracked for buses, but are tracked for the general services fleet to charge back the cost of maintenance. The data in the books are not analyzed for costs or trends.

One of the mechanic helpers tracks fuel use by each individual bus. He writes this information down on a form and provides the form to the business record coordinator. The business record coordinator is a full-time employee who drives four hours a day and spends four hours a day maintaining maintenance records. A mechanic helper who performs oil and lube jobs manually tracks his work on forms as well. He provides these forms to the business records coordinator. The business record coordinator copies this information, as well as information from work orders, into the bus books.

The parts inventory is not tracked. A parts inventory is done once a year and parts are ordered when they are needed or appear to be running low. The business records clerk estimated the parts room has about $50,000 in parts inventory. TEA School Transportation Operations Reports show that the Transportation Department spent between $140,714 and $226,638 annually in Transportation Department supplies and materials from 1996-97 to 2000-01.

The head mechanic would like to use a VMIS system. The Transportation supervisor said that he and the Technology Department have not found a VMIS system that meets their needs. The parts room has a computer and a printer.

A VMIS can provide maintenance personnel with the following information and capabilities:

- detailed cost information of fuel consumption, maintenance services and a complete inventory of parts used;
- controlled preventive-maintenance schedules identifying vehicles in need of periodic service;
- immediate online access to vehicle information;
- comprehensive reporting (daily, monthly and yearly) showing fuel usage, maintenance, cost; labor time and parts inventory summarized by vehicle, department and district; and
- identification of retail purchase for gasoline, parts and labor.

Recommendation 90:

Purchase and implement a vehicle maintenance information system.

The director of Maintenance and Transportation, Transportation supervisor and head mechanic should develop a list of requirements for a VMIS and meet with the Technology Department to discuss the requirements for software and develop specifications. The Technology Department should work with the Purchasing Department to purchase the software that meets specifications. Once the software has been received, the Technology Department should install and customize the software per the Transportation Department requirements.

Once the software is installed, the Technology Department should provide training to the head mechanic and business records coordinator for the program. After training, the head mechanic and business records coordinator should begin regularly using VMIS to enter and store information on vehicles, repairs, preventive maintenance and fuel. Labor hours worked on buses should be tracked to help determine the true cost of maintenance. The business records coordinator should also enter the parts inventory into the program and keep the information updated. The head mechanic should use VMIS to track information for each vehicle on a regular basis, look for trends and schedule preventive maintenance. VMIS should be used to help identify vehicles that should be replaced.

Many VMIS systems with customized features are available off-the-shelf with customizable features. Costs range between $180 and $1,100.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation, Transportation supervisor and head mechanic develop a list of requirements for a VMIS.	October 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation, Transportation supervisor and head mechanic meet with the Technology Department to develop specifications for VMIS software.	December 2002
3.	The Technology Department and Purchasing Department research VMIS software packages.	January 2003
4.	The Technology Department selects a VMIS program based on the specifications developed.	March 2003
5.	The Purchasing Department purchases the selected VMIS. The Technology Department installs VMIS.	April 2003
6.	The Technology Department modifies the program to meet the requirements of the Transportation Department.	June 2003

7.	The Technology Department trains the head mechanic and business records coordinator to use VMIS.	July 2003
8.	The business records coordinator tracks vehicle maintenance using VMIS. The head mechanic uses VMIS to look for trends in maintenance and schedule preventive maintenance.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

A sample VMIS program costs $650 for the edition with the most capabilities and a single-user license. The Transportation Department already has a computer and printer in the parts room for the program, which can be shared by the head mechanic and business records coordinator.

Because the head mechanic and business records coordinator are full-time employees, training is considered part of their duties and does not incur a cost.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Purchase and implement a Vehicle Maintenance Information System.	($650)	$0	$0	$0	$0

FINDING

The Transportation Department does not have a comprehensive preventive-maintenance program. Buses receive oil and lube jobs, which consist of checking filters, fluids, the battery, lube fittings, the rear axle, gaskets, tank drainage and recording the vehicle number.

In general, basic vehicle preventive maintenance requires that vehicle inspections be performed every 3,000 (PM-A inspection) and 6,000 miles (PM-B inspections). A PM-A inspection generally includes the following elements:

- passenger and driver seats and safety belts;
- driver's sun visor;
- horn operation;
- driver's switches and controls for operation and illumination;
- vehicle instruments and gauges for operation and illumination;
- wiper condition and operation;
- windshield washer operation;
- interior lights;
- front passenger door operations;

- radio mounting and operation;
- parking brake operation;
- interior for damaged panels and missing decals;
- fire extinguisher and mounting;
- interior floor for weak spots or loose flooring;
- check windows - broken or missing parts;
- check all exterior lights;
- check tires and lug nuts - record pressures and tread depths;
- check wheelchair lift operation and condition;
- check lift interlock operation;
- check exterior for paint, body damage and missing or damaged decals;
- check state inspection sticker;
- brake condition and adjustment;
- exterior mirrors mounting and condition;
- steering components;
- drive shaft U-joints;
- check for fluid leaks on engine and transmission;
- check coolant level, system concentration and pressure test capacity - change coolant at each 30,000 mile interval;
- pressure check cooling system - check for leaks;
- check radiator and condenser fins for dirt and debris;
- check skirt-mounted condenser for fin damage, dirt and debris;
- check skirt-mounted condenser for fans for operation;
- check engine compartment for defects and problems that could cause road failures;
- check exhaust system for leaks and loose mounting;
- check rear axle lube level;
- retrieve continuous diagnostic trouble codes;
- perform engine key on engine off on-demand self-test;
- perform engine key on engine off injector electric self-test;
- perform injector electric self-test;
- perform engine key on engine running on-demand self-test;
- check fast idle operation;
- load test batteries;
- check charging system and record voltage;
- change engine oil and filter; and
- interior cleanliness.

A PM-B program is performed on the vehicles every 6,000 miles in addition to the tasks performed with the PM-A program. The PM-B tasks include:

- change air intake filter;
- clean and inspect battery connection;
- check belt tension;

- inspect shocks, springs and air bags;
- check air ride system for leaks;
- check air ride air compressor operation and mounting;
- clean A/C unit filter (rear unit);
- check front A/C system pressures;
- check rear A/C system pressures;
- leak test A/C systems; and
- inspect and treat vehicle for insects and vermin.

Based on sample records, oil and lube service is performed too frequently. Buses are not scheduled for oil and lube jobs based on mileage. Vehicle maintenance staff cycle through the buses and general-service vehicles, completing from one to six oil and lube jobs each day. Once all the vehicles have been serviced, the oil and lube jobs start again with the first vehicle.

On three sample buses, oil and lube jobs were performed an average of every 58 days and 1,600 miles. Some oil and lube jobs were performed less than 1,000 miles apart. Oil and lube jobs are included in a typical PM-A program every 3,000 miles.

The average DISD bus operates 13,800 miles per year. One of the full-time drivers that fuels and washes buses documents mileage each time a vehicle is fueled. This information is provided to the business records clerk.

Recommendation 91:

Conduct regular preventive maintenance inspections on school buses and general- service vehicles.

The Transportation Department should develop a preventive maintenance schedule for the bus and general-services fleet. The head mechanic should develop a PM-A inspection that is conducted every 3,000 miles, and a PM-B inspection that is conducted every 6,000 miles for buses. The cars and light trucks of the general services fleet can be placed on a calendar schedule, with the PM-A inspection every six months and a PM-B inspection every year. The time spent on too-frequent oil and lube jobs can be refocused on scheduled preventive-maintenance inspections.

The Transportation Department has procedures in place to track vehicle mileage. The head mechanic should review vehicle mileage weekly to determine which vehicles need to be scheduled for preventive-maintenance that week. Other department supervisors should be contacted to schedule maintenance for the general service fleet. The head mechanic

should track the percent of preventive- maintenance inspections performed on time.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The head mechanic develops PM-A and PM-B inspection programs based on industry standards.	October 2002
2.	The head mechanic reviews mileage each week to identify vehicles due for preventive-maintenance inspections.	December 2002 and Weekly
3.	The mechanics perform preventive-maintenance inspections based on the schedule provided by the head mechanic.	December 2002 and Weekly
4.	The head mechanic tracks preventive maintenance inspections performed on time.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 11
FOOD SERVICE

This chapter discusses the Donna Independent School District's (DISD's) food service operations in the following sections:

A. Organization and Management
B. Meal Participation
C. Financial Management

An effective school food service program provides students with affordable, appealing and nutritionally balanced breakfasts and lunches in a safe, clean and accessible environment. Successfully managed school food service programs provide customer satisfaction and contain costs while complying with applicable federal, state and local board regulations and policies.

The Texas School Food Service Association, a professional organization for school food service employees, has identified 10 *Standards of Excellence* for evaluating school food service programs. The standards encompass areas ranging from planning, financial management and control to nutrition, sanitation and professional development.

BACKGROUND

DISD participates in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack and Summer Feeding programs, administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for all Texas schools. DISD contracts with TEA through the School Lunch and Breakfast Agreement annually to participate in these programs. As part of the contract, DISD is subject to annual coordinated reviews by TEA. The last coordinated review was conducted in November 2000. At the end of the school year, districts must renew the agreement through TEA's Child Nutrition Programs Information Management System to continue participation in the programs.

The City of Donna inspects each DISD cafeteria annually; all district cafeterias passed their 2001-02 inspections.

DISD provides food service through its School Nutrition Services Department, which serves more than 3.2 million meals in the district each year. From 1998-99 through 2000-01, the district increased the number of lunches served by 5.3 percent and regular breakfasts by 17.6 percent (**Exhibit 11-1**).

Exhibit 11-1
DISD School Nutrition Services Department Meals
1998-99 through 2000-01

Meal	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change (1998 to 2001)
Lunches	1,448,716	1,488,512	1,525,494	5.3%
Breakfast (Regular)	844,952	923,815	993,703	17.6%
Breakfast (Severe Need)	803,790	809,811	911,200	13.4%
Average Daily Attendance (ADA)	10,311	10,611	10,755	4.3%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Child Nutrition Programs
District Profiles, 1998-99 through 2000-01.

The district serves students in 11 elementary schools, two middle schools, one ninth grade school and one high school. In addition, the high school, the ninth grade school and one middle school have a la carte snack bars where approved snacks are sold. The district enforces a closed campus policy for all schools (students are not allowed to leave school grounds for meals).

In July 1999, the School Nutrition Services Department purchased the *Bon Appetit* point-of-sale system, which it uses in its secondary cafeterias. The department still uses a manual system in its other cafeterias. A point-of-sale system is an automated meal counting mechanism that tracks students served, meals purchased and a la carte items bought. The director of Food Service said that the department tried to use the system in all cafeterias, but was unable to train staff sufficiently in its use. To record meal counts at the elementary schools, cashiers use manual counters, or clickers.

In 2001-02, all students enrolled in DISD schools were not charged for lunch under the National School Lunch Act Special Provision 2. Provision 2 designation allows schools to serve meals to all children at no charge for a four-year period. In the first year, or base year, the school determines student eligibility and takes meal counts by type, such as paid, free or reduced-price to establish the reimbursement percentages for the remaining three years of the provision 2 status. During the remaining three-year period, the school files for reimbursement by counting the number of reimbursable meals served each day and multiplying the total number of meals served by the base year percentages of free, reduced and paid meals served.

If the income level of the school's population remains stable during the initial four-year period, TEA may approve a four-year extension or the program. Schools that use Provision 2 must pay the difference between federal reimbursement and the cost of providing all meals at no charge from revenue sources other than federal funds. Provision 2 reduces the requirement to identify and process applications annually and simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures.

Provision 2 application is generally for schools that have a high percentage of students who are classified as economically disadvantaged and eligible for free or reduced meals under the National School Lunch Program. DISD's peer districts (Edgewood ISD, Eagle Pass ISD, Mission Consolidated, San Benito Consolidated and Rio Grande City Consolidated) average 88.7 percent economically disadvantaged students as a percentage of total enrollment. DISD ranks third in the percentage of students classified as economically disadvantaged at 90 percent. This figure is slightly lower than Eagle Pass ISD at 91.1 percent and Edgewood ISD at 96.3 percent. DISD's percentage of economically disadvantaged students is also slightly above the peer average of 88.7 percent (**Exhibit 11-2**).

Exhibit 11-2
Economically Disadvantaged Students
Donna vs. Peer Districts
2001-02

District	Economically Disadvantaged Students	Total Students	Economically Disadvantaged Students as Percent of Total
Edgewood	12,933	13,435	96.3%
Eagle Pass	11,636	12,778	91.1%
Donna	**9,410**	**10,451**	**90.0%**
Rio Grande City	7,715	8,906	86.6%
San Benito	7,802	9,102	85.7%
Mission	10,789	13,122	82.2%
Peer Average	**10,175**	**11,469**	**88.7%**

Source: TEA, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), 2001-02.

Funding sources for DISD's food service operations include: adult meal payments, federal reimbursements, a la carte sales and fees from special events catered by the School Nutrition Services Department. The largest source of revenue comes from federal reimbursements.

During the last five years, Rio Grande City Cons. increased its federal revenues by 46.4 percent. DISD had the second lowest increase at 14.5 percent. Edgewood ISD had the lowest increase at 11.5 percent. DISD's change is about one-half that of the peer average of 30 percent for the period (**Exhibit 11-3**).

Exhibit 11-3
Food Service Federal Revenue
DISD vs. Peer Districts
1995-96 through 1999-2000

District	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change From 1995-96
Edgewood	$4,524,386	$4,931,858	$4,934,615	$4,895,661	$5,046,302	11.5%
Donna	**$3,129,462**	**$3,264,198**	**$3,424,232**	**$3,635,883**	**$3,582,632**	**14.5%**
Mission	$3,583,803	$3,732,458	$3,991,423	$4,021,960	$4,420,321	23.3%
Eagle Pass	$2,936,637	$3,264,757	$3,571,804	$3,844,130	$4,140,809	41.0%
San Benito	$2,427,711	$2,607,590	$2,861,184	$3,155,651	$3,508,969	44.5%
Rio Grande City	$2,412,899	$2,527,261	$2,944,815	$3,103,277	$3,533,684	46.4%
Peer Average	**$3,177,087**	**$3,412,785**	**$3,660,768**	**$3,804,136**	**$4,130,017**	**30.0%**

Source: TEA, 1995-96 through 1999-2000.
Note: Federal revenue does not include USDA Commodity payments or Summer Feeding program revenues.

If a school district's food service operations are not self-supporting, the operations must be subsidized from the general operating fund, which diverts funding from instructional activities.

For the past two years, DISD's food service operations expenses have exceeded revenues. The greatest deficit occurred in 1999-2000, when the department lost nearly $300,000. While revenues have increased by 8.2 percent, expenditures have increased by 12.5 percent. The district went from a self-supporting operation in 1998-99 with a $70,000 profit to one with a deficit in 1999-2000 and 2000-01. Furthermore, the district budgets its food service operations in the general fund. When revenues are not sufficient to cover expenditures, the losses are subsidized by this fund. Consequently, DISD does not operate a separate fund solely for its food service operations with the exception of the summer feeding program. The district is making progress cutting the deficit in 2000-01 by two-thirds (**Exhibit 11-4**). The district budgeted and used sizeable food service reserves of more than $300,000 in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 to offset the deficits. The food service reserve line item decreased to $61,000 in 2000-01.

Exhibit 11-4
DISD School Nutrition Services Department
Revenue and Expenditures
1998-99 through 2000-01

Revenue and Expenditure Categories	1998-99 Actual	1999-2000 Actual	2000-01 Actual	Percent Change From 1998-99
Local	$261,615	$291,291	$265,363	1.4%
State	50,136	51,534	52,334	4.4%
Federal	3,923,603	3,849,839	$4,265,750	8.7%
Total Revenues	**$4,235,354**	**$4,192,664**	**$4,583,447**	**8.2%**
Payroll	$1,965,306	$2,271,830	$2,327,989	18.5%
Contracted Services	118,566	133,490	146,288	23.4%
Food and Supplies	1,985,741	2,056,451	2,195,440	10.6%
Other Operating Expenditures	8,846	18,175	11,477	29.7%
Capital Outlay	85,962	11,813	2,818	(96.7%)
Total Expenditures	**$4,164,421**	**$4,491,759**	**$4,684,012**	**12.5%**
Net Profit/Loss	**$70,933**	**($299,095)**	**($100,565)**	

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 1998-99 through 2000-01.

Chapter 11
FOOD SERVICE

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

As shown in **Exhibit 11-5**, the director of Food Service heads the School Nutrition Services Department and reports to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance. The director of Food Service has been a School Nutrition Services Department employee since 1989 in various capacities and has been in this position since July 2000. The director of Food Service supervises five staff at the central office, two warehouse staff, five managers and assistant managers and 114 food service staff at 14 cafeterias. There are 15 schools in the district. Two schools, Rivas and Caceres Elementary Schools share a cafeteria.

Exhibit 11-5
DISD School Nutrition Services Department Organization
2001-02
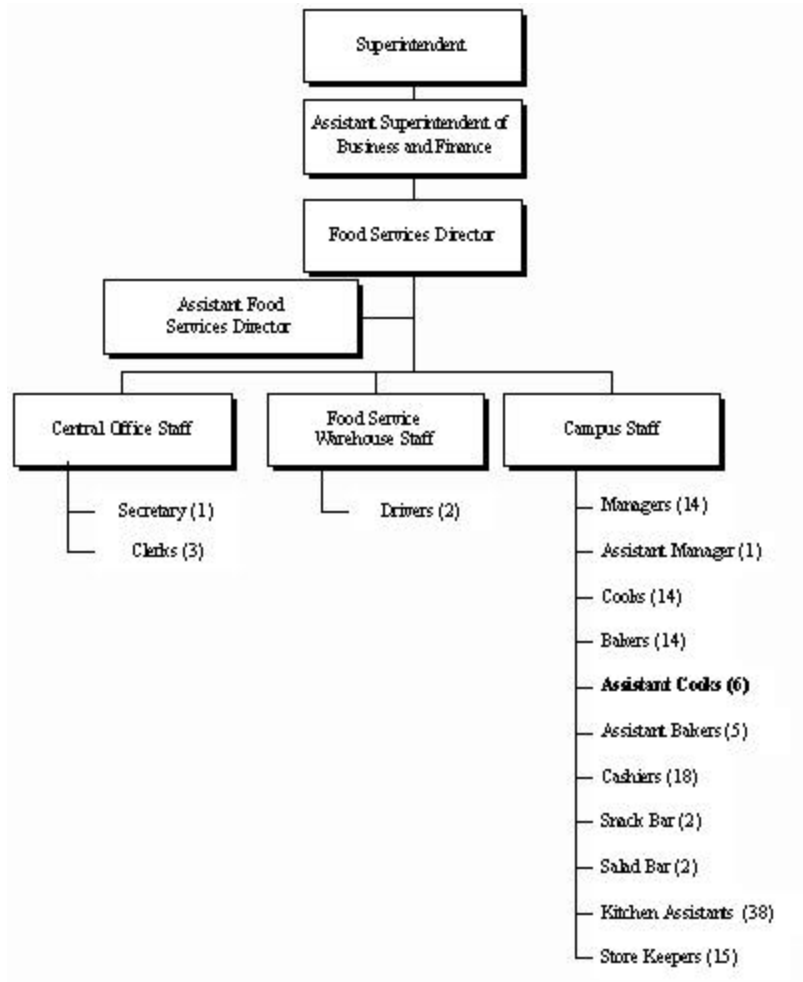
The cafeteria managers and assistant manager supervise 114 staff at 14 cafeterias. Two elementary schools, Rivas and Caceres, shared a kitchen and cafeteria in 2001-02. With the new construction and opening of the Rivas cafeteria in August 2002, there will be a separate cafeteria for each school in 2002-03. **Exhibit 11-6** shows the staffing at each school cafeteria. All cafeteria staff work full-time with the number of hours worked ranging from six to eight hours. Each school cafeteria has a storekeeper position. The storekeeper is responsible for cleaning the cafeterias, doing heavy lifting in the kitchens, emptying trash and helping to stock and rotate the inventory. At schools that have breakfast in the classroom programs, the storekeeper also helps deliver the breakfasts.

Exhibit 11-6
DISD School Nutrition Services Department Staffing
2001-02

School	Manager/ Assistant Manager	Cooks/ Asst. Cooks	Bakers/ Asst. Bakers	Cashier	Snack/ Salad Bar	Kitchen Assts.	Store- keeper	Totals
Donna High School	1	1	1	2	2	4	1	12
Todd Ninth Grade	2	1	2	1	0	3	1	10
Veterans Middle	1	2	2	2	0	4	1	12
Solis Middle School	1	2	1	2	2	3	1	12
Guzman Elem.	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	7
Truman Price Elem.	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	7
Ochoa Elem.	1	1	1	1	0	3	1	8
Runn Elem.	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	5
Stainke Elem.	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	7
Lenoir Elem.	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	7
Rivas/Caceres Elem.	1	2	2	2	0	2	1	10

Salinas Elem.	1	2	2	1	0	2	2	10
Garza Elem.	1	2	1	1	0	5	1	11
Munoz Elem.	1	2	1	1	0	5	1	11
Totals	**15**	**20**	**19**	**18**	**4**	**38**	**15**	**129**

Source: DISD director of Food Service, April 2002.

The School Nutrition Services Department has a central warehouse used to stock disposable wares, paper and chemicals. The district maintains about one week's supply and uses just-in-time (JIT) delivery for these items. Each week vendors deliver food commodities directly to the schools based on an order sent from the School Nutrition Services Department central office. Inventories are physically counted monthly at the schools and documented in a monthly inventory report for each school.

The district does not have a licensed registered dietician on staff. For nutritional analysis, the director of Food Service submits menus to the Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) dietitian for assistance. Menus were analyzed in the fall of 2000 and have varied slightly since the analysis was completed.

For the most part, the district uses the convenience preparation method. However, once a week, the menu calls for a conventional meal. A conventional meal requires preparing some foods on the premises using raw ingredients, bakery bread or prepared pizza and the meal is served on dishes. The convenience method uses processed food and disposable wares.

The district does not use a cycle lunch menu, a menu that repeats items during a cycle or period of time, since the district believes there should be ample meal choices.

FINDING

DISD established an innovative program that has reduced food service accidents. In the fall of 1998, the director of Food Service noticed that 29 accidents and workers' compensation claims were filed in the department in 1997-98.

The director of Food Service worked with the director of Employee Services to institute a program to reduce accidents by training a safety representative for each school cafeteria. Safety representatives are School Nutrition Services staff members who voluntarily serve as safety representative for their respective cafeteria. The safety representatives

meet weekly for training and discussion. The district's third party administrator for workers' compensation provides training seminars and videos. Topics include techniques for properly lifting cafeteria items to reduce back injuries, proper handling of equipment to reduce cuts and burns and making sure that signs are used when floors are wet to reduce slips and falls.

The safety representatives monitor cafeterias for unsafe activity and work with their manager to eliminate hazards. At the end of the year, the safety representative and cafeteria managers from the two cafeterias with the least accidents and the greatest attendance at safety meetings receive a jacket.

As a result of the program, accidents have been reduced from 29 in 1997-98 to 14 through March 2002 of the 2001-02 school year.

Job-related injuries are costly in terms of workers' compensation benefits and reduced productivity by hiring temporary replacement workers. Many school districts implement safety training programs to reduce accidents and claims.

COMMENDATION

DISD's safety representative program has improved safety and reduced accidents in school cafeterias.

FINDING

DISD has implemented employment incentives to encourage employee attendance. The district has a summer feeding program with 24 positions available for hire. There are 129 cafeteria employees who could apply to work for the summer program. The director of Food Service has established good attendance during the school year as the primary factor in selecting employees to work in the summer program. Since the program's inception, employee attendance rates have increased significantly.

Reducing absenteeism benefits Food Service operations in terms of productivity and cost. When regular employees are absent and substitutes are used, cafeteria productivity suffers. The substitutes may not be familiar with the cafeteria layout and recipes and can only be assigned the simplest tasks. Reducing absenteeism also reduces costs. When regular employees are absent, the district pays their salary through vacation or sick leave days. In addition to paying the absent employee, the district also hires and pays for substitutes to ensure the staffing is adequate for meal service.

COMMENDATION

DISD uses summer employment as an incentive to reduce employee absenteeism during the school year.

FINDING

DISD serves fewer meals per labor hour (MPLH) than the recommended industry standards at all but one of its school cafeterias. MPLH is a standard performance measure used to gauge the efficiency of school districts, hospitals, restaurants and other food services operations. MPLH is the number of meal equivalents served in a given period divided by the total hours worked during that period. Meal equivalents are lunches plus an equivalent number of breakfast and a la carte sales. DISD uses the following conversion rates for meal equivalents as shown in **Exhibit 11-7**.

Exhibit 11-7
Conversion Rate for DISD Meal Equivalents
2001-02

Category	Conversion Rate
Lunch Meal	One lunch equals one equivalent
Breakfast Meals	Three breakfasts equal one equivalent
A la Carte Sales	Sales divided by $3.00 equal one equivalent

Source: DISD director of Food Service, April 2002.

DISD uses a combination of convenience and conventional meals at all locations. The director of Food Service said that convenience meals are used frequently, but there is usually one day per week that conventional meals are served, which is when meals are prepared from scratch.

Exhibit 11-8 outlines the MPLH industry standards usedto evaluate staff productivity. If the MPLH rate is lower than the recommended rate, either the number of meals served is low or the number of hours worked is high. The number of hours worked is a function of two variables: the number of staff employed and the hours per worker. Both variables are controllable. For schools with MPLH below industry standards, a school food service operation would have to increase the number of meals served or reduce the number of staff or the hours worked by each employee to achieve the recommended MPLH.

Exhibit 11-8
Recommended Meals Per Labor Hour

| Number of Equivalents | Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH) | | | |
| | Conventional System | | Convenience System | |
	Low Productivity	High Productivity	Low Productivity	High Productivity
Up to 100	8	10	10	12
101 - 150	9	11	11	13
151 - 200	10-11	12	12	14
202 - 250	12	14	14	15
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 up	19	21	22	23

Source: School Foodservice Management for the 21st Century, 5th Edition.

Exhibit 11-9 compares DISD's MPLH for each school kitchen to the industry standard for conventional system use for the month of October 2001. October 2001 was selected for the comparison because student participation was at its peak. To be as conservative as possible in evaluating DISD's productivity, the conventional meal preparation system was used and average hours were adjusted to exclude storekeeper hours, since these duties are not dedicated to meal preparation and service.

Exhibit 11-9
DISD Meals Per Labor Hour Comparison
October 2001

Schools	Average Meal Equivalents Served	Average Hours Worked	DISD MPLH	Industry MPLH Standard	MPLH Variance +/(-)

Donna High School	1,376	79	17.4	19	(1.6)
Todd Ninth grade	776	66	11.8	17	(5.2)
Solis Middle	1,019	76	13.4	19	(5.6)
Veterans Middle	1,012	79	12.8	19	(6.2)
Guzman Elementary	519	47	11.0	15	(4.0)
Price Elementary	607	47	12.9	16	(3.1)
Ochoa Elementary	720	55	13.1	17	(3.9)
Runn Elementary	488	30	16.3	14	2.3
Stainke Elementary	482	48	10.0	14	(4.0)
Lenoir Elementary	594	46	12.9	15	(2.1)
Rivas/Caceres Elem.*	1,249	76	16.4	19	(2.6)
Salinas Elementary	943	63.5	14.9	19	(4.1)
Garza Elementary	1,110	70.5	15.7	19	(3.3)
Munoz Elementary	1,027	75	13.7	19	(5.3)
District Total	**11,922**	**858**	**13.9**		**(48.7)**

Source: DISD director of Food Service MPLH analysis for October 2001. Industry standards are from School Foodservice Management for the 21st Century, 5th Edition.
*Rivas and Caceres Elementary Schools have been combined because they share a kitchen and cafeteria.
Note: DISD MPLH has been rounded to the nearest tenth.

Exhibit 11-10 shows the number of hours worked at each DISD cafeteria compared to the industry recommended hours.

Exhibit 11-10
DISD Meals Per Labor Hour Comparison
October 2001

Schools	Average	Average	Allowed	Hours

	Meal Equivalents Served	Hours Worked	Hours at Standard MPLH	Above Standard
Donna High School	1,376	79	72.4	6.6
Todd Ninth grade	776	66	45.6	20.4
Solis Middle	1,019	76	53.6	22.4
Veterans Middle	1,012	79	53.3	25.7
Guzman Elementary	519	47	34.6	12.4
Price Elementary	607	47	37.9	9.1
Ochoa Elementary	720	55	42.4	12.6
Runn Elementary	488	30	34.9	(4.9)
Stainke Elementary	482	48	34.4	13.6
Lenoir Elementary	594	46	39.6	6.4
Rivas/Caceres Elem.*	1,249	76	65.7	10.3
Salinas Elementary	943	63.5	49.6	13.9
Garza Elementary	1,110	70.5	58.4	12.1
Munoz Elementary	1,027	75	54.1	20.9
District Total	**11,922**	**858**	**676.5**	**181.5**

Source: DISD director of Food Service MPLH analysis for October 2001. Industry standards are from School Foodservice Management for the 21st Century, 5th Edition.
*Rivas and Caceres Elementary Schools have been combined because they share a kitchen and cafeteria.
Note: All calculations have been rounded to the nearest tenth.

MPLH analysis is a recognized standard used by school districts to measure productivity. MPLH is a tool that districts use to develop plans and strategies to control labor costs. San Angelo ISD used MPLH to reduce 11 part-time positions by approximately four hours each since 1994-95 saving the district more than $41,000 annually in salary costs.

Comal ISD Food Service Department reduced seven full-time staff in August 2000 through attrition. Comal ISD estimates that it will save approximately $575,000 over five years. The Food Service coordinator plans to continuously monitor MPLH and look for additional ways to improve productivity.

Recommendation 92:

Establish staffing and productivity measures and adjust staffing levels to achieve adopted standards.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Food Service analyzes MPLH and develops specific standards to be achieved by each school.	September 2002
2.	The director of Food Service presents a MPLH analysis to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance, the superintendent and the board for approval. The board adopts a hiring freeze while a plan and associated strategies for achieving MPLH standards are developed.	October 2002
3.	The director of Food Service works with cafeteria managers to develop a plan and various strategies to increase productivity and reduce labor costs at schools that exceed MPLH standards.	October-December 2002
4.	The director of Food Service presents the plan to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance for review and comment.	January 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance presents the plan to the superintendent and the board for approval.	February 2003
6.	The director of Food Service and cafeteria managers implement the plans for improving productivity.	March-May 2003
7.	The director of Food Service and cafeteria managers evaluate the productivity of each school according to the MPLH standards each month.	August 2003 and Ongoing
8.	The director of Food Service develops and reports results of the MPLH productivity plan and strategies to the superintendent and the board.	Quarterly
9.	The director of Food Service modifies the plan as needed.	Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

By reducing staffing levels by 181.5 hours each day and using DISD's average School Nutrition Services Department salary of $7.72 an hour and with 180 serving days, the district would achieve industry standards and realize annual savings of $252,212. This adjustment in hours can be obtained through the elimination of department positions, reduction of staff hours, or a combination of both. There is no cost savings expected for 2002-03 since the plan will not be fully implemented until the end of 2002-03.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Establish staffing and productivity measures and adjust staffing levels to achieve adopted standards.	$0	$252,212	$252,212	$252,212	$252,212

FINDING

Some of DISD's storekeepers are not scheduling inventory tasks efficiently and are performing tasks assigned to other positions. There is one storekeeper at each school except for Salinas Elementary, which has two, for a total of 15 full-time storekeepers. According to the position's job description, the storekeeper's primary function is inventory control of stock and food supplies for each school. The job description lists tasks such as posting daily incoming and outgoing school stock and food supplies, maintaining perpetual inventory for stock and food supplies and receiving and storing USDA commodities according to health standards. The job description also states that the cafeteria storekeeper computes discounts and charges on orders.

Vendors deliver food items directly to each school. Produce is delivered on Monday and all other deliveries are made on Wednesday and Thursday. The storekeeper is responsible for rotating stock and making room for the new stock. USDA commodities are received once a month. The director of Food Service estimates that rotating and storing USDA commodities takes one to two hours. At one school, a review team member observed the delivery process and noted that the entire process of unloading, rotating and re-stocking frozen commodities took approximately one half hour.

While reviewing the storekeeper's inventory operations, the review team also observed that storekeepers spent considerable time performing custodial duties such as cleaning the dining room, emptying trash as well as delivering breakfasts to the classrooms at the elementary schools. Some storekeepers also performed cashiering duties. These duties are assigned to the custodial and cashier positions.

Without efficient scheduling and an accurate analysis of the time requirements associated with inventory control, the district may be paying for more staff than is necessary for these duties. The district may also be paying for duplicate efforts.

Many districts assign cafeteria clean-up duties to custodians with a portion of their costs covered by the food services budget, rather than committing a full-time food service position to perform these duties.

Recommendation 93:

Analyze the effectiveness of storekeeper positions and transfer corresponding duties to other district personnel.

The director of Food Service should analyze the daily tasks of the storekeeper's position at each school and develop a plan that retains the position's inventory tasks but transfers the custodial and breakfast delivery tasks to custodians. The director of Food Service should contact vendors and coordinate a delivery schedule that allows an individual storekeeper to perform inventory and stocking duties at multiple schools. Under the plan, the director of Food Service would centrally manage the storekeepers and develop a schedule that assigns districtwide inventory and stocking duties to the storekeepers.

The plan should specify that the director of Food Service work with the director of Maintenance to schedule custodial time for breakfast in the classroom delivery and cafeteria cleanup and identify the portion of the costs that will be covered by the food services budget.

By centralizing inventory and stocking duties and transferring custodial and breakfast in the classroom delivery tasks, the district could reduce storekeeper staffing levels from 15 to three.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Food Service analyzes storekeeper position tasks and identifies the amount of time needed to perform tasks.	November 2002
2.	The director of Food Service works with the Maintenance director to identify custodial scheduling and breakfast in the classroom delivery requirements for cafeterias and associated costs.	December 2002
3.	The director of Food Service contacts vendors to discuss scheduling deliveries for more efficient stock and inventory management.	December 2002-January 2003

4.	The director of Food Service compiles task and scheduling information and associated costs into a plan to eliminate twelve storekeeper positions and presents the proposal to the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance for review and comment.	February 2003
5.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance and the director of Food Service present the plan to the superintendent and board for approval.	March 2003
6.	The director of Food Service works with the Personnel director to identify means to reduce staff levels as identified in the approved plan.	April-May 2003
7.	The director of Food Service implements the plan.	June 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

By eliminating 12 storekeeper positions, each with an annual salary of $9,979 plus 23 percent variable benefits and $2,502 fixed benefits per position the district will save $177,312 ($9,979 x 1.23 variable benefits = $12,274 + $2,502 fixed benefits = $14,776 annual costs per position x 12 positions = $177,312).

Assigning part-time custodians to each of the district's 15 cafeterias, each with an annual salary of $5,241 ($7.32 per hour x 4 hours per day x 179 days each year) plus 23 percent variable benefits and $1,251 fixed benefits (50 percent of full-time fixed benefit rate) per position will cost the district $115,455 ($5,241 x 1.23 variable benefits = $6,446 + $1,251 fixed benefits = $7,697 annual costs per position x 15 positions = $115,455).

The net savings to the district would be $61,857 ($177,312 - $115,455). Since the plan will not be fully implemented during 2002-03, the savings are not estimated to begin until 2003-04.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Analyze the effectiveness of storekeeper positions and transfer corresponding duties to other district personnel.	$0	$61,857	$61,857	$61,857	$61,857

Chapter 11
FOOD SERVICE

B. MEAL PARTICIPATION

Meal participation ensures that students are receiving the properly balanced, nutritious meals that they need to perform well. It is normally more cost effective to feed larger numbers of students and it increases the amount of federal reimbursements received.

When compared to its peers, DISD ranked third in breakfast participation in 2000-01 at 52.2 percent, behind Edgewood with 59.08 percent and Rio Grande City Consolidated with 78.75 percent. In lunch participation in 2000-01, DISD ranked fourth among the peer districts at 80.14 percent. Mission Consolidated had the highest lunch participation rate at 85.12 percent. DISD maintained its lunch participation rates from 80.28 percent in 1998-99 to 80.14 percent in 2000-01. DISD increased its breakfast participation rate by 5.38 percent during the same time (**Exhibit 11-11**).

Exhibit 11-11
Average Annual Meal Participation Rates
DISD vs. Peer Districts
1998-99 through 2000-01

District	Donna	Edgewood	Mission	Eagle Pass	San Benito	Rio Grande City
Breakfast Participation Rates						
1998-99	**46.82%**	42.40%	28.58%	30.02%	49.39%	63.88%
1999-2000	**48.91%**	45.95%	33.43%	32.90%	47.05%	67.12%
2000-01	**52.20%**	59.08%	50.21%	38.22%	44.98%	78.75%
Percent Change (1998-2001)	**5.38%**	16.68%	21.63%	8.20%	(4.41%)	14.87%
Lunch Participation Rates						
1998-99	**80.28%**	72.45%	72.20%	71.27%	82.64%	80.98%
1999-2000	**78.81%**	75.91%	73.26%	78.28%	74.86%	78.77%
2000-01	**80.14%**	84.64%	85.12%	81.18%	74.25%	79.94%
Percent Change (1998-2001)	**(0.14%)**	12.19%	12.92%	9.91%	(8.39%)	(1.04%)

DISD's participation rates for the first seven months of 2001-02 have increased when compared to 2000-01. Lunch participation increased, from 80.1 percent in 2000-01 to 85.3 percent in 2001-02. Breakfast participation rates have increased by almost 10 percent during the same period (**Exhibit 11-12**).

Exhibit 11-12
DISD Meal Participation Rates
2001-02

Month	Average Daily Attendance	Average Daily Lunch Participation	Daily Participation Rate	Average Daily Breakfast Participation	Daily Participation Rate
September	9,999	8,749	87.5%	6,291	62.9%
October	10,455	8,862	84.8%	6,417	61.4%
November	10,569	9,109	86.2%	6,635	62.8%
December	10,634	9,112	85.7%	6,599	62.1%
January	10,777	9,231	85.7%	6,573	61.0%
February	10,925	9,223	84.4%	6,674	61.1%
March	10,837	9,019	83.2%	6,597	60.9%
Average	**10,599**	**9,044**	**85.3%**	**6,541**	**61.7%**

DISD has the highest lunch participation rates at its elementary schools, with all elementary schools exceeding 90 percent. The high school has the lowest lunch participation rate at approximately 68 percent. Breakfast participation rates are again the highest at the elementary schools. The lowest participation rates are at the middle schools, the ninth grade school and the high school, with participation rates at less than 36 percent (**Exhibit 11-13**).

Exhibit 11-13
DISD Meal Participation Rates by School
January 2002

School	Average Daily Attendance	Average Daily Lunch Equivalents	Lunch Participation Rate	Average Daily Breakfast Equivalents	Breakfast Participation Rates
Donna High School	1,544	1,045	67.7%	548	35.5%
Todd Ninth grade	773	567	73.4%	255	33.0%
Solis Middle	1,187	849	71.5%	393	33.1%
Veterans Middle	1,175	825	70.2%	347	29.5%
Guzman Elementary	444	423	95.3%	251	56.5%
Price Elementary	510	472	92.5%	324	63.5%
Ochoa Elementary	544	561	103.1%*	506	93.0%
Runn Elementary	377	367	97.3%	325	86.2%
Stainke Elementary	389	362	93.1%	265	68.1%
Lenoir Elementary	477	455	95.4%	308	64.6%
Rivas Elementary	504	478	94.8%	310	61.5%
Caceres Elementary	531	502	94.5%	496	93.4%
Salinas Elementary	714	681	95.4%	670	93.8%
Garza Elementary	902	859	95.2%	855	94.8%

Munoz Elementary	831	784	94.3%	720	86.6%

FINDING

DISD's School Nutrition Services Department developed an aggressive program to identify eligible students for free and reduced lunches. The district decided to apply for Provision 2 status of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast program, using 2000-01 as its base year. Based on that decision, the director of Food Service established a multi-pronged approach to identifying and qualifying eligible students.

In July and August 2000, the director of Food Service trained managers and cashiers to process applications so that students could drop off the applications at the cafeteria or at the front office. The director of Food Service also contacted principals, explaining the importance of the application process. The School Nutrition Services also set up an informational booth at schools during registration in August 2000. The School Nutrition Services Department used certifications from the Texas Department of Humans Services to identify and qualify eligible students.

To get applications returned, the School Nutrition Services Department sponsored a competition in which the first five schools that turned in 100 percent of their applications would receive free ice cream. As a result of the competition, seven schools turned in 100 percent of their applications and the School Nutrition Services Department provided all seven schools with free ice cream.

To ensure the integrity of the applications, the central office clerks reviewed and re-validated the applications taken by the cafeteria managers and cashiers.

As a result of these efforts, 9,679 students out of 10,215 were identified and certified as eligible for free and reduced lunches during the process. This represents 94.8 percent of the total student enrollment. This is important to the district because the number of economically disadvantaged students is one of the methods used to determine the allocation of federal Compensatory and Title I funding. And,

economically disadvantaged is defined as students identified as eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

COMMENDATION

DISD used various strategies to maximize identification of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

FINDING

The district has instituted programs to increase student breakfast participation. At the elementary level, the district serves breakfast in the classroom to increase participation. The district piloted the program at Ochoa Elementary in the fall of 1998. With this approach, breakfasts are sent to the classroom. The program was expanded in 1999-2000 to Salinas, Caceres and Lenoir Elementary Schools. In the fall of 2001, Garza, Munoz and Stainke Elementary Schools implemented the program. At Lenoir and Stainke Elementary Schools, the program is partially implemented, with pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade served in the classrooms and other classes served in the cafeteria.

DISD also sponsors Muffins with Moms and Donuts with Dads at the elementary schools to promote interest and participation. The district coordinates Muffins with Moms and Donuts with Dads with class activities to recognize parents for Mother's and Father's Day. Parents attend and eat breakfast with their children. The Muffins with Mom menu includes a muffin, cereal, milk and juice. The Donuts with Dads menu includes a donut, cereal, milk and juice. The parents are charged $1.25 for the meal.

At the high school, there is an extended breakfast period so that students who participate in athletics and band activities that occur during the normal breakfast period can eat breakfast.

As a result of these programs, breakfast participation increased 15 percent, from 46.8 percent in 1998-99 (**Exhibit 11-11**) to 61.7 percent during the first seven months of 2001-02 (**Exhibit 11-12**).

COMMENDATION

DISD's breakfast programs and initiatives have significantly increased student participation.

FINDING

The district faces numerous obstacles to maximizing student lunch participation at the secondary level. DISD has a closed campus policy so secondary students cannot leave during lunch. Since all students can eat free, there should be an incentive to eat in the school cafeteria. However, there are numerous school organizations and clubs that compete with food service by selling food in or near the school cafeterias. There are also vending machines that operate within or near many of the secondary school cafeterias.

During school visits, the review team observed the sale of nachos and candy items by the high school management club that did not meet USDA requirements in the cafeteria. The club's table was within 15 feet of the food service salad bar. At the Todd Ninth Grade Center, pizza was sold outside in a courtyard area adjacent to the cafeteria. Similarly, at Solis Middle School, the review team observed commercial pizza being delivered and sold down the hall from the cafeteria during the lunch period, even though pizza is one of the cafeteria's daily entrees.

Since fund raisers and vending machine sales are often a significant source of revenue for school organizations, many school administrators find it difficult to eliminate their use. However, many concessions and vending machine items have minimum nutrient value and directly compete with the more nutritious and healthy lunches provided by the School Nutrition Services Department. As a result, the district not only loses revenues, but students eat a less healthy and nutritious lunch. Also, vending machine and concession sales may be offering items that do not comply with federal regulations that prohibit the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value in the food service area during meal periods. Such foods include carbonated beverages, water ices, chewing gum and candies such as lollipops, mints and jaw breakers, jellies and gums such as jelly beans, marshmallow candies, fondant, licorice, spun candy and candy-coated popcorn.

TEA disseminated a policy change in April 2002 that reinforced the requirements prohibiting foods of minimal nutritional value and established financial penalties for schools found violating the policy. When a school is found in violation of the policy, the USDA recommends that corrective action be taken against the school including not allowing reimbursement for all meals served on the day the violation was observed and requiring that the lost income be recovered from a source other than food service funds.

Effective school districts constantly monitor and devise strategies to improve student participation. Spring ISD (SISD), for example, monitors meal participation rates monthly for each school. The director of Food Service met with principals to discuss ways to increase participation and a

number of new ideas were tried that resulted in increased participation. The School Nutrition Services Department Web site solicits comments from parents and students. SISD managers are more involved in the decision-making process, and principals took the initiative to help boost participation. Snack bar items can now be counted as a reimbursable meal in the secondary schools. As a result of these and other strategies, there has been an increase in participation of 27.3 percent for breakfast and 14.1 percent for lunch.

By improving customer service and food selections and creating a more appealing cafeteria atmosphere for students, Del Valle ISD (DVISD) increased student participation in the Child Nutrition program. The Child Nutrition program employed a variety of efforts to brighten up the cafeterias and increase student participation. These efforts included updating menus with new selections, creating a food court at the high school and establishing a food service advisory committee. Parent and principal surveys indicated that the children felt welcome in the food service areas.

Various districts have also established policies and restricted the sale of candy and other items sold in direct competition with their food service programs. Fort Bend ISD approved a policy to control the sale of food in competition with meals served under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. Port Arthur ISD prohibits the sale of candy and other items sold in competition during lunch periods. Bastrop ISD (BISD) implemented procedures so that all vending machine companies must work through their Child Nutrition Services Department. The Child Nutrition Services director has restricted vending machine placement and closely monitors vending sales during serving periods to ensure compliance with federal requirements.

In implementing various strategies designed to increase student participation that require additional staffing such as food courts, kiosks or "grab and go" carts, school districts have been creative in using volunteers, paid student labor and other labor to minimize the labor cost of these strategies. One means of adding labor in high schools involves contracting with a club or class to run a snack bar or other serving area. The contract should define the procedures that the club or class need to follow to staff the area and should outline the type of compensation the club or class will receive, such as an hourly rate, a percentage of profits or a flat sum. This type of arrangement can work to the advantage of both the club and food service operation.

Recommendation 94:

Develop and implement strategies to increase student lunch participation.

The director of Food Service should establish a working group composed of school principals, school organizations and clubs to develop pilot programs and strategies that increase student participation and eliminate the sale of minimally nutritious items during meal periods. Strategies could include alternative service delivery such as "grab and go" or pre-packaged items from a cart, or dividing areas of the cafeterias into "food courts" with different selections.

To balance the loss of potential revenue for school clubs and organizations and enlist the support of school administrators, the plan should consider proposals for the School Nutrition Services Department to enter into contracts with clubs or classes to help run snack bars, "grab and go" stations or pre-stocked food courts for a percentage of profits from the increased participation. Each program or strategy should be reviewed by the school attorney to assure that it meets all regulations and should have a detailed cost analysis showing additional labor and food costs and projected revenues, an implementation schedule and performance measures to assure that it is viable.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Food Service convenes a working group of school principals and representatives from school organizations to develop strategies to increase student participation.	October 2002-January 2003
2.	The director of Food Service works with staff designated by the assistant superintendent for Business and Finance to develop cost analyses for each of the identified strategies.	November 2002-February 2003
3.	The working group meets to finalize and recommend strategies based on the cost analysis information, for presentation to the superintendent and board.	March-May 2003
4.	The director of Food Service presents jointly developed strategies along with budget requirements for implementing the strategies to the superintendent and board for approval.	May 2003
5.	The director of Food Service works with the school attorney to develop standardized contracts that can be used with clubs and organizations, if necessary, based on the strategies identified and approved by the board.	May 2003
6.	The director of Food Service implements approved strategies.	August 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD does not actively solicit feedback to address perceptions about food quality and presentation may be affecting its participation rates. The Director of Food Services said that the district does not currently conduct surveys, but that she is planning to develop both an internal and external survey to determine how the School Nutrition Services Department is performing.

The review team surveyed parents, teachers, principals and students and asked questions about food quality, service and environment. **Exhibit 11-14** lists the survey results responding to the statement that the cafeteria's food looks and tastes good. Twenty percent of principals, 33 percent of teachers, 44 percent of parents and 27 percent of students agreed with the statement, the cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.

Exhibit 11-14
Students, Teachers, Parents and
Principals and Assistant Principals View of DISD Food

Survey Statement	Survey Response					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.						
Students	3.9%	23.3%	18.4%	26.2%	26.2%	1.9%
Teachers	0.0%	33.3%	13.3%	30.0%	23.3%	0.0%
Parents	15.5%	28.5%	18.0%	19.5%	18.5%	15.5%
Principals and Asst. Principals	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: DISD TSPR Survey Responses, April 2002.

A sampling of comments to the TSPR survey shows parents' perceptions and concern with food quality. The comments below have not been edited for grammar or spelling, but appear as written by the survey respondents.

- The one thing I have a problem with is that they serve my child cold and sometimes rotten food.
- Cafeteria food is to cold and kids get food poisoning.
- My comment is that the food is not pleasing to my children because it is different types of frozen foods and my children do not like cold food. They eat fresh food recently cooked.

Understanding what the students like or dislike and why they perceive the food to be poor and unappealing is a critical element to developing strategies to improve quality and increase student participation. Without feedback, the district does not have the information necessary to develop strategies to improve quality and presentation.

There are many techniques that school service operations can use to gain feedback to address food quality and presentation concerns. Techniques can range from formal surveys or suggestion boxes to informal interviewing and small group discussions with teachers, students and parents. To gain firsthand perspective about food quality and presentation, a director of food services can conduct daily unannounced monitoring of the serving lines and conduct taste tests at various cafeterias.

Kerrville ISD's director of Child Nutrition does informal monitoring of food quality and presentation by eating a school lunch or breakfast every day. The director may also do an informal evaluation by standing by the cafeteria dish window, where students return their dirty trays after eating, to monitor what was not eaten.

South San Antonio ISD uses districtwide surveys every year to see what students like and don't like. The survey information has helped the district to develop menus that include items that students like. South San Antonio offers its secondary students 10 to 15 choices a day.

Tyler ISD prepared and circulated a questionnaire to solicit feedback from students and faculty on the acceptability of lunch and breakfast meals, and made appropriate changes. Breakfast and lunch participation increased by 13 percent and nine percent respectively in the first two years of implementation. Since then, meal participation grew one percent in 1997-98 and three percent in 1998-99.

Recommendation 95:

Solicit feedback to develop strategies to improve food quality and increase student participation.

The director of Food Service should directly observe food serving lines and monitor food quality and presentation on a rotating basis at all schools

and do follow up with cafeteria managers as needed. In addition, the director of Food Service should conduct annual student surveys as well as quarterly small group discussions with teachers and staff to gather feedback to continually upgrade food quality for the students and adults participating in the school meal program. Based on the feedback received from surveys and small group discussions, the director of Food Service should develop strategies to improve food quality and address student and adult concerns.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Food Service randomly spot checks each school cafeteria by tasting food and testing temperature and does follow-up as necessary.	September 2002 and Ongoing
2.	The director of Food Service develops and conducts survey to gain feedback from students about food quality and presentation.	November 2002 and Annually
3.	The director of Food Service conducts small group discussions with teachers and staff.	November 2002 and Quarterly
4.	The director of Food Service reviews survey results and develops strategies to improve food quality.	December 2002 and Annually
5.	The director of Food Service and cafeteria managers implement changes.	January 2003 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 11
FOOD SERVICE

C. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The financial management of food service operations has been a major emphasis of school districts nationwide. Food service operations are expected to be run like a business and be self-supporting. To successfully manage a financially successful school food service operation requires a knowledge of the financial goals and objectives of the school board; sound planning and budget development to meet the board's goals and objectives; and a financial accounting system that provides accurate and timely financial information to assist in managing revenues and expenditures.

DISD's School Nutrition Services Department has an operating budget of approximately $4.3 million in 2001-02 as shown in **Exhibit 11-15**. The largest expenditure category in DISD's budget is salaries and benefits. In terms of total dollars, DISD has the smallest food service budget among the peer districts at $4.3 million. This is $2.3 million less than Edgewood, the district with the largest budget.

When comparing categories of expenditures as percent of total budget, DISD has the second highest percentage of its budget dedicated to salaries and benefits, 54.2 percent, just slightly behind Eagle Pass with 54.3 percent. Among its peers, DISD also had the smallest amount of its budget dedicated to food and supplies at 43.2 percent, almost 14 percent lower than San Benito, with 56.9 percent. DISD had no budget for capital outlay, which are expenditures for acquisitions, construction, or major renovation of school district facilities.

In terms of food services budgeted expenditures per student enrolled, while DISD ranked fourth among the peers in student enrollment, it had the lowest ratio of expenditures per student at $413. This compared to Rio Grande City Consolidated with the highest ratio of $504 per student.

Exhibit 11-15
Food Service Budget Comparisons
DISD vs. Peer Districts
2001-02

Expenditure Category	Donna	Eagle Pass	Edgewood	Mission	Rio Grande	San Benito
Salaries and	**$2,337,850**	$3,073,723	$3,006,351	$2,336,459	$1,670,900	$1,581,106

Benefits						
Contracted Services	**96,061**	50,810	160,000	387,400	183,665	129,106
Food and Supplies	**1,860,945**	2,522,100	3,350,000	3,132,500	2,470,425	2,579,428
Other Operating Expenditures	**16,250**	4,000	14,500	49,500	6,500	52,785
Capital Outlay	**0**	9,205	116,000	105,000	155,000	188,000
Total Expenditures	**$4,311,106**	**$5,659,838**	**$6,646,851**	**$6,010,859**	**$4,486,490**	**$4,530,425**
Expenditures as Percent of Total Budget						
Salaries and Benefits	**54.2%**	54.3%	45.2%	38.9%	37.2%	34.9%
Contracted Services	**2.2%**	0.9%	2.4%	6.4%	4.1%	2.8%
Food and Supplies	**43.2%**	44.6%	50.4%	52.1%	55.1%	56.9%
Other Operating Expenditures	**0.4%**	0.1%	0.2%	0.8%	0.1%	1.2%
Capital Outlay	**0.0%**	0.2%	1.7%	1.7%	3.5%	4.1%
Expenditures Per Student Ratios						
Enrollment	**10,451**	12,778	13,435	13,122	8,906	9,102
Expenditures per student	**$412.51**	$442.94	$494.74	$458.07	$503.76	$497.74

Source: TEA, PEIMS, 2001-02.
*Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Exhibit 11-16 details the expenditure trends for the five-year period, 1997 through 2001, for DISD food service operations. Overall expenditures increased 30.6 percent during the period. The largest percentage increase was contracted services, which more than doubled during the period. The

largest dollar increase occurred in payroll expenditures which increased almost $687,000.

Exhibit 11-16
DISD School Nutrition Services Department Expenditures
1996-97 through 2000-01

Expenditure Category	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change 1996-97-2000-01
Payroll	$1,641,259	$1,840,644	$1,965,306	$2,271,830	$2,327,989	41.8%
Contracted Services	62,482	53,200	118,566	133,490	146,288	134.1%
Food and Supplies	1,864,586	1,802,624	1,985,741	2,056,451	2,195,440	17.7%
Other Operating Expenditures	7,088	7,682	8,846	18,175	11,477	61.9%
Capital Outlay	11,613	121,238	85,962	11,813	2,818	(75.7%)
Total Expenditures	**$3,587,028**	**$3,825,388**	**$4,164,421**	**$4,491,759**	**$4,684,012**	**30.6%**

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

DISD generates revenue from federal, state and local sources. Federal and state funds are reimbursements for participation in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack and Summer Feeding Programs. Local Revenue includes student and adult meal payments, a la carte sales and fees from catering special events. **Exhibit 11-17** identifies the rates for federal reimbursement received by DISD for 2001-02. DISD qualifies for the severe need additional reimbursement of $0.22 since more than 40 percent of the lunches served for the past two years have been at a free or reduced price.

Exhibit 11-17
Reimbursement Rates
2001-02

District	Full Price	Reduced Price	Free
Reimbursable Lunches	$0.20	$1.69	$2.09
Reimbursable Breakfasts	$0.21	$0.85	$1.15
Breakfast Severe Needs (additional)		$0.22	$0.22
After School Snack	$0.05	$0.28	$0.57

Source: Federal Register, Volume 66, Number 124, June 27, 2001.

FINDING

DISD's director of Food Service increased reimbursements by converting a la carte meal choices to Type A meals. The Food Service monitored a la carte sales and noticed that hamburgers and pizza were the two most popular selections at the secondary level. To receive full reimbursement from the National School Lunch Program for these two menu items, the director converted these selections into Type A lunches. Type A lunches consist of one meat, two fruits or vegetables, bread and milk in specified amounts. These items are alternated and offered as one of the two entrée selections each day.

By converting these selections to Type A lunches, the director has been able to receive more revenue than when these items were sold a la carte.

COMMENDATION

DISD's conversion of popular a la carte items into reimbursable lunches has increased revenues.

Chapter 12
SAFETY AND SECURITY

This chapter discusses the safety and security operations of Donna Independent School District (DISD) in the following sections:

A. Security
B. Safety
C. Discipline Management

School districts must provide a safe and secure environment for their staff and students. To accomplish this, effective school districts develop policies, procedures and programs to address crisis contingencies, student discipline, facility safety and violence prevention. Failure to adequately address any one of these areas weakens the safety and security of the school district.

BACKGROUND

Community crime affects the safety and security of neighborhoods, businesses and school districts. In addition, truant students can affect the neighborhood with criminal mischief and other misbehavior. To gauge the level of crime and violence in the immediate district area, the review team obtained crime data from the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Although the crime rates in Hidalgo and the City of Donna have been higher than that of the state over the past four years, crime rate in the area has actually decreased since 1997. Donna had a dramatic drop in its crime rate between 1999 and 2000. Since 1997, Hidalgo County has decreased its crime rate by 11.4 percent, Donna by 60.7 percent, and the state by 9.6 percent (**Exhibit 12-1**).

Exhibit 12-1
Crime Rate Comparison: Hidalgo County to State Average
1997-2000

Crime Rate Per 100,000 Population	1997	1998	1999	2000	Change from 1997	Percent Change from 1997
Hidalgo County	6,556.7	5,854.7	5,713.4	5,806.9	(749.8)	(11.4%)
City of Donna	6,334.5	6,084.2	6,112.1	2,491.3	(3,843.2)	(60.7%)
State of Texas	5,478.2	5,110.7	5,035.2	4,952.4	(525.8)	(9.6%)

In its publication, Keeping Texas Children Safe, the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) notes that the most effective districts have a safety plan that includes prevention, intervention and enforcement strategies. Effective programs include the steps shown in **Exhibit 12-2**. School districts applying these measures in a comprehensive system achieve significant results.

Exhibit 12-2
Keeping Texas Children Safe in School
January 2000

Strategy	Steps to Take
Prevention	• Know your goals and objectives: where your district is going and what you want to accomplish. • Establish clear expectations for students, parents, teachers and administrators. • Address warning signs before they turn into trouble.
Intervention	• Look for trouble before it finds you. • Recognize trouble when you see it. • Have individuals in the right place and at the right time to intervene. • Have a plan of action appropriate for the occasion and practice it.
Enforcement	• Leave no room for double standards. • Ensure that discipline management extends inside and outside the classroom. • Alternative programs are not just a matter of compliance with the law; they are many students' last chance at success.

The Texas Legislature is assisting the safe school effort by providing legislation related to a number of safety and accountability standards for Texas schools, as displayed in **Exhibit 12-3**.

Exhibit 12-3
Major School Safety Initiatives of the Texas Legislature
1993-2001

Legislation	Summary
1993 Legislature	
House Bill 23	Required information-sharing between law enforcement and schools on student arrests for serious offenses; required school principals to notify law enforcement if criminal activity occurs or is suspected of occurring on school grounds.
Senate Resolution 879	Encouraged collaboration between the Texas Education Agency and Department of Public Safety in the recording of criminal incidents in the schools.
House Bills 633 and 634	Outlined the commissioning and jurisdiction of peace officers for school districts.
House Bill 2332	Authorized the State Board of Education to establish special-purpose schools or districts for students whose needs are not met through regular schools.
Senate Bill 16	Defined drug-free zones for schools.
Senate Bill 213	Created the safe schools checklist.
Senate Bill 155	Created the Texas Commission on Children and Youth.
1995 Legislature	
Senate Bill 1	Revamped the Education Code and laws on safety and security in schools, including the requirement for districts to establish alternative education programs and, in counties with populations above 125,000, to establish juvenile justice alternative education programs.
1997 Legislature	
Senate Bill 133	Rewrote the safe schools provision of the Education Code.
1999 Legislature	
Senate Bill 260	Allowed the expulsion of a student who assaults a school district employee.
Senate Bill 1580	Created the Texas Violent Gang Task Force.

Senate Bill 1724	Required each school district to annually report (beginning with 1999-2000) the number, rate and type of violent and criminal incidents occurring on each school, and allowed them the option of including a violence prevention and intervention component in their annual school improvement plans.
Senate Bill 1784	Allowed school districts to use private or public community-based dropout recovery education programs to provide alternative education programs.
House Bill 152	Made the act of placing graffiti on school property a state jail felony.
House Bill 1749	Encouraged school districts and juvenile probation departments to share information on juvenile offenders.
2001 Legislature	
Senate Bill 430	Funded the Texas School Safety Center, which will provide a resource for schools on safety training and school safety audits, and set training standards for school resource officers.
Senate Bill 1432	Defined the duties and powers of peace officers and attendance officers in enforcing truancy laws.
House Bill 1088	Added additional categories of misbehavior, including false alarms or threats made by a student, as reasons for removal to an alternative education program.
House Bill 2204	Established the Safe Routes to School Program to provide funds for safety projects in and around schools.

Source: TSPR 1999 and updated through Texas Legislature Online 2001.

State law requires school districts to develop District and Campus Improvement Plans to guide instruction. Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) frequently include goals for safety and discipline management.

Districts must adopt a student code of conduct with the advice of a district-level committee. Students who engage in serious misconduct must be removed from regular education settings and placed in disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs). Law enforcement and local school districts must share specific information about the arrest or criminal conduct of students.

In counties with a population of 125,000 or more, school districts, the juvenile board and juvenile justice systems must establish a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). The JJAEP falls under the

jurisdiction of the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission and provides for the education of incarcerated youths and youths on probation.

In addition, federal legislators support Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) by providing funding to state and local governments. This funding promotes the development of programs that prevent violence in and around schools. The SDFS program consists of a state grants program and a national program. The authorization for the program is found in Title IV of the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001. Texas schools receive Title IV funds, and each district decides the most effective way to apply the money. Districts must report violence incident rates to the state. TEA serves as the fiscal agent distributing the SDFS monies to the participating districts.

Chapter 12
SAFETY AND SECURITY

A. SECURITY

The 1998 U.S. Department of Justice report, *Security Concepts and Operational Issues*, observes that security operations often require a balance among effectiveness, affordability and acceptability. Frequently, schools do not have the funding for an aggressive and complete security program. Schools can provide effective security operations without applying every security approach at every school. Effective security operation designs are based on who or what needs protection as well as the type of security threat and facility constraints.

Safety and security responsibilities span several departments in the DISD. The Employee Services Department operates the crisis plan and employee safety programs. The Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department coordinates disciplinary referrals to district alternative education programs. Principals are the first line of discipline management at the school level.

The Maintenance and Transportation Department manages the custodial staff who open and close district buildings, the maintenance staff who repair equipment and unsafe building conditions and the bus drivers who are responsible for the safe pick up and return of district students. DISD has its own Police Department that provides its schools with traditional law enforcement services.

As shown in **Exhibit 12-4**, no single position below the level of superintendent is responsible for oversight or implementation of district safety and security initiatives.

Exhibit 12-4
Organization of Safety and Security Duties
DISD Departments

2001-02
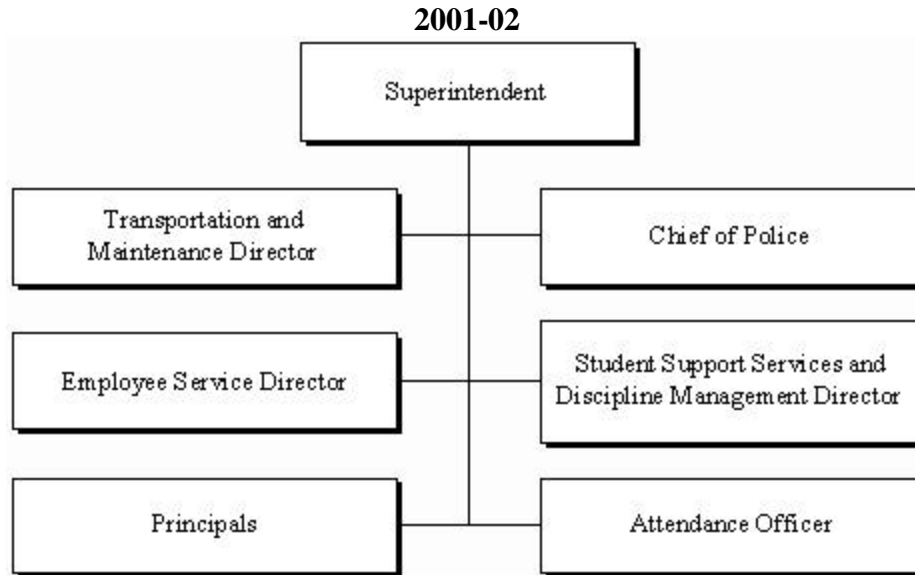
Source: DISD Superintendent's Office, 2002.

The Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department reviews recommendations for placing students in disciplinary alternative education programs and holds hearings on placements. It also provides staff development programs on social services topics including suicide prevention and child abuse. The department director participates in developing CIPs and the DIP. The director also recommends changes to the district code of conduct (COC) and updates the board on legislative changes that affect the code.

The Employee Services Department oversees employee safety programs and the district crisis management plan. As part of these duties, the director of Employee Services monitors workplace injuries and trains employees on ways to improve safety when performing daily tasks and works with the Maintenance Department to repair unsafe building conditions. The director of Employee Services is also responsible for drafting and implementing the crisis plan. In the event of an emergency, school staff contacts the director of Employee Services who will then initiate the crisis response.

The DISD Police Department provides law enforcement services to the district. Officers assigned to schools are referred to as school resource officers (SROs); serve as a law enforcement resource; and perform traditional law enforcement duties as well as mentoring duties. Although primarily assigned to secondary schools, SROs also visit elementary schools to provide a positive role model for younger students. Officers work with counselors in developing and delivering training programs to staff and students. The Police Department also oversees the security guard

force. The guards provide basic security throughout the district, as well as providing crossing guards at select school intersections.

FINDING

DISD funded its Police Department through a federal grant. Prior to December 1999, DISD managed school security with a department of security guards. The city Police Department responded to calls for service at DISD schools. While this arrangement was adequate, priority calls in the city slowed police response time to district calls and needs.

DISD sought to link consequences for misbehavior more closely in time to the activity. In cooperation with the city Police Department, the district applied for and received a federal COPS In Schools grant, a U.S. Department of Justice program to provide funding directly to state and local jurisdictions to pay for the salaries and benefits of officers engaged in community policing through local schools.

The $563,230 grant provides funding for five peace officers, including the chief of Police, who are stationed at schools to provide rapid response to criminal activity. The grant period is four years and requires the district to pay for the unit during the fifth year.

Under Texas law, average citizens have limited authority to make arrests if they see a felony or breach of the peace being committed. Peace officers have full authority to arrest for all crimes committed in their presence, as well as to request and serve arrest warrants for other crimes. Other security-related positions, such as a security guard or hall monitor, do not have this type of authority. Having a district police force gives the district greater authority over criminal events of all types that occur on district property. To be a certified peace officer, individuals must meet minimum education and continuing training requirements. Peace officers must be commissioned according to Texas legislature guidelines. School district boards have been given the authority to commission officers.

DISD hired a peace officer from a neighboring community to be the new chief of Police and to draft policies and procedures for the officers. The COPS In Schools grant provides that officers must have at least five years of experience to ensure maximum effectiveness during the term of the grant. Each secondary school has one officer assigned to provide prevention and enforcement services. Besides performing traditional enforcement duties such as making arrests and issuing citations, the officers assist teachers and students in understanding the dangers and consequences of drug abuse and other criminal activity.

In addition to the training required by the Texas Commission for Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE), all peace officers are sent to training for certification as juvenile officers. The chief also uses a certified instructor from another police force to provide the required TCLEOSE training for DISD officers. The DISD chief meets with chiefs from area school districts to exchange information and best practices.

Legal standards for handling juveniles are different from those for adults. Arrested juveniles must be taken to a certified facility for booking and detention. The chief of Police completed the state certification process to ensure that the district has a legally appropriate place for arrested or detained juveniles to be processed before being transported to the Hidalgo County juvenile detention facility.

Developing a district police force has expanded the scope of available law enforcement solutions for DISD. Having an internal police force has also reduced the time between the crime's occurrence and the arrival of a police officer.

COMMENDATION

DISD's development of its own police department through the federal COPS In Schools grant addressed district safety needs with a minimum initial investment of district funds.

FINDING

The district does not have a comprehensive long-range safety and security planning process to coordinate and outline a strategic direction for the many departments responsible for district safety and security. Various departments have general administrative procedures, but no single plan that provides strategic direction. The DIP has two goals with supporting strategies that address discipline management but no comprehensive plan that merges safety and security initiatives.

Without a districtwide safety plan, departments function, plan and budget independently. Individual department efficiencies are not considered for districtwide impact or efficiencies. For example, district schools have essentially the same operating hours. Daily start and stop times for schools are only slightly staggered. DISD's Transportation Department developed routes that considered only the impact of scheduling on the number of available buses and drivers. Students are released from class, but have to wait for buses to pick them up from school. To provide supervision for waiting students, security guards monitor and make sure students are not engaging in criminal mischief or other misbehavior.

Rather than develop efficiency-based solutions through coordinated planning, separate departmental decisions have driven resource and staffing decisions. A safety and security plan that provides procedures for analyzing the impact of programs on district safety can draw diverse departments together to develop strategies that consider districtwide efficiencies. Measuring the success of programs or decisions is more accurate if it considers all areas affected by a strategy, rather than a single department. Safety is best achieved through comprehensive planning.

A comprehensive long-range safety and security plan typically includes the following elements: a mission statement; an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; long-term goals; clearly stated, measurable objectives that support achieving the goal; strategies or initiatives that identify how objectives will be met; performance measures and output measures to track progress and effort; resource plans (budgets) linked to each strategy; and funding sources and cost sharing roles and responsibilities. San Angelo ISD uses a safety committee as a planning tool to identify issues, brainstorm solutions and develop a coordinated approach to districtwide safety issues.

Recommendation 96:

Develop a comprehensive long-range districtwide safety and security plan that includes performance measures.

The district's comprehensive security plan should clearly outline desired safety and security goals and the staff's expected responsibilities. With a comprehensive plan, district level administrators should be able to measure the department's actual performance compared to its planned performance. The measures must be easy to use, easy to understand, inexpensive to implement, and link performance to costs.

The Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) program requires a district safety advisory committee that includes representatives from the district and the community actively participating in the plan development to ensure the coordination of all safety-related issues. Committee participation should be ongoing, as new issues arise and the plan is updated.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent designates a subcommittee to the SDFS advisory committee consisting of administrators with safety and security duties and tasks them with developing a long-range safety and security plan for the district.	September 2002
2.	The subcommittee to the SDFS advisory committee meets and	October 2002

	develops a preliminary long range plan that aligns district and department level goals, identifies safety or security issues, provides for research and development of solutions and establishes priorities for resources and funding.	- December 2002
3.	The subcommittee to the SDFS advisory committee presents the initial draft to the SDFS advisory committee for input and advice.	December 2002
4.	The subcommittee to the SDFS advisory committee incorporates the SDFS advisory committee policy and program suggestions into a second draft of the plan.	January 2003
5.	The subcommittee to the SDFS advisory committee presents the second draft to principals and department directors not seated on the committee for input on the plan.	February 2003
6.	The subcommittee to the SDFS advisory committee meets with the SDFS advisory committee to discuss administrator concerns and suggestions and make any changes before presentation of the final draft plan to the superintendent.	March 2003
7.	The SDFS advisory committee presents the plan to the superintendent for approval.	April 2003
8.	The superintendent directs any changes and presents the plan to the board for adoption.	May 2003
9.	The board adjusts and adopts the plan, identifies funding, and directs its implementation.	July 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Instead of security alarms, DISD uses 24-hour security guards at the bus barn and three elementary schools. A night security guard also patrols all district property. The night guards at three elementary schools, 24-hour bus barn guards and roving night guard costs $200,000 annually. Cost of service is based on the salary of the night guards and has been calculated to include fringe benefits (**Exhibit 12-5**).

Exhibit 12-5
DISD Night Security
2001-02

Assignment	Number Assigned	Annual Cost of Service
Bus Barn Guards	3	$77,564
Night Guard Garza Elementary School	3	$53,963
Night Guard Salinas Elementary School	1	$21,183
Night Guard Munoz Elementary School	1	$18,733
Roving Night Guard	1	$24,998
Total	**9**	**$196,441**

Source: DISD Security Staff Roster 2002 and DISD Payroll Roster 2002.

Exhibit 12-6 shows the cost of the alarm systems in DISD schools by initial installation cost and ongoing monitoring cost.

Exhibit 12-6
Alarm System Costs in DISD Schools

School	Installation Cost	Monitoring Cost Per Year
Donna High School (7 alarms)	$15,457	$1,320
Todd 9th Grade School	$4,925	$360
Stainke Elementary School	$3,922	$360
Guzman Elementary School	$4,893	$360
A.P. Soliz Middle School	$5,999	$360
Rivas Elementary School	$3,450	$360
Caceres Elementary School	$3,520	$180
Lenoir Elementary School	$3,375	$180
Price Elementary School	$12,000	$276
Ochoa Elementary School	$2,625	$180

Source: DISD Alarm System, 2002.

On February 5, 2002 the chief of Police/Security sent a memo asking the superintendent to replace two eliminated night security positions with two certified peace officers who would alternate shifts to cover the district seven days a week. He cited recent criminal activity to support his request.

Exhibit 12-7 shows the estimated cost of the proposal made by the chief of Police. Salary cost for patrol officers is based on the average officer salary and includes fringe benefits.

Exhibit 12-7
DISD Night Patrol Implementation Costs
2001-2002

Item	Number Needed	Estimated Cost
Patrol Officer	2	$91,657
Vehicle	0	$0
Total	**2**	**$91,657**

Source: Memo from chief of Police to superintendent, February 5, 2002 and DISD payroll roster 2002.

A 24-hour police department has additional benefits. The Texas Department of Public Safety does not allow direct access to criminal history information to police agencies that are not operating around the clock. North Forest ISD uses certified police officers to patrol district property at night, as well as to monitor alarms and respond as needed. Because the NFISD Police Department operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, district emergencies are handled promptly and officers can research information in the DPS criminal information system from their own computer.

Recommendation 97:

Add security alarm systems, eliminate security guard positions and add patrol officer positions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation works with the chief of Police to develop specifications and cost estimates for alarm systems in buildings currently served by night security guards.	September 2002
2.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation meets with the superintendent to discuss the proposal and identify funding sources.	February 2003
3.	The director of Maintenance and Transportation provides the	March 2003

	specifications to the Purchasing Department for competitive bids.		
4.	The superintendent presents the bids to the board for acceptance.	April 2003	
5.	The awarded contractor installs the security systems.	June 2003	
6.	The chief of Police meets with the director of Personnel to eliminate security guard positions and add certified peace officer positions.	June 2003	
7.	The director of Personnel completes the reduction in force and hiring activities by August 1, 2003.	August 2003	

FISCAL IMPACT

The implementation of the recommendation will result in the elimination of nine security guard positions and the addition of two peace officer positions for an annual savings of $94,887.

Eliminate Security guard positions at an average salary of $15,711.35 per guard		
Annual salary for nine positions	$141,402	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.23	
	$173,924	
Fixed benefit rate	+ $2,502	
(times nine positions)	x 9	
	$22,518	
Total annual salary and benefits savings for guard positions		$196,442
Add two certified peace officer positions at $37,305.50 per officer	$74,701	
Annual salary for two, based on average of current officer salaries	$74,701	
Variable benefits rate	x 1.16	
	$86,653	
Fixed benefits	+ $2,502	

(times two positions)	x 2	
	5,004	
Total annual salary and benefits cost for officer positions		($91,657)
Total annual savings realized by replacing nine security guards with two peace officers ($196,442 - $91,657 = $104,785)		$104,785
Add security alarms:		
Cost of alarm system at Price Elementary as representative cost	$12,000	
Number of locations converting to security alarm systems	x 4	
	$48,000	
Total cost of adding alarm systems		($48,000)
Cost of monitoring in successive years ($276 x 4)		($1,104)

In the first year of implementation, three new alarm systems for the elementary school and one alarm system for the bus barn will reduce the district's first year savings amount. The alarm systems will have a one-time cost of $48,000 in year 2002-03, and a monitoring cost of $1,104 in successive years. The transition from guards to officers will result in first year savings in the amount of $8,732 ([$104,785/12] x 1 month) for the month of August 2003. This results in a first year net cost of $39,268.

| Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
One time cost to purchase four alarm systems	($48,000)	$0	$0	$0	$0
Annual monitoring cost	$0	($1,104)	($1,104)	($1,104)	($1,104)
Convert guard positions to patrol officer positions.	$8,732	$104,785	$104,785	$104,785	$104,785
Net (Cost) Savings	($39,268)	$103,681	$103,681	$103,681	$103,681

FINDING

DISD does not have staffing formulas or deployment criteria for security officers. Prior to 1999, the district had no police force. Security guards handled district security issues. In 1999 the district added a police force of

five officers. The number of security guards did not decrease with the additional enforcement manpower.

The chief of Police, who supervises the security guards, has the authority to change the number of guards assigned to a school, but does not have the authority to reduce the total number of guard positions. **Exhibit 12-8** shows the number of guards assigned to the schools according to the chief of Police.

Exhibit 12-8
DISD District Safety and Security School Assignment
2002
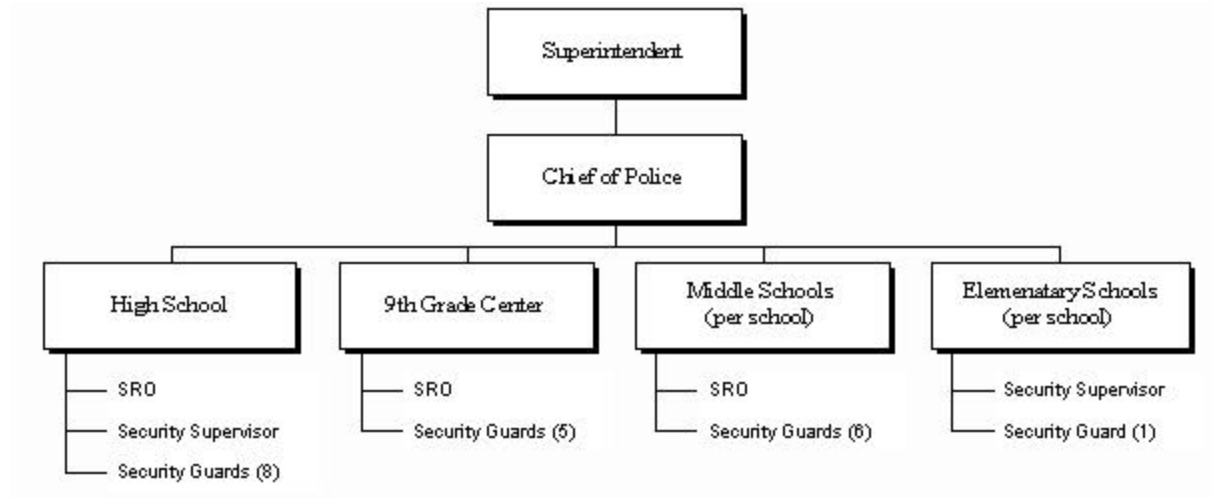
Source: DISD interview with chief of Police, April 2002.
Note: Rivas and Caceres Elementary Schools share a guard.

In trying to determine the number of guards and their assignment, actual staffing was difficult to confirm. The DISD payroll system does not list guards under a security-related job title but classifies them as paraprofessionals or maintenance workers. The security unit provided a list of employees by assignment, which **Exhibit 12-9** summarizes.

Exhibit 12-9
DISD Assignment of Security Guards by Location
2001-02

Assignment	Number Assigned
Security guard substitutes	19
Bus Barn Guards	3

Night Guard Garza Elementary School	3
Night Guard Salinas Elementary School	1
Night Guard Munoz Elementary School	1
Night Patrol	1
Donna High School Security Guards	8
Solis Middle School Security Guards	4
Veterans Middle School Security Guards	3
Todd 9th Grade Center Security Guards	2
Runn Elementary School Security Guards	1
Price Elementary School Security Guards	1
LeNoir Elementary School Security Guards	1
Ochoa Elementary School Security Guards	1
Stainke Elementary School Security Guards	1
Garza Elementary School Security Guards	1
Salinas Elementary School Security Guards	1
Munoz Elementary School Security Guards	1
Guzman Elementary School Security Guards	1
Rivas/Caceres Elementary School Security Guards	1
Assignment not specified	2
Disciplinary Alternative Program Security Guard	1
Total	**58**

Source: DISD Security Staff Roster Revised January 2002. Note: numbers have been rounded.
Note: Security guard substitutes are not listed on the district payroll roster.

Exhibit 12-9 shows total number of guards and the daily assignment. Nearly one third of the security force is substitute employees.

The DISD payroll system creates a list of all positions by title, employee and salary; but, the security staffing roster, which was current as of the

spring 2002 semester, does not account for or assign several positions, which are on the district payroll. For example, the payroll register lists five part-time security positions, two of whom do not appear on the security staffing roster.

A comparison of **Exhibits 12-8** and **12-9** highlights the variation in deployment strategy between the chief of Police and the security guard supervisor in charge of daily staff assignment. The chief of Police believes the assigned numbers are higher than the actual assignments show. The ninth grade school principal said her school had four security guards, which is different from the five noted by the chief and the two noted on the assignment roster.

Assignments are not made on any measurable factors such as cost, workload or student population. The variances between **Exhibit 12-8** and **Exhibit 12-9** show substitutes fill a number of permanent security positions on a daily basis. The high use of substitutes means assigned staff is less familiar with the daily activities at a particular location, making them less effective than a permanent employee. Excessive use of substitutes circumvents the number of positions authorized by the board. For example, the board might authorize two security positions, but with the use of substitutes, extra positions can be added daily. Many districts throughout Texas use staffing formulas to determine if additional positions should be added, positions need to be eliminated or to adequately assign staff.

Recommendation 98:

Develop a staffing formula that considers workload, criminal activity per location and other effectiveness factors to assign security guards.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The chief of Police reviews the current slot roster to determine the actual number of full time positions authorized.	September 2002
2.	The chief of Police reviews workload, student population, criminal activity and facility configuration to determine the appropriate staffing for each school.	October 2002
3.	The chief of Police documents the formula used to arrive at the correct staffing pattern.	November 2002
4.	The chief of Police applies the formula during each budget process to predict changes to staffing needs.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD uses a large number of security guards and a minimal amount of technology to perform routine surveillance. Instead of security cameras, the high school uses eight security guards and six golf carts to patrol the school grounds. The middle school has a small, three camera video system. The middle school also uses six security guards and one golf cart to patrol school grounds. Elementary schools have daytime guards, although incidents of criminal activity are infrequent.

DISD employs twice as many security officers as many of its peer districts (**Exhibit 12-10**).

Exhibit 12-10
Comparison of Security Positions
DISD vs. Peer Districts
2002

School District	Security	Peace Officers	School Placement
Edgewood	0	9	Secondary
Eagle Pass	11	11	Secondary
Mission	13	6	Secondary
Rio Grande City	14	5	Secondary
Donna	**28**	**5**	**Elementary, Secondary**

Source: Peer District Surveys, 2002.

Exhibit 12-11 shows the cost of daytime security in DSISD schools.

Exhibit 12-11
DISD Daytime Security Positions
2002

Positions	Cost
Positions on payroll but unassigned	$36,738
Donna High School Guards	$155,815
Solis Middle School Guards	$101,668

Veterans Middle School Guards	$54,055
Todd 9th Grade Center Guards	$42,350
Runn Elementary Schools Guards	$14,789
Price Elementary School Guards	$17,098
LeNoir Elementary School Guards	$15,386
Ochoa Elementary School Guards	$15,386
Stainke Elementary School Guards	$15,268
Garza Elementary School Guards	$14,789
Salinas Elementary School Guards	$19,951
Munoz Elementary School Guards	$16,528
Guzman Elementary School Guards	$30,677
Rivas/Caceres Elementary School Guards	$23,176
Disciplinary Alternative Program	$15,268
Total	**$588,942**

*Source: DISD Security Assignment Roster Revised January 2002 and DISD Payroll Roster 2002. *Note: the total is calculated on rounded numbers.*

Districts without a high level of criminal activity monitor their schools as an effective measure to deter and prevent problem activities. Surveillance cameras and monitoring help deter drug dealers from bringing drugs on school grounds and help provide prevention.

As districts grow and technology changes, the usual methods of staffing and deployment may not provide adequate levels of security. Cameras can provide consistent coverage to wider areas, allowing larger areas to be monitored by fewer staff. The need for a mobile force may also change the number or type of personnel needed. Schools with few discipline or security problems may not need any additional security, while schools at greater risk need more than one type of security measure. Many districts monitor student and visitor behavior with video security systems, security staff and peace officers in combinations that provide effective coverage for the potential security risks.

Recommendation 99:

Add security cameras to schools with a higher risk of misbehavior or criminal activity and adjust the number and location of security staff.

Strategically placed security cameras could minimize ongoing staff costs. The review should also consider the cost and benefit of particular video configuration. Security at low risk schools should be reviewed to determine the cost versus the security benefit gained.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with the board to approve elimination of 11 guard positions after installation of video cameras.	September 2002
2.	The chief of Police reviews criminal activity reports, misbehavior statistics and other information to determine which schools have a need for a video security system.	September 2002
3.	The chief of Police reviews school layouts and security staffing to determine effective placement of cameras and staff at schools identified as needing a video security system.	October 2002
4.	The chief of Police meets with the principals of the identified schools to discuss the initial findings and develop initial specifications for the system.	October 2002
5.	The chief of Police presents the plan to the superintendent for approval.	January 2003
6.	The chief of Police presents the plan and estimated costs in the budget process for approved funding.	April 2003
7.	The chief of Police submits the specifications to the Purchasing Department for bids.	September 2003
8.	The assistant superintendent of Business and Finance obtains bids and board approval for a contract.	
9.	The awarded contractor begins installation.	November 2003
10.	The superintendent directs the director of Personnel to begin notification for a reduction in force by May 31, 2004 for the approved position reductions	January 2004

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation eliminates 11 daytime security guard positions, resulting in annual savings of $219,785. The first year of implementation

will not have salary savings as cameras cannot be budgeted until the second year, and position elimination occurs after camera installation.

The second year of implementation will have a one-time cost of adding a video camera system to secondary schools. The high school has priced a video system for $101,000. Assuming video systems are placed in the four secondary schools, and assuming that the cost for the 9th Grade Center and the middle schools will be two-thirds of the cost of the high school system, video costs will be $303,000. If positions are eliminated at the end of the school year in 2003, the second year will have a net cost of $248,054. This is determined by dividing the annual cost of 11 positions by 12 months and multiplying the result by 3, the number of months remaining after the positions are eliminated. [($219,785/12)x 3 = $54,946. The three month salary savings is subtracted from the cost of the cameras for the second year implementation cost. ($303,000 - $54,946 = $248,054).

Full savings are realized in years three, four and five.

Eliminate Security guard positions at elementary schools:		
Annual salary for 10 positions at an average of $13,623 per guard	$136,230	
Variable benefit rate	x 1.16	
	$158,027	
Fixed benefit rate	+ $2,502	
(times 10 positions)	x 10	
	$25,020	
Total annual salary and benefits savings for guard positions		$183,047
Eliminate security guard position that is not assigned to security unit	$29,514	
Variable benefit rate	x 1.16	
	$34,236	
Fixed benefit rate	+ $2,502	
Total annual salary and benefits		$36,738
Add security cameras::		
Cost of security system as priced for High School for high school	$101,000	
Three schools at 2/3 of high school system.	$202,000	

Total installation cost				$303,000

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
One-time cost for security cameras	$0	($303,000)	$0	$0	$0
Adjust the number and location of security staff.	$0	$54,946	$219,785	$219,785	$219,785
Net (Cost) Savings	$0	($248,054)	$219,785	$219,785	$219,785

FINDING

The district Police Department does not use computers to full capacity, due in part to a lack of law enforcement specific software. Because the district does not have enforcement-specific software, when a DISD police files a report, he uses a standard word processing software program to type the reports.

The district does not use a database to help officers track the status of citations written or to compile a report to analyze citations number and type. Although the department secretary compiles the number and type of calls for service monthly, these monthly statistics are not preserved or analyzed. As a result, the department is unable to calculate the clearance rate of cases.

Effective police work is based in part on pattern identification and process of elimination. With the district's current computer software, patterns of suspicious activity, similarity in elements of criminal activity, or common witnesses or suspects cannot be easily identified during investigations. Departmental performance measures that would allow the chief of Police to assess the daily activity of the officers, or the rate at which the department is solving cases cannot be easily performed.

The chief of Police investigated a software program that tracked citations and produced student notification letters, which would cost $2,000. Many other law enforcement software products are commercially available. One company provides applications for report writing, gang tracking, citation writing, court case tracking, logging daily activities and maintaining mug shots, at a cost of $35 for a single user.

Most police departments regardless of size use computers to identify suspects, track offenses, and perform statistical analysis. The time saved in the office increases time available time for patrol duties. For law enforcement agencies that are 24-hour agencies, the state of Texas requires incident information to be reported for crime rate analysis.

Recommendation 100:

Purchase police report-writing software and train personnel on use of all software programs.

While the number and type of software programs would be determined by the chief of Police, the selected software should, at a minimum, include report writing, gang tracking and citation tracking applications.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The chief of Police meets with Career and Technology staff to discuss possible software and compatibility.	September 2002
2.	The chief of Police submits request for funds to purchase the software.	October 2002
3.	The superintendent approves the request for funds.	November 2002
4.	The chief of Police purchases the software.	December 2002
5.	The chief of Police schedules training for staff on the new software, as well as for other software in use.	January 2003
6.	Staff develops reports and performs analysis by using the software.	March 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The price used in this fiscal note reflects citation tracking software priced by the chief of Police. However, other commercially available products for small departments should be researched to obtain the greatest features for the best price.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Purchase police report-writing software and train personnel on use of all software programs.	($2,000)	$0	$0	$0	$0

Chapter 12
SAFETY AND SECURITY

B. SAFETY

Principals, administrators and supervisors are responsible for developing proper safety behavior in employees and students and for educating all district personnel about safety rules and regulations. A safe school district effectively manages its resources and aggressively plans for potential dangerous situations.

Many of DISD's safety initiatives focus on the secondary school level. Administrators rely on preventive measures designed to deter misbehavior, although programs to detect misbehavior are also used to keep students safe. Interviews with school administrators showed some policies, such as the emergency alarm policy, are applied districtwide. Other district policies are customized to fit the needs of individual schools. **Exhibit 12-12** shows a sample of the programs and policies used at different schools.

Exhibit 12-12
DISD Security Measures Utilized by Schools
2001-02

Security Method	Donna High School	Todd 9th Grade Center	Solis Middle School	Garza Elementary	Security Purpose
Identify Visitors	Reusable badge	Classroom pass	Reusable badge	Classroom Pass	Intruder Alert
Identify Staff	No	No	No	Carries identification card	Intruder Alert
Identify Students by ID or uniform	Carries identification card	Carries identification card	No	No	Intruder Alert, Minimize Gang Association
Parking lot control	Separate tags for teachers and students	Separate lot for teachers but few students drive	Students do not drive per district policy	No	Asset Security, Trespassers

Master Key Control	Keeps log and locks up spares	Keeps log and locks up spares	Keeps log and locks up spares	Keeps log and lock up spares	Asset Security
District Security Personnel	SRO and security guards	SRO and security guards	SRO and security guards	Security guards	Truancy, Incident Management, Trespassers
Single Point of Entry	Limited points of entry	Area is fenced to reduce accessibility	Buildings are connected with fencing to reduce accessibility	Area is fenced and points of entry are limited	Intruder Alert
Hall Lockers	No. Does have 50 lockers with clear doors for special needs students.	Available but do not use	Available but do not use	Not available	Weapons, Drugs
Clear or Mesh Back-packs	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Weapons, Drugs
Security Alarms	On building and high risk areas	No alarms on out buildings	On high risk areas of building	On high risk areas of building	Asset Security
Security Scanners	Wand, plus shared walk through detector	Wand, plus shared walk through detector	Wand, plus shared walk through detector	No	Weapons, Contraband

Source: Interviews with sampling of DISD principals from Donna High School, Todd 9th Grade Center, Solis Middle School and Garza Elementary, April 2002.

DISD also contracts with a drug detection company for periodic inspections of school facilities. This company uses dogs to locate and identify illegal drugs during 36 half-day visits at $170 per visit. Of the 14

drug dog visits between November 2001 and February 2002, only four visits alerted authorities to the presence of illegal drugs. Considering the number of students at each school, the drug dog program appears to be an effective deterrent in keeping drugs out of DISD schools.

The district also uses drug detection kits when suspected narcotics are located. District police perform the substance testing. Testing occurs in the presence of the student and a district administrator. Testing the substance confirms or disproves that the suspected substance is an illegal drug. This information is valuable in determining student punishment and is essential if DISD intends on filing criminal charges. Parents and staff expressed concerns about drug use in TSPR public forums and surveys. In interviews, school administrators admitted that drugs were in the schools, but said the problem was not widespread. The chief of Police said the district's proximity to the international border make drugs more accessible, but that the district uses drug intervention, prevention programs and other strategies listed in the campus improvement plans to combat the problem.

The district keeps its facilities graffiti clean by fencing its property and maintaining an aggressive painting program. Administrators have custodians or security clean the areas around the schools. A call is made to maintenance as soon as graffiti is observed and fresh paint is usually applied the same day. The review team made visual inspections of DISD schools and saw a minimal amount of graffiti on school property. Administrators promote school pride and community responsibility as public relation messages to combat graffiti.

The district provides a number of emergency communication tools. Each school has an emergency alarm system used for fire, weather or other emergency notifications. The district has standardized its alarm signal allowing students and staff to move among schools and still recognize the alarm sounds. A random sample of schools showed two-way intercom systems connect teachers to the administrative office. In buildings that do not have two-way intercom access, telephones provide an alternative means of notification. Administrators and security officers use walkie-talkies to keep informed of incidents as they occur. The Transportation and Maintenance Department applied for and received a Federal Communications Commission license that will allow the district to increase range and clarity for radios used by bus drivers on rural routes.

FINDING

The district's building key maintenance process does not provide adequate tracking or documentation for key assignment and replacement. The district holds each employee responsible for loss and replacement of assigned keys, but lacks a written, enforceable policy. Employees are

informed of the district's practice regarding keys by their department head or school administrator. Reminders are given at the beginning of each school year when keys are reassigned.

Principals decide who receives school keys. Principals maintain the keys and manually log who has received a key. If the school budget allows, principals have the authority to have door locks changed. The high school principal said that he had door locks replaced in administrative areas with sensitive information, but he occasionally finds duplicate keys of other facility doors. The Solis Middle School principal has adopted a strict key assignment policy that limits persons with access to administrative offices. All school administrators interviewed said they have a strict key assignment policy.

The director of Maintenance and Transportation said the master locksmith maintains a detailed log of key and lock core assignment by hand in a spiral notebook. The information is not easily researched or analyzed. In the event of accidental loss or destruction the district has no back up for the information contained in the notebook. Key assignment at the school level is also tracked by manual log entries. Should the log become lost or unreadable, the information is not stored in another location.

Combined with an assignment and replacement policy that determines who should have access to which doors, a system that can track and identify missing keys is also essential to controlling building security costs. A lost key requires replacement of the lock core. All doors that can be opened by a lost key must have the core replaced and new keys issued. Commercial key tracking software can link key and core assignments so that replacing a core can easily be linked to a list of all keys needing replacement as a result of changing the lock core. Some software programs even include sample authorization policies.

In Waco ISD (WISD) for example, the Maintenance Department locksmith implemented a computer software system for creating, storing, locating and accessing information on WISD keys. The system creates the master keying details that follow stringent security requirements. The system is stored on disk and can be accessed to identify key codes. The system is combined with an automated computer coded key cutting machine. The new process is quicker and allows the locksmith to immediately identify a lost key and produce a replacement key on site.

Recommendation 101:

Create a written policy and automate tracking procedures to maintain accurate records on keys made, keys assigned, lock replacements and related information.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Transportation and Maintenance researches and develops a proposal for purchasing a tracking system.	October 2002
2.	The assistant superintendent for Business and Finance reviews the proposal and approves the purchase of a tracking system.	November 2002
3.	The director of Transportation and Maintenance enters data on cores and assignments from hand logs to software program and runs analysis to determine which cores should be updated.	December 2002
4.	The director of Transportation and Maintenance works with school administrators and directors to develop a written policies and procedures for assigning and recovering keys.	January 2003
5.	The director of Transportation and Maintenance submits the policies to the superintendent for approval.	February 2003
6.	The superintendent presents the policies to the board for adoption.	May 2003
7.	The director of Transportation and Maintenance implements and distributes the approved policies to all affected departments.	September 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact consists of a one-time cost of $700 for a commercial software program to track key assignment.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Create a written policy and automate tracking procedures to maintain accurate records on keys made, keys assigned, lock replacements and related information.	($700)	$0	$0	$0	$0

FINDING

Some schools do not have secured classroom areas for teachers or other adults to store personal items. Administrators confirmed that purses or other items are currently left in classrooms without lock-up capabilities. The chief of Police stated that there has been internal theft. Police incident statistics show 11 reported thefts in 2000-01. Monthly activity reports by officers show 40 thefts between August 2001 and March 2002. The lack of

adequate police reporting software makes it difficult to determine if these numbers reflect student, staff or district theft.

Adults must carry keys, money, identification and other items throughout the day. Many workplaces provide a secured area for high-risk items that become targets of theft when left unattended. Texas districts of all sizes consider property safety as part of a safe school environment and provide locking cabinets, desks or lockers for students and staff to use when personal items must be left unattended.

Recommendation 102:

Provide an area in each classroom that the teacher can use to secure items such as keys, purse or wallet, or other personal items.

In secondary schools, students do not use lockers. Teachers could be assigned a secured locker next to their classroom door. Where lockers are not adjacent to a classroom, a latch and lock could convert a cabinet into a secure location. As another option, schools could ensure that desks with locking drawers have working locking mechanisms.

Teachers with lockers could provide their own locks for a no-cost option for the district. If teachers provide their own locks, they must acknowledge that the locked area is still district property and subject to district search and seizure policies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Maintenance Department supervisor reviews each location to determine if locker, cabinet or desk can be reconfigured for safety.	September 2002
2.	The Maintenance Department supervisor drafts a proposal for each school with associated costs.	October 2002
3.	Each school principal reviews and approves the corresponding school's proposal.	December 2002
4.	The Maintenance Department director develops a schedule for implementation and submits it to the superintendent with a funding request.	January 2003
5.	The superintendent submits the proposal to the board for adoption and funding.	May 2003
6.	The Maintenance Department director assigns staff to implement the proposal according to the established schedule.	September 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost of implementation is $2,876. This amount assumes that the district installs a $4 lock and latch for each secured area for the 719 teachers in the district.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Provide each classroom with an area for the teacher to secure items such as keys, purse or wallet, or other personal items.	($2,876)	$0	$0	$0	$0

FINDING

The district does not consistently enforce the DISD identification policy that requires visitors to report to the office, sign-in and receive an identification badge. DISD uses highly visible signs at each school to direct visitors to the office. Staff enforces the policy by stopping unidentified visitors and directing them to the office. Office staff must verify that all visitors have been signed-in and provided badges. Some parts of this policy are enforced more vigorously than others.

Fenced enclosures minimize the number of entrances to the older, courtyard-style schools. Visitors approaching the front of any DISD school cannot miss the clearly marked signs in English and in Spanish stating that visitors must check in at the office. The review team inspected a sampling of district schools to test enforcement of the visitor policy. In most schools visited, security officers promptly stopped the unidentified team member with directions to the office. However, no visitor badges were seen during the test visits. Once in the office, visitor badges were not out and available for use and sign-in logs were difficult to locate. Some administrators could not describe what was on the visitor badge for their school.

Districts in smaller communities commonly recognize many school visitors. Administrators said that delivery persons were well known and visitors were usually recognized. The recognition process, however, should not replace the sign-in process. The sign-in sheet does more than identify the visitor to the administration; the sheet is evidence of who is at the school at a particular time. Crisis responders must know who is present during a crisis event. Police must be able to identify potential witnesses. Well-prepared schools throughout Texas identify who is present and where in the school they are located should an emergency arise.

Recommendation 103:

Train staff on the importance of visitor identification and monitor policy compliance.

While schools are generally a safe environment, certain precautions enhance school safety. Administrators should know who is on school grounds and for what purpose. Principals at each school should remind staff of the visitor identification policy and ensure strict adherence to district policy.

The principals should also remind parents to follow the visitor identification policy through school newsletters. A clearly marked sign-in log should be visible in each office. Office workers and volunteers should monitor visitors to be sure each visitor signs the log and wears a visitor's tag. School staff should recognize the visitor's tag for their school.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	Principals direct office personnel to review sign-in log and supplies, making sure the log is visible and accessible.	September 2002
2.	Principals develop appropriate procedures for following the policy when an unmarked visitor is at the school.	September 2002
3.	Principals and teachers provide training and reminders to student and staff through assemblies and announcements.	October 2002
4.	Principals periodically review the log and monitor hallways to ensure compliance.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

DISD has a crisis plan, but does not regularly perform emergency drills other than fire drills. DISD provides copies of the crisis plan to each school for implementation. Developing the drill schedule is left to each school. All schools perform regular fire drills. Administrators said that other emergencies are handled by calling the director of Employee Services who initiates and directs the crisis plan. A review of Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) showed several schools have identified additional crisis training as part of their 2001-02 school goals.

The chief of Police said some schools are better at crisis drilling than others. The schools that drill more often have usually had a bomb threat or other incident that raised the administration's awareness. Drilling has also

raised parent concern. Students talk about the drills, prompting parents to call and find out if the drill was in response to a specific incident.

The district partners with the city and county to provide emergency shelter facilities during a variety of weather emergencies. DISD's proximity to the Texas coast puts residents in a hurricane risk area; substandard housing places local colonias - neighborhoods that lack basic city services, such as water, sewage and electricity - residents at-risk during severe winter weather.

While it is good emergency management to practice or perform weather and fire emergency procedures, drills should also cover other types of emergencies. The response to a hostage situation is different from the response to a weather evacuation. Drills identify plan weaknesses, highlight communication or resource problems and provide staff and students with knowledge and direction during times of confusion.

For example, Kingsville Independent School District (KISD) holds annual drills that include community emergency response providers. Each year the scenario changes to provide new challenges. Drills might include a hostage or sniper situation, or a hazardous material spill from a nearby train wreck.

Recommendation 104:

Develop drill plans for both school and community crises that include a review and improvement component.

Scenarios can be school or community based, but should include community emergency response providers. Drills should involve a reviewer who observes the process, notes any problems and meets with participants to debrief and improve the process. The plan should also include notification to parents that these types of drills will be part of the district's safety preparedness program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Employee Services meets with principals to determine scenarios for drills.	November 2002
2.	The director of Employee Services selects one scenario that includes community responders and other "mini" drills that school staff can perform.	December 2002
3.	Principals perform "mini" drills, noting areas needing improvement.	January - April 2003

4.	The director of Employee Services meets with community service providers to arrange appropriate times for community drills.	February 2003
5.	The director of Employee Services monitors drills.	January - April 2003
6.	The director of Employee Services meets with principals and emergency service providers to discuss weaknesses observed during drills and to find solutions.	May 2003
7.	The director of Employee Services continues to develop an annual drill schedule and to monitor performance.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources

Chapter 12
SAFETY AND SECURITY

C. DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT

The U.S. Department of Education's 1998 publication Early Warning, Timely Response, defines a well-functioning school as one that fosters "learning, safety and socially appropriate behaviors." These schools have a strong academic focus and support students in achieving high standards, foster positive relationships between school staff and students and promote meaningful parental and community involvement. Most prevention programs in effective schools address multiple factors and recognize that safety and order are related to children's social, emotional and academic development.

Texas schools are required to provide standards for conduct and discipline through the adoption of a student code of conduct. DISD provides an annual student code of conduct to students and parents. An acknowledgement that the rules were read and understood accompanies the code. The board also has a discipline management plan that provides guidelines and appeals processes for levels of disciplinary action. Student removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) placement is determined in a hearings process through the Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department.

The district has several levels of disciplinary alternatives. Students may be removed from regular classes to a disciplinary alternative learning area at their home school - generally referred to as in-school suspension (ISS). Or students may be suspended and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program at a DISD-provided location. For felony offenses, a student may be expelled and placed in the Hidalgo County Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP).

DISD'S student code of conduct is divided into two categories: behaviors and consequences. The behaviors list begins with general misconduct. Behavior that may result in suspension is listed next, ending in behavior that requires expulsion. **Exhibit 12-13** presents examples of behaviors and consequences as defined in the code of conduct.

Exhibit 12-13
Categories of Offenses Outlined in DISD'S Student Code of Conduct
2001-02

Behaviors	Consequences

General Misconduct: • Cheating or copying work • Leaving school without permission • Scuffling or fighting • Disobeying school rules or failing to comply with directives given by school personnel • Possessing matches or a lighter • Disrupting the school environment or educational process • Violating safety rules Possessing a paging device or cellular telephone	Discretionary Removal Formal Removal Suspension
Behaviors that may result in removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Program • Criminal mischief • Felony conduct not on school property or school event • Fighting • Repeatedly violating classroom standards of behavior	Suspension Disciplinary Alternative Program
Behaviors that must result in removal to the Disciplinary Alternative Program • False alarm or report • Felony conduct on school property or school event • Assault on school property or school event • Sale, delivery or use of controlled substance • Sale, delivery or use of alcoholic beverage • Under the influence of inhalants • Engages in expellable conduct between ages of six to nine	Disciplinary Alternative Program
Behavior that may result in expulsion • Vandalism • Robbery or theft • Extortion, coercion or blackmail • Hazing • Insubordination • Profanity, vulgar language or obscene gestures	Disciplinary Alternative Program Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program

directed toward others • Fighting, committing or threatening physical abuse • Falsifying records, passes and other school-related documents • Refusing to accept discipline management techniques proposed by the teacher or principal	
Behavior requiring expulsion • Possession of the following as outlined by the Texas Penal Code: firearm, an illegal knife, a club, a prohibited weapon such as an explosive weapon, a machine gun, etc. • Behavior containing elements of the following under the Texas Penal Code: aggravated assault, arson, murder or attempt to commit murder, aggravated kidnapping, indecency with a child, retaliation against a school employee or volunteer with one of the above listed offenses	Disciplinary Alternative Program Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program

Source: DISD Student Code of Conduct, 2001-02.

Unless the behavior is a major violation of the penal code or code of conduct, discipline is initially administered at the student's home school. Principals are the first line of decision-making on whether a student should be referred to ISS or DAEP. Certain misbehavior identified on the above chart requires removal to the DAEP. At that level of misbehavior, the student is referred to a hearing administered by the Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department.

The director of Student Support Services and Discipline Management reviews case facts with parents before deciding if removal to an alternative education program is appropriate. The student can appeal a hearing ruling, but the board generally backs the decision made by the hearing placement officer. **Exhibit 12-14** provides the number of students that were referred to the district DAEP or JJAEP during 2000-01. The referral total of 232 students represents 2.2 percent of the district student population and 5.1 percent of the secondary school population.

Exhibit 12-14
Referrals to Disciplinary Alternative Schools
2000-01

Offense	Number of DAEP Referrals Reported
Persistent misbehavior	32
Emergency removal	13
Truancy	6
Possession of marijuana	20
Theft	5
Under the influence - alcohol	2
Delivery of alcohol	1
Assault - student	30
Possession of cocaine	1
Assault/staff	18
Influence - marijuana	16
Off-campus felony	14
On-campus felony	9
Possession of alcohol	2
Sexual harassment	2
Disorderly conduct	3
Under the influence - Roche™ pills	9
Continue placement	2
Abuse of volatile chemical	6
Gang affiliation	5
Criminal mischief	2
Terroristic threat	1
Possession of other weapon	2
Expulsion - Persistent misbehavior AEP	11
Expulsion - Felony possession - cocaine	7
Expulsion - Felony possession - Roche™	7
Expulsion - Assault staff	5
Expulsion - Felony possession - marijuana	1

Totals	232

The TEA Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs Annual Evaluation 2000-01 reported that statewide, about 31 percent of students referred to a DAEP spent less than six days in the program, 41 percent spent six to 30 days, 23 percent spent 31 to 89 days and fewer than five percent spent 90 days or more. The report did not evaluate JJAEP or in-school suspension programs.

The district contracts for additional placement services at the Hidalgo County JJAEP in Edinburg, Texas. The county pays $59 per day per student for 10 spaces at the facility. The total amount budgeted by the district for the space is $76,936. Students placed in excess of the reserved spaces are paid at $75 per student per day. Using the contract figures, the budgeted amount assumes 10 students will be spending 130 days in the facility. Using the 2000-01 referral information compiled by the Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department, the average referral during the fall semester was 101 days, and the average referral during the spring semester was 80 days. The district places students in the JJAEP whom it cannot help. The Donna Adjustment and Guidance Center (DAGC) principal visits the JJAEP every two weeks to follow up on DISD students placed there.

The DAGC is the district's Discipline Alternative Education Program (DAEP) serving students in grades K through 12. Students are assigned to the program as a result of persistent inappropriate behavior at their home campus. The DAGC has a staff of 15. A principal, five full-time teachers and five teacher assistants administer the DAGC. The teachers include a Math teacher, an English teacher who is also a certified Special Education teacher, a Science teacher, a Social Studies teacher and one elementary teacher who is also a certified bilingual teacher. The teacher assistants rotate every six weeks. The DAGC also has a full-time drill officer, a liaison officer who follows students that go back to their home campuses, a counselor and a secretary. The DAGC has five classrooms: one for students in grades K through 5 and four for students in grades 6 through 12.

The DAGC separates students with discretionary placements from students with mandatory placements. Discretionary placements result from actions such as disruptive behavior; violations of the student code of conduct; possession, purchase or use of tobacco products or school-related gang-related activities. Mandatory placements result from conditions such

as conduct punishable as a felony; possession and use of alcohol or controlled substances; public lewdness or indecent exposure; retaliation against a school employee; or a terrorist threat or assault. A TEA March 2002 DAEP Evaluation Report shows that in 2000-01, 39 percent of the placements in the DAGC were discretionary and 61 percent were mandatory. In 2000-01, 23.3 percent of the students assigned to the DAGC were in special education. In 2000-01, 80.6 percent of the students were assigned to the DAGC only once. Students are assigned to the DAEP for a minimum of 30 days to a maximum of 84 days. In 2000-01, students were assigned to the DAGC for 32.6 days on average. The DAGC conducts a 30-day review looking at students' conduct, attendance and academic performance. The 30-day review meeting also prepares students for transition back to their home campus. The DAEP has a code of conduct and students wear a uniform.

The DAGC offers a highly structured learning environment that focuses on helping students take more responsibility for their actions. The students remain in one classroom during the school day while teachers rotate from classroom to classroom. Food is brought in during lunch. The school day is from 8:00 to 3:30. Instruction is individualized. Each of the classrooms has four computers. The students use the Plato Learning System, a computer-assisted learning resource. Students are pre-tested at their time of arrival so they can be properly placed. They are also tested at the completion of their assignment to the DAEP to assess and document their progress. Each student follows an individualized lesson plan. The counselor meets with each student at least once a week. The counselor also meets with small groups. New Beginnings, an outside program that works with kids who have substance abuse problems, sends staff to the DAGC daily to work with students. The DAGC principal estimated that between 20 and 30 percent of the students assigned to the DAGC have substance abuse problems.

The DAGC can accommodate a maximum of 15 elementary school children and 60 secondary school children at a time. In 2001-02, the DAGC has 277 students in grades 1 through 12. The largest numbers of students assigned to the DAGC are in grade 8 - 79 students - and grade 7 - 52 students.

FINDING

DISD's successful peer-mentoring program, the Peer Assisted Leadership (PAL) program, has received recognition and opened additional program and funding opportunities. The program pairs high school students with elementary and intermediate students as role models and friends. Participants receive training in conflict resolution and mediation. The underlying philosophy of the program is based on the idea that children

first turn to their peers to help resolve problems. DISD receives $86,438 of federal Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) funds that the district uses for programs like mentoring, character education and life skills. The district's PAL program started with funding from the SDFS program as well as community and local school funds.

Through 2001, the program had 56 PAL mentors serving 327 students. PALs participated in a number of charitable events, including a 911 fundraiser for the American Red Cross, the Donna High School Campus Beautification Day, Ronald McDonald House clean up and supply drive and Buffalo grass planting at the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge.

The district has a PAL website called PALNET. The activity level of the DISD program, including its online access, won the program an exemplary rating. As a result, the program received a $5,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Department to build a local wildlife trail. PAL may receive an additional $10,000 grant to expand and maintain the trail. Local organizations have also expressed an interest in partnerships with the PAL program, bringing a potential for expansion and additional leadership opportunities for students.

COMMENDATION

The district has an exemplary mentoring program that has brought additional grant opportunities to the district.

FINDING

The Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department has developed several tools to ensure that disciplinary referrals are appropriately documented and correctly coded for statistical reporting. When a school refers a student to the disciplinary hearing process, the director of Student Support Services and Discipline Management compiles a notebook with relevant information on the student and the alleged behavior. Schools receive a checklist to make sure all necessary items are well documented and forwarded to the director. The list includes items such as student demographics, copies of test scores, suspension notices to parents, special education information, grades, attendance, counselor reports and witness statements. The parent receives a copy of the folder during the placement hearing.

The director of Student Support Services and Discipline Management also provides each school with a color-coded list of discipline infractions and action codes that are reported to the TEA Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). School staff can easily see which actions are mandatory or discretionary placements by the color of the code. The

list also provides a handy reference in determining which code should be entered into the PEIMS database.

Each week, the director requests a report from the PEIMS database on recently reported disciplinary activity. The director reviews the report to determine if any mandatory codes have been entered that the Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department did not receive for hearing. The director contacts the school to see if the file is delayed or the data improperly entered into the computer.

The director also reviews all special education suspensions lasting 10 days. Special education laws require a review for special education students assigned to in-school suspension for 10 or more days. The director uses the weekly report to make sure the district is complying with the law and to make sure special education students are receiving the necessary attention.

COMMENDATION

The Student Support Services and Discipline Management Department works closely with schools to make sure referrals to the DAEP are properly documented and properly referred.

FINDING

DISD has no review process for ISS or other school-based discipline to ensure students in similar circumstances receive similar disciplinary treatment. Survey comments showed that parents believe discipline is administered through politics, not fairness. The chief of Police said that he occasionally hears of an incident that was not reported to the police. **Exhibit 12-15** compares reported data from three sources and underscores the potential for variation in how incidents are treated.

Exhibit 12-15
Comparison of DISD Incident Data
Reported from Three Sources
2000-01

Offense	SDSF Report Number of Incidents Reported	Referral Report Number Referrals DAEP/JJAEP Reported	DISD Police Arrest Report
Possession of controlled substances	93	22	35
Under the influence -	6	2	1

alcohol			
Assaults	55	53	96
Influence -controlled substances	96	25	25
Possession of alcohol	4	2	1
Gang affiliation	**3**	**5**	**N/A**
Criminal mischief	**18**	**2**	**10**
Possession of other weapon	**3**	**2**	**1**

Source: Safe and Drug Free Schools Report 2001, DISD Police Department Arrest Reports 2000-01, Student Support Services and Discipline Management Report 2000-01.

DISD has a software program that captures incident information that must be reported to TEA. In-school suspension reports and disciplinary alternative referral reports are documented in the computer system. Some disciplinary information is reported in a form that can be reviewed for consistency. Other safety statistics are not used for consistency comparisons. For example, the Police Department keeps statistics on reported criminal incidents, but school administrators do not use this information to determine if all cases that should have been reported to the police were reported.

The information reported on in-school suspensions is not provided to central administration or other review points to make sure principals are administering discipline fairly or in compliance with the code of conduct. The U.S. Department of Education's 1996 publication, Safe and Drug Free Schools: An Action Guide, provides several exemplary practices for effective data compilation and use. Many Texas districts collect and review incident and discipline information to make sure disciplinary referrals and suspensions are fairly applied.

Recommendation 105:

Develop a tracking and review process for in-school suspension and other disciplinary measures to ensure discipline is fairly applied.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent designates staff to develop reporting and review procedures.	September 2002
2.	The superintendent assigns responsibility for the review to the appropriate level staff.	November 2002
3.	Designated staff reviews and reports information to the superintendent.	December 2002
4.	The superintendent monitors and makes corrections where necessary.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources

Appendix A
PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

As part of Donna Independent School District (DISD) performance review, two public forums were held on March 26 and 27 at Rivas/Caceres Elementary and Todd 9th Grade Center. Members of the public were invited to record comments they have regarding the DISD education system. Community members and school staff who participated in the public forums gave their comments about the 12 areas under review. These comments illustrated community perceptions of DISD and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The following is a summary of comments received by focus area.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

- We appreciate that you are looking into the Casares Elementary offices. Every year a recognition is done in honor of some school board member. No one ever chooses any other member because his wife works at that campus. After school a big to do was done in his honor - formal with a huge 1 1/2 inch steak dinner. No one knows who pays for this fancy meal cause no one pitches in. The control most school board members have over school personnel is unbelievable. The moral is low and people work there because they need a job.
- Superintendents are paid off, instead of allowing them to earn their pay. Instead of using that money for the students, we use it to pay off friends and family members of school board members. We have site-based decision making groups in each campus but at the end it is the school board that decides what happens. The school board has all the power and it makes decisions that benefit them and not for the benefit of the students.
- The superintendent is a nice man, but I feel he is a puppet to certain board members. I strongly suggest a superintendent from out of the state (or at least the Valley). Someone who is not related to anyone, someone with a doctorate, someone innovative, hardworking and competent.
- Before any school board meetings the organization chart is already in progress - people get moved or fired because you're a board members relative - or you didn't vote the right way - In this district it's not what you know - it's who you know. Monies are being misused, there are first year employees earning more than a 25

year employee. Hello - what is wrong with this picture? Superintendent's bought out - good one's being fired for wrong reasons - when he's trying to straighten wrong doing of District. Board member's wife - getting higher positions more pay - Board usually buys out contracts. The superintendent sticks to close to board. We need stronger board to hire stronger teachers for students; students first their salaries 2nd.

- Across the state - great need for more professionalism and clear cut code of conduct on behalf of school board. School board needs to be more accessible to parents.
- Too much involvement by board members in the day to day operations of the school district. Much of that stems from the fact that there is a lack of strength from the superintendent. Board members take any complaint by either district personnel and find means to retaliate in some way by either demoting, firing, or not hiring anyone with differing views. There is an internal political machine that has been established that the majority could continue to dominate the board seats.
- Site-based management - These are very nice terms however, site-based management to me means that the decisions are made with the educational goals. The goals are not made by the school board. The school board rewards different administrators not by what they contribute to district but by what they contribute to their political campaigns.
- Board Governance: Unfortunately it has gotten to the point that the board controls all personnel and is the decision maker rather than the superintendent or other department heads. Board members intimidate employees, that if they don't vote accordingly on school elections that they will be terminated from their jobs.
- Superintendent - We have a very weak superintendent who is never available to the community. He is there and serves a function and that is to do as board members request him to do. He is not a decision making individual.
- Board governance is a dictatorship. Board is involved in every day district goings on in the campuses or departments where they try to tell you what to do instead of suggesting.
- I think the board governance needs to put more of their time on how schools are run because to my knowledge they need to do more for our teachers and staff at schools. They should plan more meetings and activities involving the parents. The Board should hear what parents have to say instead of ignoring them. There should be more changes in schools. They should provide more programs. Spend more money in programs instead of board. We don't need a lot of people in the district organizations and management. We need the money to be spent on buses, drivers, custodians, principals and especially teachers. The district should

hear and listen more. The money from the district is being spent on the board not on the district schools. I get concerned because my kids travels on buses late, with too many kids, buses are full. I would like to look and check how money is spent. The district hires and pays the people who they want. They don't go by their education, they hire anybody just because they are relatives, that is not right. Donna district is corrupted, very corrupted, I'm sorry but that's how I feel and see it. I'm a concerned mom. Donna is never going to go up if the district doesn't change.

- Strategic planning should be implemented and followed to the letter. Not just have it, gather dust. If we utilize strategies in improving old curriculum we definitely will advance in instruction. Take out the old, bring in the new.
- Site-based decision making - seek personnel, along with the principal in making decisions to try to help kids in all areas. Have more incentives for academic recognitions for students who excel, not just athletics. Have more school involvement to bring schools together and feed off some ideas of the better schools. Implement togetherness for school quality.
- Superintendent should have the guts to change Donna's structure from politically motivated innuendos to quality and higher standards. If he demands, chances are he will get. Puppets are a dime a dozen. Strong leadership in schools demand progress.
- Better school management by administrators - quality supervision is needed. Budget for qualified administrators, not hand picked puppets that are not even fully qualified. If we have a strong principal, chances are the school reflects his/her attitude. The principals should demand the help of parents.
- Superintendents are being paid off instead of earning their pay. Superintendent "puppet" to school board. The school board has the ultimate power they do the hiring. Not always on who is the most qualified but who you happen to be related to or who your political party is.
- Site-based decision making - ultimately the recommendations are not taken, administration have the final say, it's a waste of time.
- Superintendent changes as much as the board does. He must be their puppet to remain as superintendent. He can't make a decision on anything unless the board tells him to.
- All of these positions are auctioned off to the highest bidder. Depending on what position you want that is the amount of political contribution. On the Board of Trustees, we have five members telling the superintendent and staff how to run the district. These five members are not educated past high school. Starting with the superintendent and the secretaries all are related to board members.

- They (Board of Trustees) have created a monopoly of people that they can manipulate to do whatever the board desires. Those desires can be anything from firing someone who didn't support them to hiring someone who did support them even if it means creating a new position. It is rampant all over the district.
- Board governance - when school board members actually go into a former superintendent's office and start demanding that all of his things be removed quickly (he, superintendent, was on suspension with pay at the time) so the board member's friend can move in, what do you call that? When board members are asked about possible promotion for an individual and the board member asks "What's in it for me?" What do you call that? These acts are "committed" in front of other school personnel who are afraid to contradict or criticize their comments. The current board majority is harassing/intimidating all personnel into submission to their way of thinking.
- Superintendent - the current superintendent is a puppet who does anything the board majority members want. He hires political supporters/family members. The ex-superintendent dedicated himself to this district, from student-teaching to superintendent and for what? To be ousted because he was not and did not promote them?
- I feel the board has gone too far in their power. We have had over eight superintendents in the past 25 years. All have been removed and replaced due to pressure from the board. We have board members go and check on personnel to see if school personnel are doing their jobs. Fear of retaliation is always there. We are unable to express our opinions freely. The superintendents that are doing a good job and not taking directives from board member are removed. Our current superintendent is a puppet, he will not proceed with any task unless the board tells him to do so. Most of the recommendations that the superintendent does are and have already been approached to the board before the board meeting has occurred. There is no support for this superintendent and the board. I feel that if there was truly good school management we would have better accountability ratings for our campuses. Open forum at board meetings was moved to after executive session is done!!!! TEA we need your help!!!
- Site-base decision making committees don't necessarily make important decision. Another superintendent! For a year, we were paying for two superintendents, that's my tax dollars. This last move was done capriciously. The school board had no justifiable reason for firing the superintendent. Previously, the current superintendent who had been the previous superintendent, asked to be moved to another position. Any other business would have

asked him to leave. He had a superintendent's contract, couldn't do the job then your fired!

- School board members do not know their own policies: They interrupt public forum speakers without cause and against district policy. They illegally talk to employees about labor organizations. They tell employees to get out of certain organizations - this is against district policy. Employees request in writing to be heard public meeting, however, they denied the request and called for executive meeting - this is against Government Code, chapter 551. During an executive meeting there were others allowed in executive meeting, as if it was an open meeting, and employees and representative asked that they be removed and the board members answered, if you do not like it, leave.
- Last year the superintendent "QUIT" for unspecified reasons. The board named the deputy superintendent "interim" then named him superintendent. After the elections the board suspended him. They later had a previous election campaign manager file suit and had him removed - at cost to the taxpayers. They then named the superintendent who quit back to his old job. Most of us feel that he is just a puppet for the board. The board decides who they hire and who gets fired, and who gets raises.
- In this district, there are some administrators that have obtained their certification to work as an administrator in a school. It is not fair for the taxpayers to be paying so much money to a person that is not fully certified in his administration position. A person has to earn his money through education not with political help.
- Family members of the board are getting raises. Many workers are treated unfair but are afraid to speak up for fear of losing their jobs. The bond money that has been received is not used for the schools. Board member families are hired and are protected not the workers. The school board does not care about the students or the workers.
- To begin with, there is too much micro-managing by the school board. The superintendent is very weak - his only intent is to keep his job for at least 2 more years so he can retire. There are some good administrators in the district but the top 2 administrators have no business running the district. Both have paid the school board, through contributions to their campaigns, for the positions they now hold. Neither the superintendent nor the deputy superintendent care about the district.
- You guys really need to look and look hard. This administration and board members are killing our district. Please!
- The school board members try to control the whole school district of Donna. They think they can make the decision for the employees.

- The school hosted a free meal for all migrant families at Christmas. This was in conjunction with the tourist center. It was at one of the cafeterias and political signs were in the cafeteria on school property. The people on the slate were the ones organizing and giving out the food.
- There is very little organization due to lack of stability. No one knows what they're supposed to do because they are new and have very little experience. Management = no management.
- There is no accountability starting with the superintendent. All of his compadres and family work under him. They tend to look the other way. The superintendent looks to the board majority for guidance. It is well known that the superintendent is getting ready to retire and he's counting the days. He doesn't care about the district. He can't manage the people under him. Everyone is just doing the minimal. There is no respect for the administrators because they have not earned their position, they were placed.
- The Board gives favoritism to their family members and friends as far as salary increases, their family/friends received $3,000-$5,000 increases. They don't do much, or know much and they're given these huge amounts and people like myself and other hardworking people receive a measly standard raise.
- The District has corruption in the darkness.
- The school district in my opinion is being micromanaged by the school board. The school board dictates to the superintendent who to hire and fire.
- Our taxes are very high and some programs don't have accountability.
- "It's not what you know, it's who you know. Help! Help! Help!"
- Board governance - not good leaders; superintendent - he is a puppet to the board members, he does what he is told to do. School management - money is not being used for the purpose for the students, it's for themselves. Decision-making - board makes the wrong decisions.
- The district discriminates and retaliates against employees and lets administrators do what they want.
- The way the DISD is managed very poorly by the superintendent and the school board. They manage the hiring and promote their own wives and relatives. They manage to budget money or trips for board conventions like "Louisiana (New Orleans)" and many others, and they get to take their wives plus spending money. Where is the money? They claim there isn't enough or don't get the proper pay to they deserve.
- Board has too much power in our district, when the board members have the power to hire and fire and don't look at qualifications - we are in deep trouble take that power from them.

- Superintendent (puppet) - he is controlled by the board members. The superintendent needs to play by the board members game or he will be paid-off and a new puppet will be hired.
- Site-based decision-making is a waste of time - no decision is taken into consideration.
- No site-based decision-making committee. Board governance - most board members make decisions - usually against employees. Other employees that know board members can appear to get what they want.
- You need to visit the Runn Elementary campus. Very important. I'm surprised the other families have not filed any discriminatory lawsuits.
- Are all or any new positions being backed up by a complete job posting/description and duties required for new position?
- Are all job positions up-to-date as far as job title and duties and requirements for job and on file with the personnel department?
- How much authority does a district athletic director have when it comes to renewing a teacher/coach's contract? Do the superintendent or board members have any say so in the matter or the campus principal?
- Questionable reassignments within the district due to politics and not with work performance.
- People employed by the district are afraid for their job. They feel threatened to be seen with people with the opposite party or doing anything against their order. People didn't even want to show up to this opportunity to voice their opinion.
- The organization and management of this school district is all politically motivated; most management are not qualified but are given positions according to who they support. People that are professional and care about the children and school are replaced by educated idiots. Their intensions are for self profit and could care less about school agendas, laws and/or regulations. Some special interest people are hired as counselors or other titles just to collect a paycheck for helping political people in the board. Our tax dollars and federal fund are misused and/or stolen with bad deals. Recently, some land was sold to the district for $11,000 more per acre than the property was worth. Where do these funds go? I always see school district vehicles with two or three school district employees driving around McAllen at all hours of the day. You can see them at restaurants for two hours or so. Complaining to the superintendent or school board member is useless. Teachers are abused by politically installed principals. During election years, school employees are threatened to be fired by higher management or school board members. Most of my family members are teachers in this district and always tell me of their fear of having their contracts cut at the end of each school year. How can teachers

that care about their students, focus and concentrate in this kind of atmosphere?

- The district is in the worse shape that I can remember. There is no leadership, starting at the top. There is a gross mismanagement of funds, that I don't know where they come from to do some of the things, for instance, how are they paying for pay raises that only certain people are getting? If anyone checks the people that are getting - these increases are related to top administration or board members. Taxes have gone up and yet there is no improvement in the education of the children. In the last board meeting, it was brought up that sex education had to be taught, and $140,000 were needed to hire three teachers. My thought is why not get the coaches that don't teach classes during the day to teach these classes instead of using $140,000 to pay for the teachers. There is talk of another bond issue, we already had two. The board of 10 years ago were able to build three schools with no increases in taxes or bonds. Why? You go to board meetings and only they know what they are talking about when it comes to budget reports, financial reports, etc... They should provide a booklet as they do for the board members. When audience members ask questions, they are quickly asked to sit down or they cannot provide answers or they ask you to come by the main office and pick up the information. Now the open forum has been moved to the end of the executive meeting, which is at the end of the meeting, by then everyone has gone home - Help!

- Decision making doesn't exist in the district. If the committee makes a recommendation they (superintendent, board, administration) go against it and do their own thing. Site-based out the window. Grievance you might as well forget it because if you are not related to administration or board your case is out the window.

- No site-based decision-making committee, board members make most decisions to benefit themselves and their family. People don't get promoted because of competence and certification they promote people who don't have degrees only because they know them or their friends. It's not "what you know, its who you know". I really don't think they act on what's best for our school and our children. It's what's best for them. It's upsetting the things that go on in our schools administration. I really wish something could get done about that.

- Mesa Directiva, cuando uno los busca pora juntarnos y hablar solore el progreso de las escuelas y las nesesidades de las que caresen. Aunos no les interesa, a otros sí van por cumplirpero diciendo no tengo tiempo, tengo mucho trabajo, hablencon mi señora.

- Superintendente - mas de las veces, se tartan los problemas con las secretaria pues sicupre dicen, and a fueras del pueblo esta en una junta importante. Manejo de la escuela - yo en lo personal no miro que vallan seguido a la escuela de mis hijos, pienso que la escuela esta muy oluidada.
- La paraticipacion de los padres en los comites, no son muy envueltos no hay motivasion para que los padres se interesen y participen en los comites en donde la voz del padre puedeser importante. Se se invitan a los juntas, a los centros de padres, pero solo los ponen a pintar y a recortar papeles, pero no los introducen ni los invuitan ni les dicen de estos comites y solo tienen 1 de cada escuela para complir. Cuando se invita a los de la mesa directiva a platicar con ellos, lo que se batalla para comunicarnos con ellos unos dicen que no les interesa nuestros comentarios, otros si nos escuchan paracomunicarnos con el Superintendente es muy dificil, solo ilegamos con la secretaria. Los Administratadores, van muy poco a recoler o revisar las escuelas, yo pienso que es una de las causas que no se supera la educaccion. Pues solo estan en juntas y juntas. En la colaboraciones entre negocios no los pades no sabemos nada.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

- We need more teachers who are here for the students not the paycheck. All schools should be neighborhood zoned for all students. Currently, regular education is neighborhood zoned. Special education students have to be bused to other campuses which are a distance from their home.
- Teachers and Administration need to focus on teaching the TEKS and not the TAAS. Get away from programs that are not working.
- The Gifted and Talented program only gets support from the current administration for the secondary campuses only.
- Our programs that get implemented are never fully carried out. The 504 program, LEP programs are not functional. They aren't being utilized the way they're suppose to. Too many children are not properly being tested or exited out of these programs.
- Donna district needs more programs for the students. Needs more curriculum. Needs more educational programs ex. After school for Elementary. Pay teachers to help the student on more bilingual programs. Put programs on the newspaper. Every time I see the newspaper all I see is Weslaco schools activities with their students. Show Gifted and talented in the newspaper. I like to see that about our kids and teachers.
- Although there is a curriculum per se, if an audit was made there is not consistency or implementation of curriculum yet we have a curriculum office that does nothing about that. As far as the

(TAAS) is concerned if the curriculum does not provide the necessary instruction the performance will not be passing. There is no measurement and accountability that is done to be able to give you any indication where the weaknesses are.

- Ability grouping in classrooms? Fair or unfair practice? Effective or non-effective theory? Should we discriminate on scholastic ability when grouping children? Some theorists say no. They contend children learn better when they are allowed to bring prior knowledge into the classroom. Also, grouping the upper and lower level learners together because children learn from each other, as well as from direct instruction. If the ability grouping is to continue, then the evaluation of teacher performance should not be based on test results alone.

- I'm concerned about how some 504 students at our High School have not been served the way they should. Our programs that are supposedly implemented to keep or assist students to be successful are never followed through to the fullest especially our 504 assistance program. Teachers are not being supplied with information to help students as they go from one grade to another. More emphasis needs to be given to these student programs so we can have a lower drop-out rate.

- The only programs available for those students that are not special education but need some assistance is Expressways to Reading (ETR). I really don't know what that does because I don't see an improvement in the students that go to that lab. It is run by a teacher assistant although the presentation I listened to said it should be run by a trained professional. We had HOSTS but the license was not repurchased.

- Curriculum - need for smaller class size.

- Gifted and Talented - feel that not enough is being done to continue more and better education for the students of the school district.

- TAAS - feel that TAAS is being pushed too much and all other educational instruction is not being met to further the education of the students.

- Special education - need more teachers and their campuses are too spread apart to take the students to their campuses.

- The curriculum in our school district has often concerned me - in particularly in the area of writing. Students aren't writing enough. My child is doing well, but mainly because I have kept on top of things, as far as this area is concerned. My concern is - what happens to all those children whom don't have that help at home? As a parent, I have watched my child's writing very closely since 2nd grade. I assure you that my child is doing well because he is blessed to have help at home. The areas of concern are: not enough writing, inappropriate delivery of writing instruction.

- Another area of concern is that the G/T program doesn't offer much to challenge our students with critical thinking schools.
- Teachers that are certified are few. The morale of the majority of the full staff districtwide is at its lowest level. Students are being forced to take the GED test at high school level and then being hired by the district as teachers aides or teacher substitute or as security. There is no discipline or respect for schoolteachers by the students because they know.
- While we have some wonderful teachers - they are not allowed to teach to their full potential - and those who do - pay the price. They are also limited with their materials. Having visited the high school one day and hearing the teacher say they did not have any chalk - is upsetting. The teacher said they get a box every six weeks, or else they has to buy their own and commented that this is for most of their supplies.
- The elementary administrators have been told about the unconstitutionality of grouping students by their ability. This individual hasn't done anything about it and instead demanded that the teachers and their students perform at a minimum passing scores in the district math exam. The abusive and unfair practice of putting teachers on campus growth plans because of low scores has really stressed teachers. Some are thinking about suing!
- There is an excellent administrator in elementary curriculum, however this person does not get enough support from the top to really make a difference. The secondary department is very weak to the point of non-existence. The schools (secondary) will not improve except the high school because of the principal. He is saddled with political appointees, but he is strong. The middle schools have weak principals with only one strong assistant principal. The elementary schools have some good principals. The strong principals, with the help of the elementary director will make a difference - the others will regress or maintain the status quo.
- I work and I see a lot of misuse of monies, there doesn't seem to be a control on the way the teachers just spend and spend but I guess that's what their supposed to do. I think that some one should put a control or a limit on what all employees not just teachers, managers and staff. No one sees where all these supplies go to. I have personally seen some of our school merchandise at peoples homes. At the campus level, there should be someone or somebody checking people and peoples bags when they leave and see how much merchandise is leaving the school district.
- Donna does not have enough state certified teachers.
- They do not follow these curriculum the way they're suppose to.
- Our good teachers are overworked. Most of our administrators are in the position based on politics (who you know).

- Check on integrity of TAAS results.
- Some of the programs are not carried out or implemented correctly. An example is the 504 some students go through one - 2 or 3 yrs of school and the teachers don't know or are not made aware that that particular student is a 504, and they don't modify. There should be more monitoring of teachers that they carry out or implement the right curriculum according to the individual student. Some programs like the Jostens is not being implemented the way it is suppose to in some campuses, teachers are not providing the instruction.
- High school needs better access for students at the library and they need to add non-speaking Spanish class for all of the students who were G/T and didn't have the training in Spanish since these are the students pulling in the money for the district in the TAAS scores.
- It is real simple - we need leadership and supervision for our kids, all they think is how much am I going to get paid.
- We need better teachers in the school district that are state certified and to follow the curriculum! We need to put our taxes where they really need to be!
- I'd like to know how much money is used for special education services? I think they need to focus on children with special needs. And have more programs for kids with ADHD and other reading disorders. They need to have more audits done. So we taxpayers know what the school system is up to. Because if it wasn't for children, there would not be schools. They also need to help kids with computers - at least lend them one to increase their learning abilities.
- Currently, at certain elementary campuses, students are grouped by ability. There is 1 teacher per grade level that has the lowest in ability students - many of them well below grade level due to social promotion. These teachers work in extremely stressful conditions and at least twice as hard as the others. It's not fair. It's unfair treatment, teachers and students.
- Concern for G/T of higher level classes. Donna does not have a quality method of instruction for G/T kids. It is mediocre. Something needs to be done about funding for a gifted student to keep them from changing schools and thus keeping track of them within our school district. Funds need to be provided for adequate instruction, needs, and better equipment. More programs need to be provided and have access to for quality instruction. The money needs to be supervised so that it goes to the needs of kids. Management of money and quality of instruction concerns us all. This needs to be corrected.
- Curriculum is something that our present board rarely addresses at meetings. Most teachers if you ask them what curriculum they are using; they will not know. This topic should be first and foremost

discussed and checked (evaluated). In this district, it's about accommodating their people (so to speak) in high paying position (political patronage running rampant). TAAS scores need to be raised but not at the expense of learning and a good education. Higher standards is not a battle cry. I feel like we're just skating and not taking our student education as serious as we should. In this community it's all about politics. I'm sure there are some excellent programs that are working (i.e. Bilingual). We have many bilingual students therefore monies do come in. Unfortunately, money does not assure success. Bilingual teachers are coached as to what to tell monitors or auditors. All in all, our educational service delivery is not delivering. Someone should sue for "malpractice" or delivering a bad product!

- The education service and delivery system of DISD is at best a farce. The system has been so politicized that little or no attention is paid to the needs of the students. Student performance - TAAS results reflect my above statements. The campus throughout DISD would rather refer students to special education in an effort to exempt slow learners or poor performers from the TAAS examinations. This practice is absolutely not acceptable, because the students affected by this practice will be forever stigmatized. The teachers if asked in anonymity will admit to these practices. The school board, superintendents and administrators are playing such a political game of hiring cronies that do the will of the politicians as opposed to the will of the parents that pay taxes to educate their children well.

- Curriculum, nesesita estar mas preparada academicamente pues su responsibilidad es muy grande y importante. Pues con gritos y mandates no. programas - nesesitan tener maestros y mandorle, a entrenamientos y que cada maestro tenga su T.A. para que les ayude con los niños y que ahiga apoyo y materials devidos pues hay mucha escases.

- Los dineros de los programas, nesesitan reportirlos sin miedo, para los niños para sus programas que les compren muchose materials, libros, computadoras y ocupuen personal que trabaje directo con el niño no tanta gente de limpieza y mantenimiento.

- Carese de to do, cuando ilueve, hay mucho lo do, hizieron unos baños, muy feos. Se nesesitan libros, maestros T.A. maestros Buenos, materials para los ninos los Administradores nesesitan estar mas preparados, en una competencia del UIL. A la del curriculum le faltaron trofeos, de los niños ganadores y se confundian, a unos se los davan a otros se los quitaban y los niños iloravon, para mi como padre, muy desorganizado.

Appendix A
PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- There is very little parental involvement for the district. If you are verbal they don't want you there. One campus has no parental involvement for parents who work. All parents meetings are at 9:00 a.m. If you work you are left out.
- The district needs to be more proactive with parental involvement. Often, we attend meetings and it is sad to see that not enough parents show up. The solution may be as simple as sending the notes with sufficient time - instead of last min. notice. Perhaps parent meetings need to be at different times. Parental involvement should also include, if they don't already, sessions on shifting some of the focus away from sports. I don't have anything against sports. However, I have a big problem with not seeing enough parents out on open house night in comparison to the Friday night football games. It is the district's responsibility to get the parents out to the schools. Of course, when parents really care, they are out in the schools on their own.
- Parental involvement use to be very important in this district, but has not been maintained the way it should have been. Some centers have one or two parents per week and do not make the effort to recruit more parents or change programs that are not working.
- I feel more of an effort should be made on behalf of the district to get the parents involved.
- The previous coordinator of the parental involvement did away with the high school position of (parent educator) because parents did not participate and he said the emphasis need be in the lower grades. Well it was opened again after the first semester for a particular person.
- Community relations - the current school board is creating and intimidating the relationship between the community and the school. The school district, aside from the City, is the biggest employer of members of the community. At this point, if members of the community fail to support the majority political faction, and they are employed by the school district, that individual is subject to harassment and possible reassignment and/or termination. Evidence exists to substantiate this statement.
- Internal/External communications - The children are provided with communication relative to school functions and/or activities. More emphasis should be placed on involving more parents. I have attended only three meetings during my children's' school attendance. Meetings should be made more "parent-friendly".

More communication and incentives for attendance. Bottom line: less boring!

- Community involvement is very poor. Business school partnership almost non-existent.
- Our schools need to get involved with our community. Get more communication with the people, the parents, and students. Schools, activities should get more involved with the City. For example, fliers should be all over the city about ours schools activities and also in the newspaper.
- Limited no money available to be successful. Parental involvement rooms have been closed due to funding.
- I found it very hard that people in Donna do not become involved with their schools. They do become involved in raising money for supplies (but why should they). I feel that if our district can dish out $25,000 a month for an attorney, it can provide supplies for the students.
- The community gets very little information as it relates to the school. If a person does not attend a board meeting...no information is printed in the newspaper regarding the meeting. Since the "New Board" came in 2001, they left us out completely and formed a new committee composed of board members and administrators. I have not heard any information regarding the school on the radio or television. The community as a whole is left out unless someone gets a copy of the info and calls others in the community. When our former superintendent was at DISD he was downsizing the number of employees to save money.
- The school district has made an effort to have parental involvement but a great majority of those that participate have done so because it allows for formation of a political base inside the school district umbrella. As far as the communication is concerned with the community, it is through a newspaper that is not widely distributed in the district. As an example this review, the superintendent claims that they were aware of the performance review in February, yet I would suspect that 90 percent of your taxpayers and parents were not aware until the announcement was made this week on some radio station and the local newspaper with wide readership.
- Our administration is encouraging the schools to work hand in hand with the city (which is good).
- Rarely hear about community involvement - we do have parental involvement in the school.
- As a member of this community, I rarely hear about community activities - It would be unfair to rate this activity. As I have never participated or heard about any of these areas.
- Average at Runn.

- Community involvement is minimal. Unless you are someone important, your suggestions or concerns will not be addressed.
- Community involvement is advertised but not practiced. The school board creates committees such as building committees and the school board has yet to take the recommendations of such committees. Example - the school board purchased a piece of property for $402,000 in an area that has no infrastructure for water or sewer, has no paved roads surrounding the property and the school board allowed a heavy contributor of funds to their campaign to broker the land purchase deal for a profit of $175,000. The rumor is that five school board members and council members were given a cut of $15,000 a piece. As a result of this illegal activity, the benefactors or four members of the council and five members of the seven school board members practice political patronage for those that they like and political oppression for those that they do not like. The attendance at this audit reflects what I am saying. People are either afraid to come and participate or they are rewarded to not come.
- Do the math. If parent volunteers were given free meals for volunteering, I think we'd have many more volunteers. They should be used in two capacities. First, they should assist the teacher in the academic aspect, then they should concern themselves with decorating the halls and other less academic concerns. Either way, the effort should be made to provide free lunch for every parent volunteer. It beats paying a regular minimum wage.

PERSONNEL

- Nepotism is epidemic.
- Incompetent administration.
- Teachers are underpaid. As to state 52 percent - and as per district 42 percent. These are monies for students supplies, where is this money being spent? Salaries - not teachers, not employees - but administrator salaries - those that voted on the right party.
- Teacher pay increases to keep and attract quality certified teachers.
- Recruitment - no effort is made to recruit qualified individuals either at the professional or clerical level.
- Hiring practices - opportunities abound for those that support the political machine.
- Salary and staffing - if you support the majority on the board - you get good raises others receive minimal amounts.
- Staff development - on-site professional/staff development is minimal - off-site needs improvement.
- Here in Donna, to get a job it's not what you know, its what board member you are related to or how many votes your family can

bring to incoming board members. If you have a small family, you are out of luck even if you are the best qualified candidate.

- Students are not supervised properly. Staff gathers in one place to chat while students are doing what ever. Students are left on a campus with no administrative supervision. It is after 5:00 pm and students still on campus with no supervision. One principal on a campus is never around, and does not have an open door policy - the paraprofessionals run the campus.

- Personnel hiring is not done correctly. It's not what you know but who know. Pay is very low for transportation, maintenance and custodial personnel but for the administration raises are very hefty and no one complain about giving them the raises but for the lower personnel you have to fight tooth and nail.

- School board members have their wives or cousins working and they give them a couple of thousand dollar raises, I can't even get a 1 dollar raise. This district needs some improvement badly some body needs to come in from the government and put an end to this corruption, in Donna ISD.

- The recruitment hiring practices and salaries in Donna, Texas are based on who you voted for in the board elections held in May. Relatives, friends and supporters of the Board members end up getting good salaries and positions for their help. The working people who really work are left out in the could. It is a power struggle between the board and no matter how hard people work, it is not appreciated or recognized. We lost a good and fair superintendent just because he would not be their puppet. I feel it is wrong and not very professional on the board's behalf being that we work for a good school, yet they come in and destroy the morale and good things that were already in place by a superintendent who gave 35 years of his life and dedication to these improvements.

- In Donna, hiring is very simple - it's who you know, what political party you're with or one of "Donna's" family members. They post job openings as a cover up - waste of paper. They know exactly who will be hired, a wife of or son/daughter of a particular board member or administrator.

- Promotions or raises are given to board members wives or relatives and not the same percentages as other employees. I would like to know where they get the money for these persons. Why are employees that have been with the district for 20 plus years not getting what they deserve, they are supposedly maxed out? How can they justify this? I would like an answer!

- Donna needs to look very closely at who they hire because Donna hires any body. Reasons include relatives, friends or because they like them, not because of their education. Instead, they should hire

people, well prepared and educated. Pay good salary to the teachers and staff and treat them with respect.

- I have concerns as to manner in which positions are filled. The policy is in place as to the way things should be done and they are correct and fair according to the law, if they were followed. The hiring should be done and recommended by the superintendent, which he gives the final order to hire the person. I have been told by the superintendent in several instances that the board does the hiring and not him. I know that in this district that is true. Unfortunately, the ones they hire are their family members and the individuals which voted for them and which can continue to get additional votes. This present board has gone a bit further to compensate the individuals which helped them during the election period. They file grievances against the school for whatever reason and the board just settles. We have had at least four cases of that sort. At least $100,000 plus.
- Salaries - they have hired special agents to provide the board with special reports and comparison with other local districts of our size. Not one single thing has happened except them putting the mid point scale to practice. Again it comes to the point, the ones that get the greater raises are the board members, relatives and their helpers, not who knows and does the most for the district and it students.
- Because of all the settlements the district has been paying out for different things, it is no wonder the funds which should go to pay for students supplies and teaching equipment, etc. is 46 percent of the state levels.
- In Donna, hiring is very simple - it's who you know, what political party you're with or what your last name is! Posting of openings is a waste of paper, by the time they post an opening the position has already been promised or given to someone of their political party.
- Promotions or raises are given to board members wives by the thousands not by percents like the rest of the auxiliary personnel.
- Paraprofessionals that have committed their lives to working in our district are not paid for their years of experience but are punished because supposedly they have maxed out and new political favored employees are earning more than they are.
- Hiring practices, what hiring practices? If you are not related to a board member, superintendent or personnel officer you can forget about getting hired. If you have the money to pay off people you have a very good chance of getting hired. In Donna, money talks big time. You can become a principal in three years, a superintendent's wife became curriculum specialist. Staff that has worked for 26 years get penalized instead of compensated. Our levels of pay are so unequal - a clerk working with an administrator should not get paid less than level 4, we have too

many loyal staff members that are underpaid. Too many people getting paid off on lawsuits. There are more practices that are unethical. I am more of a person that likes to talk out the situation. I really wish that TEA would take over this district. Board members and administrators have no shame at all as to what they are doing. It's get what you want while you are on top. Forget the kids, teacher and support staff. Campuses have been cut back so much in their budgets, I feel it is used to pay off all these lawsuits.

- Recruitment - although personnel recruitment is handled by administrative personnel, the actual hiring process is totally diminished by hiring political supporters and/or family members. Actual applicants don't realize that the recruitment is only for use to "cover all bases" and looking good on paper.
- Hiring process - as stated above, the school district is the only game in town and political supporters and/or family members receive top honors regardless of qualifications. As soon as new board members are voted in, there are countless "reassignment for the betterment of the district". When will it all stop?
- Salary and staffing - an individual who served the district for over 30 yrs was finally appointed superintendent. However, he was terminated because he refused to hire political supporters for the new board majority. His salary was at $90-95k yearly; the political superintendent who took his place is receiving a salary of $112k. It seems like the more incompetent the individual is, the higher the salary, the higher the promotion.
- Structures - not all administrators are promoted in accordance with qualifications and job performances. It all depends on who you know and whether or not you supported the board majority.
- As a taxpayer, I have the following concerns that should be reviewed either by your department or that the proper departments be noticed of the following on goings. Hiring practices: people are being hired not based on their qualifications but as political favors. Salary and staffing - once again if staff is related in any way or fashion to school board members and or to their relatives they are hired at a very high rate of income. Donna has more teachers assistants than McAllen or PSJA which are a much bigger school districts. Also Donna is overstaffed in the custodial department. Rather than use funds for our children, these monies are being used for staffing and our children are being short changed.
- Our present personnel director is just there as a puppet to serve the board president requests.
- School board interferes in hiring practices. People that want a position or promotion go to them.
- Too many Chiefs, not enough Indians and too many overpaid administrators due to political pay back favors. It all starts at the superintendent and trickles down to supervisors of maintenance or

custodial. Five years ago Maintenance had only 34 employees and 14 campuses and the job got done. Today, there are 120 maintenance employees and 17 campuses and nothing gets done. The Maintenance supervisor makes over $40,000 yearly and the Transportation supervisor makes over $35,000 yearly.

- Staff development needs to be more current and well planned. For several years the district scheduled in-services at the beginning of school and throughout. I get to work in my room because the plan has been: no plan no presenter, so we are sent to work in our room. I can always use the time but I need more relevant in-services. Then I am expected to come to school for in-services on Saturdays. If I don't then it's my fault I didn't get the in-service. At my campus, several teacher assistants have so much influence with the superintendent and school board that they can intimidate the principal. Teacher Aide decides who and when she wants to work with. TA's have been reprimanded but then the principal also gets reprimanded for getting after them.

- Donna ISD does not have a pay system in place. Custodians in many cases earn more than skilled employees. Employees with more years of experience earn less than a new hired employee.

- My concerns are with the school board personnel. I believe they are the ones who are running our schools here in Donna. They say and have proven that these people have power to hire new personnel. Even if there are no openings, they make sure that these people get hired and open slots to put them in. I'm talking about school board relatives and friends. We are here for the children not for our relatives and close friends. This has been the problem here in Donna for sometime. The school board members have not worked in school to make any kind of decision. They also want to raise our taxes so that they can pocket more money for their families. There are certain people who have been with the district for more than 25 years and their pay has not increased because they say there is no money: our school board members create new positions for their relatives and better pay even if there are no funds. There are also people suing left to right and get their money in return plus a better position. One board member has been dealing and wheeling with Williams Construction behind doors. Why? I really hope the state looks into our situation. We are concern for our children who are in school. We need to better our schools. The state needs to check these people plus our school personnel. There are too many things that are not right and should be corrected by someone who does not have anything to do with our faculty members.

- You'll find that in this district, you will have several family members working at the same school. Instead of encouraging students, I feel that the district hires them and keeps them. There

are no incentives for these prior students to advance. I'm just surprised that the school does not encourage them to go forward. You will also find that the political powers that be are the same ones who's family members have been hired - and have gotten raises.

- After the former superintendent was suspended we, the community, not all of them, signed petitions and sent them to TEA...stating that we needed help. So far nothing has been done, as I know of to rectify this situation. In my opinion, the new board members tell the superintendent (present) what to do. I thought the board was to listen to the recommendations of the superintendent and approve or disapprove of the item mentioned on the agenda. There have been raises (monetary) given to administrators, their families and friends. In my opinion and what I see, the superintendent is just a figure head with no authority, because the school board members runs the school. I have witnessed meetings of board members meeting at one of the board members house during school time, along with some of the other personnel who should have been on their jobs instead of at the meetings.
- There's hiring of personnel that are sent by school board members and educated personnel cannot deny hiring them for fear of retaliation - people that are unqualified do as they please, leave work when they please and feel proud to do so because nothing can be done about it.
- Supervisor at warehouse is running a personnel office at warehouse. Your qualifications have nothing to do with your job. It's not what you know. My main concern here is trying to keep my job. But we do need some job descriptions for some of the people or give them some type of quotes they can meet to where you can see the progress and work that is being done by these individuals. Maintenance and warehouse have men just sitting in cars and trucks on school areas doing nothing and getting paid for being on the clock. The more they do for the board members the more money they get paid. This is so unfair to the rest of our men that work at our warehouse but all them and me are so afraid to lose their jobs they just never say anything.
- The school board members are the ones that hire and fire the employees of the school district of Donna, I think they are wrong.
- Recruitment: They (board) hire who they want.
- Hiring Practices: They (board) follow no guidelines. Money is no object to them. For their buddies there is always money!
- Salary and Staffing: Board creates positions that were never there. And put their staff they want.
- The bottom line - board members are not gods!
- There is a lack of certified teachers and no one wants to come to Donna. Our experienced teachers are leaving due to the lack of

management, professionalism and advancement. It is clear to them that the comparism is strong in Donna. The lack of modern equipment, lack of technology and training for the staff. Donna is behind the times. We are not hiring professional, competent, knowledgeable people. We are recommending and hiring who we knock and who will look the other way.

- All job announcements are not posted. Secretarial jobs are sometimes called "transfers". Transfers are ok if its in the same division but if its in a new pay grade surely you want the most experienced and best qualified person. Not in Donna! We have too many administrators, assistants, too many support staff for a district of our size. Our tax dollars are not being well spent. Our tax dollars are rewards for positions promised and campaign work. Morale for the true hard working employees of Donna is very low! In closing, the school board, school attorney and top administrators have lost total focus. They have hired people who have been fired or reassigned for good reason. We lost a good superintendent because he would not play their game. Now that's going to cost the taxpayers.
- The district needs to stop nepotism.
- The district needs Equal employment opportunity policy DAA enforced.
- Favoritism needs to vanish from the district.
- Grievances need to be taken care of at the lowest possible level.
- Hiring practices - you will get hired if you are related to an administrator or board member (sitting or running). Political promises.
- Salary - so far this year, the ones getting pay increases have been political supporters and/or board member wives.
- Staffing - hiring people not for what they know but who they know. Instead of promoting somebody who knows how to do the job that is being advertised, they hire somebody with no experience and they are being paid very high salary! Common Practice! Political Paybacks!!
- The district is having administrative personnel and counselors to substitute for teachers when they are pulled out for training. This takes them out of their regular duties to do someone else's job, instead of paying substitute teachers. My understanding is that they have created new positions to fulfill political promises. Some counselors have been taken away from campuses because of lack of population even if the work load is now doubled. This doesn't seem to be right. I don't think other districts do this.
- District should hire personnel that is certified in their field of teaching. District should increase salary for certified personnel. At the present time, Donna has one of the lowest salaries in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas.

- The district hires people without degrees earning $30,000 a year. These people hold positions that do hardly anything and get more money than clerks or secretaries that do much more work and are over worked and been here for years. This doesn't seem to be fair.
- There seems to be a disproportionate amount of under qualified administrators. This could constitute a discriminatory hiring practice. Look into the history of employment in the past and current administrators.
- The school district is top heavy with non-certified administrators who are being paid too much money.
- Overall the personnel is great.
- People with some education or degrees, but different salaries.
- A lot of our money that the school pays employees is just being wasted. People just clock in and just loaf around.
- Lots of politics - look at hiring process. Look at raises. 13 campuses/25 departments.
- The communication of administrators to employees need to be better informed.
- The district doesn't have seniority only when it is to their advantage.
- The district doesn't have a pay scale they just pay employees how they want.
- The district have taken days of state and local sick leave for 12 years or more at first they would give us 2 1/2 days equal to 10 hours total; for the past 2 years they have given us 5 days sick leave 2 1/2 state and 2 1/2 local, total 35 hours.
- The district needs a pay scale - they use a level system I, II, III, IV and V system but I think not even the district understands it.
- The bus drivers need a job description.
- There are teacher assistants who have been in the district for 15-20-30 years, and don't get a pay raise some years because according to administration we have maxed out, and the joke of it all is that we don't even make half of what the new personnel coming in do with connections. In this school district you get punished for devoting your experience. Unless you are related to a board member or and administrator or a big political backer. Also, some of us teacher assistants have many college hours and are not rewarded for it, people who have not even gone to college or tried to attend college have higher pay than ones who have experience plus much college hours. They say there is no money how can they justify the raises they give themselves and their people of preference. Some of them (favorites) who have been here only one year or two get more than what a first time teacher with a degree gets. Now the person in personnel doesn't do the hiring, the board members have to approve the hiring, so no one gets hired, unless the board members approve it, so no one gets hired by their

education or qualifications. But, by the "compadre" system. Also, when they hire foreign teachers, make sure they can speak fluent English especially if they are to teach English or Math. If students can't understand them in spelling test, how can they master the TAAS. Some teachers are also hired and there is no checking on their instructional strategies, not by the principal, but on word of mouth from where the schools he/she has worked at, for there are schools where they don't want them back because of poor quality teachers. But Donna, seems to get all of the rejects of other schools. Because board members don't really care about quality teaching for the children of their community, all they want is to capitalize from the system by hiring their own people at outrageous salaries who have not very good working ethics.

- Recruitment, hiring practices and salary are simple if you have the right name or right family connection, you get a raise whether you do your job or not. Personnel that do their job or have tried to move up do not have a chance. When clerks start at a higher salary then a new teacher, there is something wrong. These are clerks that have the right name and right family connection only, because other than that, have been clerks for many years get only a 0.5 percent raise a year. We are told as employees that there is no money for raise but certain personnel get raises at all times of the year.
- Recruitment needs improvement. In order to do this, Donna should leave politics out and increase the availability of having access to getting new teachers.
- Hiring practices should be enforced and not abused. Nepotism should not be allowed and must be weeded out. The need to hire teachers that are going to work hard in their perspective jobs and give students their undivided attention. Hiring just because you are a friend of a board member is not a fair practice.
- Salary and staffing of personnel should be equal and subjective. The money used for this requires careful observation and qualified recipients. Many staff members are given high salaries to do nothing. Quality and devotion to the district should come first.
- Staff development - For teachers, administrators should reflect better quality of instruction. The need for quality curriculums and teacher improvements should be first. The need to keep administrators on task in keeping them updated and keep teachers motivated. Require G/T training to provide better quality instruction for those considered gifted. New programs and techniques have come up and need to be improved.
- Not able to get good teachers because of pay - other areas of employment ex: medical, social workers, are not paid according to pay outside of schools. Stipends are not given and other districts do

provide stipends. This district hires other school districts' rejects and especially in Special Education.

- Hiring practices with recent reassignments. Salary for the teachers should be more, however, it is administration getting the higher incomes with higher pay raises in the past two years.
- The district employs approximately 2,000 employees. The district is critically over staffed in all departments from top-down with the exception of teachers. Board members' wives have been given raises for no particular reason. The positions these wives hold are questionable.
- We have poor recruitment. We are not able to keep good employees because we don't have competitive salaries. They need to look around at what other districts pay scales are and compete. They also don't know much about other job titles, other school employees, not only teachers. Our employees are not encouraged to stay because there is always better offers.
- Hiring is really bad. If you don't qualify for that position, don't worry, they will hire you if you are related to administrators or board members. The quality person goes on to another district. The pay scale is also really bad it favors Administrators and newly hired with no experience. Staff development only for a few. The Personnel director is inexperienced. The school needs to have some kind of incentives to attract quality teachers. We have a big turnover of teachers every year and a lot of subs in the classroom. A lot of these concerns have been brought up at the budget hearing - the Board doesn't listen. Some of us have asked to serve on some committees but again if you hold interest of the students and staff in mind, you will not serve on health insurance committee, site based, parental involvement etc.
- Bonos Escolares - pienso que deue de haber mos bonos pora maestros, como compensasion o motivasion para seguir trabajando con el niño con ganas y gusto.
- Reclutamiento - ya no contratoar tanto mantenimiento ni limpieza ni boseros se nesesita un buen estructuramjento de salaries pues pienso que hay mucha Fuga de dinero, en salaries y poco en inversion directa pora los niños como Buenos maestros, T.A., materials libros, etc., etc.

Appendix A
PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

- We have two middle schools that are filled to capacity; one is only 1 1/2 years old - bad planning? I think so. Now they want to build another middle school about two miles away from this school - why should the taxpayers be burdened again? If someone had done their math correctly the first time!
- The custodial and maintenance department need to rewarded for the hard work that they do for our district but instead they are belittled and threatened to be replaced if they complain. Vehicles need to be bought for our maintenance department, they are driving trucks that have to be cable jumped, ridiculous.
- Donna needs more schools. Most of Donna schools are old and small. The schools don't have room for their staff or the teachers. Most of Donna school have portables. We need big schools to keep our children safe. We need another high school, more elementaries.
- Custodial staff still not complete at my school. They keep sending subs. Our school has not been cleaned as it should. Now that a head custodian has finally been placed, cleaning is better, but not staffed completely. This has been going in for two years. Previous head custodian was not removed even after numerous complaints that he would not make sure the school was clean and that he couldn't be found when needed. Was told the board president thought he carried too many votes to lose.
- Custodial personnel - need to know answers: Is there a limit to how many rooms should one person clean per day? Should a male custodian clean female children restrooms or female restrooms? How long should personnel wait to receive paperwork requested as open meeting act? (under public notice)? After hiring how long should person wait or work before becoming a full time employee? Just exactly how long before benefits become a benefit for employee - benefits such as: insurance, health insurance, dental insurance, death insurance, retiring planning.
- We have buildings that have ceiling tiles falling, the floor is so unlevel that when you get up from your chair you hold on to it so you can sit down again. It rolls out from under you. We have 2 x 4 studs under the desks to get them level to keep materials from falling off. It has been reported but nothing has been done about it. We reported our backs were hurting from the floor but they still did nothing.
- New facilities - two middle schools filled to capacity; one new facility not very well planned - the architects they contracted did

not implement ventilation system in the buildings, restrooms, etc. When contractor asked, questioned, they said as is. The new buildings (schools) being built outside of city limits have to go with septic tanks. This opens up to a whole mess of trouble. The third middle school that will be built will be approximately two minutes away from the other middle school that is 1 1/2 years old. Not very well planned. They did not ask teachers, custodians, nurses for input. They have continued to hire the same architect-contractor, why I ask you? Relatives of members of school board.

- Need someone to oversee the spending of Bond money. Land deals are being done that inflate the price of land from $3,000 an acre to $11,000 an acre in a 5 day period before selling it to the school district.
- We have refurbished old schools, only to tear them down in a couple of years. I see no sense in this. Why are employees riding around in vehicles with a jug of water because they'll need it when the vehicle overheats? And the superintendent wants a new "suburban", and he'll probably get it. Some custodians at one campus are not doing a good job. They get upset and ask the teachers to do the cleaning.
- Electricity goes out and the water quality is bad!
- The facilities are overcrowded with teacher's aides, custodians, and security guards that basically are there to receive a paycheck in return for votes. This is the kind of political patronage that is being practiced district wide. There are other facilities that are not being utilized at all because the personnel that is housed at the alternative center are never at work. They are always at coffee in the restaurants, or riding around on the streets doing their politics. The school board and administration knows this but they look the other way. Some personnel are overworked and others don't work at all for political reasons.
- After school you can see custodian's cars and trucks parked in reverse and loading merchandise. Where's it going after 6 o'clock in the evening?
- Good.
- Both of the middle schools in our district are full to their capacity and one is only 1 1/2 years old and we outgrew it before we moved in. The temperature and ventilation system at that school has never been right. It is always too cold or too hot in that new middle school. They have bought new land (at board's request) that will put another middle school only about a mile away from the new one.
- District does not plan ahead for buildings. Special Education classrooms are not planned ahead - there are no places to changes diapers on handicapped students. They do not plan for older students and privacy.

- There are policies governing the use of facilities but the policies are suspended if you are w/ the "right" group. We have excellent facilities, but also one of the largest maintenance departments as compared with districts of comparable size. The maintenance of facilities could be better, however, there is no direction in that department.
- We are way overstaffed in the area of maint/cust/café but board promises you a job in any of these areas if you vote or donate money to their campaigns.
- Where have you seen eight maintenance people go to cut one branch when it only takes 2 people. The rest just stand and watch.
- Not planning ahead when making decisions to build new schools. Our new schools are over crowded and our zoning is all wrong 2° to no planning.
- Planta fisica - cuando llueue es un mojadero on los cuartos y charcos por to dos la dos no les interesa darle prisa en la construccion de los nuevos cuartos y los niños sufren mucho ell calor y el frio y tambien cuando queman la caña. El servicio de mantenimiento, cuan do los estan nesesitando que ven gan a resporar algo, no vienenpronto y les dicen o les pregontan y no saben nada. URGE TERMINAR LA CONSTRUCCION Runn por favor.
- Planta Fisica - En la escuela que uan mis híjos es Runn esta nesesitade de to do, avcles se va la luz por problema y los niños sufren calor y frio esta muy nesesitade de mantenimiento. En los cuartos nuevos instalaron las computadoras mal y no preden usarlas aucces nesesitan los maestros colocor materials eula pared y no pueden, pues no quieren que maltraten la pintura, menos poner un clavo.

ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- Our health insurance changes just as the board members do. It seems that we change to what ever company that will benefit the board member more. It doesn't matter that the staff have to pay more for less coverage. An insurance committee was formed but meetings are held when auxiliary committee members are unable to attend. Bond money seems to disappear faster than the schools are built therefore we have to cut back on the number or size of the schools.
- Health insurance is not in the best interest of the employees, it is based on what company offers them a better payback. Cash and investments practices - are not wisely done they are based by how much profit can be made. Bond issuance - we passed a bond about 4 years ago and they still have not completed the schools or buildings they said they were going to build or improve.

- Need for better health insurance for teachers - attract and retain certified personnel.
- Our health insurance is based on what company offers them pay back - not our best interest. Our cash and investments practices - are not adequate. They base it on how much profit they'll get - and by they I mean school board members or relatives. Bond issuance are not utilized properly, it is only when they are about to expire that they use them.
- Donna District should invest more money in Teachers, and schools workers, custodians. They should get good compensation and good insurance. Because of that, we are losing our good teachers. They get better pay and good insurance than Donna so they leave. That concerns me a lot cause my kids or our kids need good teachers. I'm a mom.
- The first alarm keeps going off as I am writing this - and security has not responded.
- We are lacking and failing in this area. Again, if the admin staff doesn't care why should the directors. There is no accountability.
- Bond issuance - rooms at Runn have been made smaller than the other new rooms and supposedly the landscaping is also going to be cut short.
- Health insurance is a nightmare! Expensive and is very hard to process claims.
- Good.
- Health insurance seems to be at the top of importance in this district. Many times when we hear about investment and interest of the school, you hear that school board is rewarded for choosing their friends. The interest of our children and our personnel are not always at the top of their list.
- Need quality health insurance and keep someone for a long time. Changing every year does not work. Need for workman's compensation to improve. Need to keep insurance from changing carriers every year and charging outrageous prices.
- Do not get info on fund raising/or sports events. I do understand the monies from sports is large. Health insurance needs to be improved - poor coverage - we hear about other school districts providing better coverage for their employees. I cannot understand why Donna cannot. I had to drop dental coverage because of price. Workers' comp. worked ok for me when I needed it. Bond issues make our taxes go up.
- Health insurance very expensive with poor coverage. Having a medically fragile child the insurance charged me out of network coverage when there was nowhere in the Valley where he could have these procedures done. All bonds - make our school taxes higher and higher. No comment on worker's comp. Not familiar with the use of fundraiser money and sports event money, but I

would hope it goes back into the sport or for student trips. TRS - is minimal and teachers who only have TRS retire under poverty level.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- They need to get competent staff who can get the job done. We currently have staff who can't even pay invoices properly. Accounting department is doing less work for more pay and more staff. Grant budgets are not done in a timely manner by the accounting department.
- There is never any money when it comes to our children but there is always money to create new positions, there is always money to give raises to certain people. What about our children?!!
- Budgeting - what's that? In our district much emphasis is placed on athletics and not enough on education. A remodeled stadium took priority over providing adequate textbooks, training for teachers to better our children. Our school taxes are being used to settle grievances filed by their campaign supporters. Something is definitely wrong. It is very sad when a board member does not know if our district is in the red or not - very poor financial reporting is being done by our Business and Finance director.
- My taxes. Land purchase shady business.
- Donna's budget needs to be spent on schools and educations, not on them. They should have a meeting on how the money is being used. I pay my taxes every year. The taxes go "up" but not the education. It seems that the money goes somewhere?!! Who knows because I don't see the change. They should tell us that the taxes are up because of better pay for teachers, used on new programs, or for more staff for the school, not the board. I am a mom.
- Concern when school taxes are used to settle financial lawsuits. When positions as secretary or such are created to bring in a person with no experience/degree and are paid ridiculously and shameful salaries. Lately this has been a big problem and is being done too often within the last couple of years. These persons who've been put in those positions are related or are paybacks to school board members who have been elected. Also as favor to administration such as our superintendent - and our higher up administrators. Within the last three years, persons who have been put in are earning more than the employees who've been in for 15+ years. Big problem.
- This school district definitely needs an internal auditor. A lot of the cash activity funds get lost and no one knows what happened. We definitely need some changes - district wide. Help us please.
- I don't even want to start on this. With two bond issues - 27 million + 29 million - and the superintendent states on 3/25/02 - "That

money is in short supply." Could this be due to the $219,000.00 paid to the attorney between June 14 and December 31, 2001. Or is it the $112,000 the superintendent gets. I'm still questioning what his benefits are in regards to amounts. I know he gets mileage and some other stuff. I just have not received that information. At just about every board meeting, they have an item on additional expenses to the current project. This has really been adding up. Oh yea - our contractor is also a campaign donor to some of the board members.

- School taxes are not just very high, but in some instances I feel we are doubly taxed (ie: we pass bond issues and yet it never is sufficient). We vote for x amount of schools to be built and then we find out there's money only for one less school than voted on. It's either bad management or lack of foresight or both. There is never enough money for teachers' needs but there is always money for our attorney regarding litigations and I mean money that is paid to our attorney for talking to school board members (mind you, only those in the majority). Also, there is always tons of money for administrators that are in favor with them. Accountability is foreign to this administration. They have many and I mean many employees scared to death come election time. This community is so much dependent on school district jobs because there aren't any elsewhere. They (management/financial) keep saying that programs make up budgets. Yet there are many programs that are not working. Question always is "How do we know if its working?" I say bottom line should be "TAAS" scores and our scores are nothing to write home about.

- We, as a community, pay more school taxes than the other schools in the valley. I don't feel our monies are spent wisely because the board and superintendent have hired too many people and some of the people do not do any work. These people, especially the secretaries, are on the telephone visiting with relatives, calling the radio stations requesting songs or trying to win a prize. If they (the board and superintendent or administrators) would down-size the personnel in the district, then these secretaries would be busy and would not have time to visit. We have a lot of teacher aides who do very little and some school personnel should have been "let go" because of their performances; however, they are still in the school because of who they know, they are a relative of a board member, or a Compadre. In my opinion there are our tax dollars being wasted. I know for a fact that grades have been changed on student transcripts in order for the student(s) to pass a grade or graduate. Since I have retired, I do not know if this practice is still going on. We have too many directors and need to downsize and too many Superintendents. We have more administrators than necessary. In fact, it was stated in the San Antonio Express that there were five

schools in the Rio Grande Valley that were administrative heavy and Donna ISD was one of the schools mentioned. We need help from the TEA and you all to straighten the school (administrators, school board members) out. In my opinion, the board members are not concerned about the children of the district.

- This department has also ballooned in size. The district just purchased property for a new school. The person who sold the property to the school bought it for $6,000 an acre and sold it to the district for $11,500 an acre. Who's managing the finances? The individual who sold the property to the district had inside information as to what property was being looked at. The rumor is that each of the board members each got money for this deal. Financial management? You all check in to it. Look at who is getting pay increases and for what.

- Ours monies are not going too far due to the policy of hiring everyone in Donna for a vote. Mileage and trips are given to everyone. Three people going to the same conference, there should be one car, one mileage check. If they want to take their own, then you foot the bill. This is not a vacation, they forget that they are on school business. Our policies need to enforced, but you need a strong leader for that. Awarding too many settlements to campaign workers - compadres.

- In the school budgeting, the budget is always accommodating for themselves, they get the raises, they get the trips. Money is always there to pay high raises for coaches and getting the best equipment for football. But we are always low on funds for supplies for instruction. The board has money in the budget for what benefits them. But money runs out when the schools are being built or when there is a need for equipment for students, extra seats for students to sit on during lunch. Otherwise they mingle around in groups outside after eating.

- The school district has spent too much money on frills and unneeded administrators.

- It seems that the problem is not financial management it is how much money am I going to make! The board members voted on having a Deputy superintendent for the school district all it was a job title and for the taxpayer was to pay more money!

- Internal controls. Inventories - over a quarter of million in merchandise. Teachers have no limit on what they spend.

- Budgeting -the main office always says there is no money, yet there is money for raises for favorites. School taxes - we are overtaxed yet there is not enough money to built the schools that were promised. They need another Bond Issue for more money to build the schools that weren't done. I think it is more money for their (Board) pockets!

- Financial reporting - the state needs to check into this. They don't like to give information.
- Budgeting is not used at times when jobs are created for board members' wives and when their starting salary is higher than starting teachers. There is something wrong with that. The jobs I'm talking about are clerks and secretary positions. Taxes at our district are at a high, but it seems that our district never has the money for new schools, materials, books or computers. But they can always find the money to create new jobs for board members' wives and family friends.
- The school budget is not easily accessible to the public. We don't know where the money is going.
- Budgeting has not been developed with educating as the priority. Eleven or twelve years ago we prided ourselves as having one of the lowest tax rates with 12 million dollars in reserve. However, today we have an unexplainable tax rate and little or no reserves. The business office, I believe, is operating well but there are demands made by the superintendent and board members that are not too sound.
- Bond - Budgeting at the new buildings is questionable. More money needs to go directly for supplies for the teachers sooner. The district takes too long for supplies to come in because the monies are not available.
- We have concerns on how the district is spending all its funds. Is the accounting being posted correctly? Two years ago at a board members meeting, our members did not know if we had a negative or positive fund balance.
- Also, please review the annual audits performed by the district and CPA. I believe we have the same CPA company for the past several years.
- Should all of our Board members go to some type of training to help them review what they can and can not approve?
- The school district of Donna has a lot of grants. But, the school board members try to control the money. I believe that the students need a lot of programs to better themselves.
- They need better administration. I believe the school board of Donna should not get involved with the grants. I believe that the school board of Donna is spending the money the wrong way. I feel as a taxpayer I would like for the money to go the right way. The school board of Donna is abusing the title-not all of them, but some.

PURCHASING AND WAREHOUSING

- The district has been lax in providing adequate textbooks. An audit should be made and better controls established for storage and warehousing.
- Competitive Bid/Contract Purchase - My knowledge of bidding and purchasing procedures has been acquired from attendance at school board meetings. It is evident (board mtg tapes will provide evidence) that select providers of different services and/or equipment are provided bids without regard to the low bid and/or proper procedures. For example, the buses (purchase w/air conditioner/or not), the maintenance, etc. some potential bidders do not have a chance to acquire said contracts. It is totally unprofessional, unethical and disrespectful to the business community.
- Warehousing - stolen property (evidence exists). Rampant evidence of misuse of school funds.
- The staff is great but they are understaffed (two persons) to prepare all purchase orders for 15 campuses. They now have to do work the accounting department was doing. They did not get more staff. So now it takes longer to get our purchase orders.
- Purchasing procedures are too slow. It takes too long to get P.O.'s and at times, at the risk of not getting parts, equipment or materials on time. The district is slow on making payments to the companies that have honored P.O.'s. Seems like the district holds on too long to the money to pay P.O.'s.
- Cooperative purchasing and competitive bids are overlooked in our district. The district goes on a "compadre" system. Somehow Board members, Administrators are privy to purchasing land that triple profits. This has happened and will continue to happen until they are stopped.
- The district has a "compadre bidding system" that gets a purchaser to go and purchase property or furniture and then resell it to the district at a higher price so that the board members and other administrators can get a piece of the profit for their own pockets.
- Competitive bids lead to questionable quality. Need for leeway by buyer, especially if the teacher-coach-administrator etc. is an expert in his/her area.
- We definitely have a problem with this department. We are suppose to have competitive bidding but it's not followed thru accordingly. Bids are awarded as Board members see fit. There are too many horror stories of Board members getting kick-backs out of the deals instead of focusing on the needs of the children, such as providing them with school buses that are in good operating condition. I highly recommend that a state inspection check our maintenance dept.

- As far as contracts - some are bidded out and some are never posted - some are given to their "compadres". My understanding is that the Subway contract was just given to the owners.
- We are paying $4.5 million for a contract - in which the company does not respond to the district's needs. More money out the window?
- Look into this one. This district doesn't always buy the best for the price. The district will buy your product or grant if there is "payola".
- Again, its who you know, and who's going to help you during your campaign. A former board president had family awarded small contracts during building. It's not the best man for the job.
- When purchasing, the system is not done in a fair way. Also, bidding is done mostly on a "compadre" basis. Board members give the bids to their friends so they can profit. Land is bought on advice at a cheap price and then resold to the school at an outrageous price by a board member's friend or political backer. Schools are being built at outrageous prices and with very poor quality. No sooner do students move in to a school that it leaks. Electrical wiring is poorly done, sewer systems are poorly constructed, air system, ventilation (no) is poor. Yet, the same bidder gets to built another new school the next time around. Why? Because they are relatives or friends or compadres of a board member, or a member works in a connecting way with that business.
- Warehouse - There is only good worker at the warehouse. The others are not in their offices or not working when they should be.
- Cooperative purchasing, competitive bids and the contract process, I feel, has been overlooked at our school district. Many times the school board gives contract and bids not to the best qualified, but to the ones that will benefit them. The people and students of our school district deserve better than that.
- Textbook dept. ok, purchasing dept. ok.
- Good - does ask for bids during purchasing.
- Compras - adquisicion de libros, libros nuevos muchos libros, en Ingles y pora el programa bilingüe, programa Host, un buen sistema pora almacenar los libros, que los animals no se los coman.

Appendix A
PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS

COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

- The use of computers must be enforced at all levels. Many students are entering college unable to use a word processor, the internet or third party software (i.e. powerpoint). I also feel the need for all teachers to be computer literate.
- Need for a lot more money to keep up with the future needs of society. Districtwide need for hardware, software and maintenance.
- The district has old computers that half-the-time don't work. They don't teach the children how to use them properly. They use programs that don't teach the kids anything. (i.e. CCC) Students don't know how to save to a diskette or to scan a document, or even create a document.
- Some of the technology instruction is ok for the students. They seem to have access to labs, libraries and some classrooms. The administration has access to technology, the only problem is when computers break down it takes maintenance time to get to it. Computers are outdated.
- One of our bright spots. The district is high on computers and their use.
- Way behind the times. Need more updated equipment and lots more training.
- My concern is that there are many classroom that do not have enough computers to successfully help elementary students acquire computer skills. In my school, some old computers were placed in the classrooms to help the students. The computers did not work and they have not been repaired. There is one computer and a television which serves the whole class, but the children do not get to use it enough time. At least 10 computers should be provided for the students. I would like these poor children to be able to compete with other rich children from Austin, Houston, Dallas, New York, etc.
- At this time, we (elementary) are currently under a 5-year contract w/ CCC. Their customer service is less than desirable. We have been experiencing a lot of problems since last year that haven't been fixed. We were told that some of the problems are "not a priority". Our elementary director is a CCC advocate and makes excuses for the company. I feel we are not getting what we are paying $4.5 million for.
- In Donna ISD, there is a computer software program called CCC. It hasn't been shown to improve student achievement, yet the decision remains to keep it and to move children out of their direct

instruction environment (the classroom) for computer sessions. All the while, there is an inadequate number of computers inside the classroom. This doesn't go with proven research strategies. Has there been a study done on the educational benefits of this program?

- Check PEIMS reports between high, middle and elementary schools.
- Some of our technology is outdated because this is not one of most important issues in our district, so many employees are made to work with outdated and slower hardware and software. Students are not always exposed to the latest technology because our school board is more worried about hiring the right friends.
- Computers and technology in schools is the future. Our kids represent that. If we do not have access to computer knowledge and skills for all kids, we are lost.
- Business/Administrative technology - these computers are old and have not been updated. Schools need to better educate kids in computer skills. Although we have some computers already in schools, we need rooms to house several classes and make use of the computers. Instructional technology should be made available to teachers. Improving and buying new hardware and software for schools will surely enhance instruction both ways.
- Junior High level - need more rooms with more computers. Internet access should be made available with guidelines and used properly for class projects. Several rooms should be made available for kids to have computer access and for homework and or projects. They should have a place to go after school and have access to that room for bettering their education.
- Runn Elementary is way behind in the technology department. When the new building housing the 1st and 2nd grades was built, the outlets were placed on the wrong side.
- Nesitan mas computadoras y buenas programas y personas capazitadasen computacion.

FOOD SERVICES

- Free meals are great for those that are not able to pay, however substitution is not possible. Hamburgers and pizzas are commonly found on the menu. I have an idea - why not provide salads/or other nutritional foods and allow those that are able to afford their meals this opportunity. I have seen many garbage cans full of food that has not been eaten.
- Need school district to pay for cafeteria uniforms and such things as shoes, hairnets, aprons, face mask and gloves. Cafeteria employees pay from their own pocket for these items.

- Improve food service department. Management needs more training for staff.
- Food being served in cafeteria is always cold and unappealing to children eating there. There is never enough food for all children. They seem to think that serving pizza and hamburgers is what the children want. This gets served twice, maybe three times a week.
- In elementary, children eat lunch at 10:30 am after having breakfast at 8:00 am. I don't see how nutrition plays a part in school. What they serve should be outlawed. No Dietician.
- Our food that is being served to our children has no nutritional quality. Students in the elementary level are being served breakfast at 8:00 am and lunch at 10:30 am and don't get home till 4:00 pm because they ride the bus. A snack or a well balanced meal other than cold pizza should be served. A selection of 2 or 3 main courses should be prepared so children have a variety of choices.
- Teachers are required to do the cafeteria count (added duty this year). Was told it was because cafeteria managers were not fluent with the language.
- Food is too starchy - although students like pizza and they do eat it, it is accompanied by tator tots or French fries, as an example of one meal. I asked if this was what the dietician recommended and was told that we do not have one but that these menus follow state guidelines. Could be why our children are gaining too much weight.
- Positive comment: a student who is a possible diabetic was given a special diet. Great meals for him.
- Progress is being made but needs much improvement.
- The food needs to be more appealing to the students. They need to serve hot food and not lukewarm food. Milk is being put back so that it can be given to the latchkey program. How do we know how long it was sitting out before it was put back in the case?
- Food here is not nutritious. Most days the kids just pick up the tray, sit down, eat dessert and throw it away. I recently saw a school menu - nothing but starch. Potato-corn-corn dogs and bread - now they have fish on Fridays. My grandson does not eat fish - no choices. One of his four grandparents has to take him something to eat on Fridays.
- More food is thrown away than is eaten. It is unappetizing, the department over staffed and is operating in the "red". A social studies teacher runs the department.
- Our children are not receiving enough food. They don't like the food a lot of the time so we are wasting food and manpower. We are also very overstaffed. Food services needs to get into the new millennium.
- The quality of food is not that great here. We do not have a certified dietician. The food is of poor quality. Some of the food,

like meats, are sometimes (often) hard. Students get pizza almost every day or hamburgers. Only, on Wednesdays do they get a decent meal. Most of the time they get starches. For breakfast its pizza and pizza at lunch. Example: one lunch included pizza, tator tots and corn. Dessert is always fruit cocktail, peaches, pears, applesauce.

- There have been several times where we have found bugs in our food. The children are being fed too much starch and sugars. The menus have to be revised to make sure our children are getting an adequate diet.
- We need better menus for our kids to eat flavorful meals. Some of those canned foods are worse than army meals. Really bad.
- Quality of food and nutritional value really should be looked at. The students seem to get pizza for breakfast 2 times a week sometimes. The snack bar, which is the only place some students eat, has been taken away from some schools. We need personnel that will choose good food to serve our children.
- Cafeteria facilities and equipment need to be serviced and improved.
- Meal participation needs to be improved. Quality food should be evenly distributed and be accessible to everyone.
- Quality of food - there should be more choices in the food provided for the kids. Salads or salad bar needs to be implemented. Elementary levels should have access to this key ingredient. Eliminate fats and introduce quality food. Assortments will do.
- Nutrition - It should be emphasized to the highest extent. We live in the valley with kids that do not know what a salad is or looks like. Their reaction to food quality and nutrition is poorly. Parents and schools need to improve the image of nutritious foods.
- Food service dept. sells cookies and cake to the kids during lunch at the Elementary campuses. The kids will not eat the meal because they want that cookie or cake. Where is the money going to? They are using Gov. surplus to do this. Now they are selling candy bars inside the cafeteria - this is wrong.
- Hay veces que siruen salado y dulce juntos y los niños no se locomen, nesesitan tener cuidado al seruir y hay mucho bote. Hay veces hacen algo sin sabor y ningun niño se lo come.

TRANSPORTATION

- Shortage of drivers. Overloading buses needs to be addressed.
- We used to work 40 hours and more but he a put stop to it for many reasons. A new bus aide started this year in Sept 2001. She came in working 42 hours a week - I've been with the DISD for nine years and I only work 37 hours.

- Bus transportation system needs improvement. Fleet is too old and maintenance needs to be updated. We are working with old tools and equipment. Need better pay for all transportation personnel, drivers, mechanics, and bus aides.
- Bus routing schedules need to improve because campuses are too far from bus barn. May need to do staggered time releases.
- Why do part-time bus drivers work 40 hours or more a week? Why not bus aides? We used to work those hours and more but they put a stop to it - for many reasons, they say. Why do some Special Education buses have a camera and some don't? Why does our boss follow us during our bus route - he says he is not supposed to but he does it anyway. I do a bus route after my bus route - One day I went to a school to work, he went to look for me just to ask me why I didn't get off my bus right away. After my route, he wants us to punch out on my time card right away. If he likes you, you work more than 40 hours a week. I've been working for DISD for 9 years. I'm still part-time and with five sick leave days it's suppose to be 10 days. We are afraid to lose our job.
- I have a concern about this department. I have been informed that most of our school buses do not have heaters and that during the months of December and January - the children that were picked up were very cold. When the director of this department was approached he informed his staff not to complain and that there are no funds for such repairs. An individual that works at this department feels that he cannot complain to higher ups or he will be written up. He wishes that a state inspector should come unannounced so he can view all the discrepancies with the superintendent. If we have enough money to give all these unnecessary raises then surely we can afford to take care of our children's needs.
- Transportation for our children concerns me because I feel that the buses that are used are fully loaded and then there are buses that are not used packed at the bus barn. Some students wait for 1 1/2 hours to get to school and another hour and 1/2 to get back home. Maybe the district needs better planning in this area.
- Are not being utilized as they should be. Children at two different campuses share same address. One school has to wait till the children from campus one are dropped off, making campus 2 children arrive home extremely late. They utilize one bus - when they should have more than one bus to share.
- When the zoning of the schools was done I was under the impression that the schools were to be considered neighborhood schools. This was to help eliminate bus routes and to save money on transportation. Students are being bused three blocks from their homes to the school. Buses stop at every block. I feel there is a lot

of waste of time and money. There is talk of air conditioning the buses. That is really a big mistake due to too many stops.

- We need more buses and drivers. Some of the buses take too many bus routes and our kids don't get in the house early or on time. We need another bus driver so the bus routing wouldn't have to be so long and tiring for our kids. They need more people and better pay. Please check on this.

- Our transportation needs a facelift. We have so many children riding on school buses in order to get to school or home and often the bus route is combined with another elementary school. These children have to wait for the bus driver to go and drop off the first bunch of students at home, come back and pick them up that they do not arrive until 4:00pm when they have been out of school since 3:00pm. Yet at the bus barn there are buses that have finished their route by 3:30pm and are not sent to pick these children up.

- I work at Donna ISD for 10 years, I'm a mechanic and bus driver and there are people that are coming in to work for us with less years of experience and getting paid more than what I get. I'm a certified mechanic and high school grad. I have told the Donna administration people about this and they tell me my certificates are no good. And people with no diploma or college hours are getting paid more than me. I have been fighting this matter for about two years. No results. I have filed Level 1, 2, 3 grievances and there has been no results, they answer me that I'm getting paid fairly. Do you think it's fair for a 10 year employee with diploma and college certificate get paid less money than a employee with 5 years and no education and they don't even speak English. Also, the supervisor asked us whenever we have a doctor's appointment or family appointments to let him know - I went on 3/25/02 and told him I have a doctor appointment at 1:30 pm and that I was going to work 1/2 day. He told me to punch out on the time clock and to leave home. I don't think that is right, so I told him that I could work until 12:00 pm and then leave, but he told me to punch out and leave. Also, I do bus routes, because I'm a substitute driver when other drivers don't come to work, we are sent to do those routes without help or with wrong directions. When we refuse to do that because we tell them we need help or better directions we are told to punch out and leave. I had a level 3 grievance with the Donna ISD school board and I asked for it to be an open session, they refused and took me to another room to discuss my problem about my pay. They have broke their own handbook policy law. They do whatever they want, they also denied my pay and told me there were employees as me as a mechanic and 3 months service getting paid $9.21 hour. That's one cent less than me. I've been here 10 years with certificates and the 3 month employee doesn't even know how to read or write.

- The school buses - some have A/C - most do not. The buses are usually breaking down. The district was supposed to buy three new buses a year and it hasn't happened. No more funds?
- Transportation Department - works for school district for the past 7 years - complains that at times she takes longer than the number of hours to make her bus route - whatever time she goes over she loses them. She feels the workers are not treated fairly in reference to hours worked. She states there is discrimination.
- There is a lot of discrimination by the supervisor of the Transportation Dept. Reduces hours for some workers if they are not in favor of school board members. Fears of job security.
- The district has a hard time keeping bus drivers - pay. All in all the department is ok, but still there is room for improvement.
- Need to do more adequate training, interviewing, background checks.
- At this time, our buses are in very poor condition. They have no heaters during the (few) cold weeks of winter and no A/C during our long summer months. The fumes that are emitted are horrendous, you get dizzy driving behind a bus, can you imagine the children.
- We at transportation have asked the district for documentation on meetings and have asked for; Job descriptions too, have yet to get it.
- Special Education needs more buses with lifts.
- Special Education more buses - the majority of our w/c lifts are malfunctioning.
- Se nesesitan mas auto buses mas en la escuela de Runn. Los ninos los levanta 6:20 am e 6:30 am. se nesesita otro bus pues 1 bus da 3 vueltas.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Once again the staffing in this department is not the best qualified to perform duties of security. People that are being hired are not on the merit system but as political favors. Some schools are being unattended at night.
- I have been to several school board meetings and was appalled by the behavior of some of the Board members and especially the citizens. Unprofessional would be an understatement!!! Lack of respect is one thing, but when on government grounds, as a school is, I feel that respect towards one another should be expected, demanded and enforced.
- Working at our school I feel that we are not safe at all times. We need more personnel to make sure that all students and workers are safe in our school. Students that are caught with drugs do not always get punished they way they should, especially if they are

related to the school members. And this puts all student in danger. All students are not discipline in the same manner because those that have the right name or know the right people can break all rules and have no consequences and no trail of their misbehavior is left.

- Safety and security programs - we have not been trained in these areas for years. What we know is because of our experiences and past training (like seven years ago or more). I feel that the District Police Department is not as effective and well run as they should be and they do not respond to calls in a quick and timely manner.
- Discipline policies are too lax given society's trend toward increased school violence. More manpower and dollars are needed for security personnel and local law enforcement must be inside middle and high schools.
- Unfair support from administration toward security personnel; salaries are too low for security personnel; unfair hiring techniques. We need to demand better wages, safe working conditions, safe working equipment. Stop harassment, favoritism and discrimination.
- Zero drug tolerance - policy is not enforced if your son or daughter belongs to supporter of majority on the board.
- Student discipline policies are followed or used if your parents are not well known in the school district. If a parent threatens to sue the district all charges or discipline referrals are done away with.
- Our district employees have not been trained on safety or security issues in several years. We have board of the tragedies and still have not had in services on this topic.
- Our district Police department that is federally funded by a grant is a waste of money. Officers in High School do not answer calls - too busy having coffee. The Alternative Education Center in our district needs to be staffed with well trained personnel that can make a difference and not be put in because of who you're related to.
- We do not have support from the administration towards security guards. Wages too low. Does security need to pay for uniforms? Need more improved safety equipment and better.
- More personnel certified to be a security. How long does an employee have to be working to become full-time employees?
- Student discipline policies are followed or used if your parents are not well known in the school district. If a parent threatens to sue the district because their child was disciplines all charges or discipline referrals are done away with.
- The Alternative Education Center in our district needs to be staffed with well trained personnel that can make a difference in a student, not just someone who can belittle them.

- Our district employees have not been trained on safety or security issues in years. We have heard of the Columbine shooting and not even then have they trained us on how to handle a situation like that. We have fliers dated 2000 - telling us what can and can't be done during Christmas decoration time.
- Our district police department that is funded by a grant is a waste of money. The officers do not answer calls and are too busy drinking coffee to help administrators with students.
- I'm very concerned about safety and security. I would like to see more security on campus. It is such a shame that we should need more - nonethe less, it is evident that it is needed because there is a lot of stealing going on. The sad thing is that we live in an area where people don't file reports - for whatever reason. It may be that they feel intimidated by the system. Maybe the schools aren't doing enough to encourage parents to file reports. Perhaps it's just apathy. Whatever the care - our district needs to become more proactive on lessening the stealing. People need to be encouraged to file reports. Without those reports, we don't have enough data to prove that we need more security.
- The school district has an elementary campus located 1/4 mile north of a regional landfill (off 493). Our concern is the safety of these students. What can the district do to protect these students from any health hazards coming from the landfill? Students are exposed to large landfill trucks passing by the school (trucks pass all day long starting at 6:00 am - 6:00 pm). Students are exposed to dust/trash flying in from the landfill. Nearby residents have complained about our increase in allergies and sinus infections. Can your agency do anything to help the district, since the TNRCC has done nothing?
- We are suppose to be Zero Tolerance but when a student who is a son of a former board member is busted with drugs, nothing is done because he is a football player and his dad has filed a lawsuit against the district. So the district drops the charges and the student continues to participate in football. Had it been someone else, he would have been prosecuted to the fullest and expelled right away.
- Security personnel have no formal training and no background checks. We have more police officers hired in our school district than the city has to protect our town. They are all political appointees.
- Teachers fear for the ir lives. They are afraid to speak out because they will fire them - that if they are disciplined and they know the board the teacher will get in trouble.
- Security personnel are not respected by students.
- We recently had three security officers arrested for stealing some safes from the school. This is the same old story. Who are you related to?

- The district is no different than other districts, however, we have an ineffective police department in the school and the security department has all but been dismantled with the demotion of the security chief.
- Safety and security are virtually non-existent. Those that are doing their job are punished if they are political foes, those that are not doing their job are rewarded for looking the other way. Drugs are rampant at the middle, ninth and high school campus. The security guards are paid to stand around and look the other way. There is no law and, therefore, there is no safety and security. This school district needs help because the children of the DISD have learned that if they knew the municipal judge they can get away with anything. The municipal judge of the city is also the alternative center director. He is corrupting the very kids that need the most help.
- Need more training. We shouldn't hire anyone younger than 21 to work at the school.
- Student discipline policies are only carried out if the child (student) is not the son or daughter of a board member, administrator, or some big political backer. Referrals are swept under the table. Some problems are ex: cheerleaders, football players get caught with drugs, a small slap on the wrists and they are allowed to perform that same week. But, if it is another student of no social standing with parents who are not "status quo" then they get suspended, get arrested, finger printed, get sent to jail, juvenile, or JJAEP. Because if the "social standing" ones get arrested, parents sue because they have the connections.
- We don't get many in-services on safety or many flyers don't get posted. In the AEP center the same thing happens with the discipline students keep on wanting to go back because they do nothing there. No instruction is done there.
- Look into keys. All employees have keys! Things are lost.
- Safety! Runn Elementary is presently a very unsafe campus as far as construction is concerned. Most parents are asking why is Runn taking so long to construct and the new LeNoir school is going up faster than Runn when we feel it should be taking longer because remodeling the building is also taking place.
- Seguridad - se nesesitan mas programas programas de Seguridad. Que a los padres. Les informen de los programas que hay en el Distrito. Pues solo sabemos que el de Seguridad es pora regañar a los que se portan mal. Y aveces se oye que son injustos y aveces que los chamacos son muy tremendos.

Appendix B
STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS
Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

(n=103)
*Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Demographic Data

1.	Gender (Optional)	No Response	Male	Female
		1.9%	46.6%	51.5%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	No Response	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
		4.9%	0.0%	1.0%	92.2%	1.0%	1.0%

3.	What is your classification?	No Response	Junior	Senior
		1.0%	30.1%	68.9%

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	11.7%	58.2%	16.5%	10.7%	1.0%	1.9%
2.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	9.7%	46.6%	27.2%	12.6%	1.9%	1.9%
3.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	20.4%	49.5%	17.5%	9.7%	1.9%	1.0%

	b) Writing	22.3%	56.3%	13.6%	6.8%	0.0%	1.0%
	c) Mathematics	32.0%	56.3%	6.8%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%
	d) Science	27.2%	57.3%	9.7%	3.9%	1.0%	1.0%
	e) English or Language Arts	26.2%	57.3%	6.8%	8.7%	0.0%	1.0%
	f) Computer Instruction	18.4%	64.1%	10.7%	3.9%	1.9%	1.0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	25.2%	61.2%	6.8%	3.9%	1.0%	1.9%
	h) Fine Arts	26.2%	52.4%	14.6%	3.9%	1.9%	1.0%
	i) Physical Education	34.0%	45.6%	9.7%	7.8%	1.0%	1.9%
	j) Business Education	12.6%	51.5%	22.3%	10.7%	1.0%	1.9%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	34.0%	49.5%	6.8%	7.8%	1.0%	1.0%
	l) Foreign Language	20.4%	52.4%	10.7%	11.7%	1.9%	2.9%
4.	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	22.3%	48.5%	11.7%	13.6%	3.9%	0.0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	21.4%	48.5%	20.4%	6.8%	1.9%	1.0%
	c) Special Education1	19.4%	48.5%	26.2%	3.9%	1.0%	1.0%
	d) Student mentoring program	7.8%	44.7%	27.2%	13.6%	4.9%	1.9%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
	e) Advanced placement program	28.2%	50.5%	17.5%	2.9%	0.0%	1.0%
	f) Career counseling program	17.5%	40.8%	21.4%	13.6%	5.8%	1.0%
	g) College counseling program	30.1%	30.1%	23.3%	10.7%	4.9%	1.0%
5.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	35.9%	51.5%	1.9%	5.8%	4.9%	0.0%
6.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	14.6%	34.0%	16.5%	23.3%	11.7%	0.0%
7.	The district provides a high quality education.	14.6%	48.5%	14.6%	14.6%	6.8%	1.0%
8.	The district has high quality teachers.	18.4%	35.9%	31.1%	8.7%	4.9%	1.0%

B. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
9.	Schools are clean.	17.5%	50.5%	12.6%	15.5%	3.9%	1.0%
10.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	17.5%	48.5%	14.6%	15.5%	2.9%	1.0%
11.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	12.6%	37.6%	23.3%	16.5%	8.7%	1.0%
12.	Emergency	16.5%	49.5%	16.5%	12.6%	3.9%	1.0%

		maintenance is handled timely.						

C. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
13.	There are enough textbooks in all my classes.	12.6%	44.7%	6.8%	24.3%	9.7%	1.9%
14.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	11.7%	55.3%	9.7%	16.5%	4.9%	1.9%
15.	Textbooks are in good shape.	4.9%	26.2%	13.6%	30.1%	24.3%	1.0%
16.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	17.5%	53.4%	8.7%	10.7%	7.8%	1.9%

D. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
17.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	36.9%	46.6%	6.8%	3.9%	4.9%	1.0%
18.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes	3.9%	23.3%	18.4%	26.2%	26.2%	1.9%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
	good.						
19.	Food is served warm.	6.8%	35.0%	20.4%	20.4%	15.5%	1.9%
20.	Students have enough time to eat.	11.7%	28.2%	7.8%	25.2%	25.2%	1.9%
21.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate times of the day.	14.6%	46.6%	8.7%	18.4%	10.7%	1.0%
22.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	3.9%	15.5%	3.9%	33.0%	43.7%	0.0%
23.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	11.7%	47.6%	13.6%	16.5%	9.7%	1.0%
24.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	23.3%	47.6%	9.7%	10.7%	6.8%	1.9%
25.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	12.6%	49.5%	19.4%	12.6%	4.9%	1.0%

E. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
26.	I regularly ride the bus.	4.9%	14.6%	25.2%	19.4%	35.0%	1.0%
27.	The bus driver maintains discipline on	6.8%	24.3%	51.5%	11.7%	3.9%	1.9%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
	the bus.						
28.	The length of my bus ride is reasonable.	5.8%	18.4%	55.3%	12.6%	5.8%	1.9%
29.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	9.7%	40.8%	35.9%	8.7%	2.9%	1.9%
30.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	6.8%	32.0%	46.6%	5.8%	6.8%	1.9%
31.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	8.7%	29.1%	45.6%	7.8%	5.8%	2.9%
32.	Buses arrive and leave on time.	5.8%	20.4%	51.5%	13.6%	5.8%	2.9%
33.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	10.7%	34.0%	45.6%	4.9%	1.9%	2.9%
34.	Buses seldom break down.	6.8%	15.5%	50.5%	15.5%	8.7%	2.9%
35.	Buses are clean.	9.7%	21.4%	49.5%	7.8%	8.7%	2.9%
36.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	9.7%	31.1%	45.6%	3.9%	6.8%	2.9%

F. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
37.	I feel safe and secure at	10.7%	53.4%	8.7%	18.4%	8.7%	0.0%

	school.					
38.	School disturbances are infrequent.	7.8%	51.5%	19.4%	17.5%	3.9%	0.0%
39.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	10.7%	33.0%	20.4%	22.3%	13.6%	0.0%
40.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	6.8%	17.5%	20.4%	25.2%	30.1%	0.0%
41.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	5.8%	12.6%	16.5%	36.9%	26.2%	1.9%
42.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	14.6%	52.4%	18.4%	6.8%	6.8%	1.0%
43.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	14.6%	38.8%	8.7%	22.3%	15.5%	0.0%
44.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	12.6%	46.6%	31.1%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%
45.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	9.7%	31.1%	17.5%	17.5%	24.3%	0.0%
46.	Safety hazards	7.8%	25.2%	39.8%	15.5%	11.7%	0.0%

		do not exist on school grounds.						

G. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
47.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	16.5%	22.3%	1.9%	35.0%	24.3%	0.0%
48.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	18.4%	43.7%	12.6%	16.5%	7.8%	1.0%
49.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	17.5%	39.8%	12.6%	14.6%	14.6%	1.0%
50.	The district offers enough classes in computer fundamentals.	17.5%	35.9%	16.5%	16.5%	11.7%	1.9%
51.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	15.5%	35.9%	21.4%	18.4%	8.7%	0.0%
52.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	22.3%	37.9%	11.7%	15.5%	11.7%	1.0%

Appendix B
STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

The following comments convey the students' perception of Donna Independent School District and do not reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

NARRATIVE COMMENTS:

- I wanted to add that the students here in Donna ISD have been wanting lockers. I believe things and education here in Donna was better when students had access to lockers. Students have been complaining on lockers and I believe that is one of the things that should be fixed in Donna.
- Football players and cheerleaders are better than the other students. Football players can go out of school and we cannot.
- I think that we need more of a variety of choices in the food we eat.
- They should get more teachers that like children and want to spend time with them, not these teachers that said bad languages or don't respect the student body. They should treat everybody the same no matter what their extra activities in school.
- We the students from Donna High are having trouble with some of our computers because they are working slow. At the cafeteria the food is almost always the same-if its not hamburgers its pizza. Our breakfast is always cereal with bread and milk. Some of the securities are not good; they are not fair with the students. Some teachers talk a lot with others when the bell already rang.
- I strongly feel that we have awesome teachers that are there for us whenever we need them. I don't like our counseling department. This is my junior year, but I'm already graduating and I like our financial aid office and its staff. They are great. We definitely need COMPUTERS AND BOOKS in some departments. We need better counseling staff that don't tell you you've been taking a class you don't need after the 4th six weeks have past. This is what happened to my friend. We need better meals. Our rooms need to be worked on. Repairs are not done on time or are delayed. Thank you!
- DHS has a grant program called Telecom and Networking but what's the use of having a good program if you don't have the equipment necessary to run it. The class is about learning to build your own computer but we only have old outdated computers. The knowledge is there but there is no hands-on. The school district won't get us the equipment we need because it's supposedly not in

the 'BUDGET'. So students have to buy them out of their own pocket and so does the teacher. It's already the second semester and we barely got the books. Also, the cafeteria food isn't that great. Yeah, we got Subways this year but can you imagine Subways everyday? I feel like we're on that diet like Jared from the Subway commercial. Our other food choice is cafeteria food, but its not always hot by the time we get it because we have to wait in line more than 20 minutes. By the time I get my lunch not only is it cold but it's already time to go back to class. Our lunch is only 45 minutes long.

- We don't have enough time between classes to get the class. I have to run from the Career and Technology building to the west wing to make in on time. I'm usually late though because I have to go to the Restroom. Sometimes we have to wait about 15 or 20 minutes in the lunch line. Don't get me wrong, the staff is very friendly. It just takes a lot of time from our lunchtime to get our food.
- I feel that DHS is doing good in academics but I also feel that they should have more options in the technology department. For example, in the technology building, there's a program called Graphic Arts. In this program students get to look and work with advance computer software. The problem is that there are 25-30 students in the classroom and only 15 computers to work with.
- My comment is about the restrooms. They need to be cleaner. They need to put the door on the toilet.
- I say it is OK but there are so many writing in books and on the walls in school and our of school.
- I feel the school is going too far with the dress code. Yeah, I understand not to have your shirt tail out but they want everything tucked in. There could be more computers in the computer classes, its first come first use of computers. They're really slow to hook up on the Internet and very little space to work on. And the thing with not letting guys have mustaches or goatees. At least let them have a clean cut.
- The staff seems to be more concerned with the dress code policy than whether or not the students are prepared for college. I've had three meetings with the principal and vice principals about the dress code and have been suspended twice for violating it, but not once have I been called in by our counselor about information on the ACTs or SATs or my plans for college.
- My opinions are that the security here are very unreasonable and they stereotype a lot. Another thing, the restrooms here need to be fixed up. For example, they need doors on the restrooms with locks. How can you expect people to feel like they have privacy when they don't have locks on the doors? Also, I feel that we should be able to dress the way we want to, be able to grow beards and have long hair. We should feel comfortable not awkward.

- I think that Donna High is just about the most unfair school I've ever known to exist. It's not that you know who you know. It's a disadvantage. Teachers who have sons or daughters here no matter what they do or how bad they just can't get in trouble. But when the teachers wouldn't let me go to the restroom when I really had to go. I walked out. I mean I had to go real bad. I got sent to A.C. for a week for 'walking out' of the class. That's not fair is it? And when questioned school official always do such a good job in covering up incidents like this. Oh, but if a football player or a son of a teacher walks out they can't get in trouble. What's up with that? Securities are all the same too. They stereotype based on appearance. When these security employees have to catch you, they can't even run, so why have them in the first place? It doesn't matter if we get new ones it is just a matter of time for this system to get a hold of them. Your just wasting your time and money giving students like us this 'opinion.'
- There is a graphics and animation class we have offered to us. I think the class needs better and faster computers. We need more advanced equipment. They also produce the DHS news. To do this more effectively, we need the proper technology. There are 15 computers in that class. We have to share a computer with two other people. You are lucky if you get to class and find an empty computer. This will be the first successful year they are able to keep the program alive. The students of this class are striving for the knowledge, all we need is the technology.
- What I'm wondering is how we are going to learn the proper facts of history if our books are from the late eighties. We can't study recent events starting from 1990 and on. I think we should have newer and faster computers, not to mention a faster Internet connection. But now that we are on that topic, we should have more funding for other programs, not only athletic programs.
- I think they (teachers and principals) just care about what we were because there just on our back telling us we can't. We're this or that and its school we come to learn not to show off our clothes.
- I hope by this we can at least get somewhere because you can't say we haven't been trying. Well since our school got selected, it took that to maybe get us somewhere. If you really say we should stay out of trouble and problems, BE MORE PRODUCTIVE! Make more physical activity programs; for example, a huge pool (swimmers) better tennis courts (add more and make them better looking with a wall). Things like that will get people off the streets. Get better teachers who know how to teach not just bore students. Keeping students in programs like this will keep the grades where they should be.
- When you are tardy three times you are sent to the Alternative Room as punishment. Then if you're tardy 1 more time you are

sent again for a day. That isn't fair. Many people are there instead of class. In that room you just sit there the whole day and do some work instead of in being somewhere where you can learn. And if they always send you there, when you go back to class you're way behind. And this rule is very bad for seniors. Also when boys don't shave they go there or go home. Even if it's very little hair. And I want to get into a class HST2 but the teacher said no because I'm going to be a senior next year. I'm in HST I and am in the top 60 (#6) and can go on.

- The teachers are great. Except some have a rule about two passes per 6 wks and I believe that two is not a sufficient number of passes because sometimes there are more than two emergencies.
- OK in my opinion, they should get rid of some dress rules. Like shaving (that has nothing to do with anyone's future) and what we wear. HELLO, were not stupid. We know what to wear for interviews, ok!! Also, some teachers and secretaries can do without the Attitude!!!
- As a student of Donna High I feel that the school district lacks the quality of computers in classrooms. Computers are often used nowadays for educational reasons yet the fact is that we the students have no access to a computer unless we're in a computer class and even then, those computers we have access to are inefficient.
- I feel that Donna ISD needs a lot of improvements. First of all they need to have a better lunch that is what they need, which is usually just pizza and hamburgers every day. The school needs to encourage students more towards a high education. Also the school administrator focus more on the athletic department. Its like the athletes are superior than the other students, since they excuse them for everything they are not supposed to.
- One of my strong opinions about this school district is the mistreatment of students. Basically, certain people are treated with special privileges while others are not. The people who are treated with special privileges are the athletic people. i.e. football players. They are able to get away with anything even with the NO PASS NO PLAY law. I know this should be enforced. They get away with this and other things while other people are not treated equally. This should be eliminated for the benefit of future students that attend this school.
- The politics and security law enforcement on campus feel they have the power to mistreat students and don't know how to handle conditions. I believe they need better training before serving Donna High.
- The Donna ISD school board don't realize that their money programs such as health, science, technology need more help and money. My teacher is the only one who teaches five classes on her

own. She needs to take some students to hospital rotations and be back for the CNA program. She has a lot of paper work and she has been requesting help but she hasn't received any. She is the best teacher I've had since my middle school years. Teachers need more help so they can give their attention to the students.

- I feel that Donna High School should improve on the maintenance. The air condition system is always messing up when the weather is cold outside. The AC is on when it's not outside and its hot inside. The DISD provides quality and excellence towards our education by offering concurrent enrollment and advanced courses to prepare for our future although the school board places too much of an emphasis on sports. The students that are involved in the extracurricular activities seem to not be working to the potential standards other students are. There is a rule 'no pass no play' but teachers seem to give them extra work to earn extra credit to be able to pass. I feel that students should work hard from the beginning and not slack off. It is a point that teachers and students need to get across. The school board should not concentrate on the athletes but on the entire student body. Some students do feel left out by this and also feel that if they work hard its for nothing because in the end the athletics have the option of earning extra points. All their hard work is a waste of time. Adults don't seem to understand the fact about what is going on with the students and how students feel about these situations. It should be bought upon the school board and faculty and staff in DISD.
- Our principal has done a lot to make the students want to learn.
- The DISD provides excellent educational programs such as AP, Pre-AP, Advance, College courses, etc. But when it comes to sports our Donna School Board favors more the sports programs than our students being absent or providing a better parent and family development program to prevent pregnancy. Athletes can fail in class and still play football games and the school board member wont say anything about that, I strongly believe that the school board should balance all educational programs and not favor athletes just because team, have never lost in a game before.
- The educational performance in DHS is excellent. They provide for us a numerous number of AP, advance and college classes that us as students can take. Although we have all these classes provided to us, there is one problem. The school board emphasized more on sports in this school than on education. They don't get students to enroll in advance classes the way they do to get them to enroll in sports. There is too much favoritism for all the athletic people from the school board and staff. In this school you are more superior if you run and play football then if you kill yourself doing a perfect English project. This shouldn't be this way. People here

get recognized everyday for sports but they never mention those who have high grades or have done something good in academics.

- Donna ISD is a great school, but it can be better by having more students get involved in organizations because I think that many students don't really or aren't involved in anything not even one organization.
- The education program is fair in Donna ISD. Donna ISD lacks a big part in computer and technology. Are school is always the last school to receive the latest technology. Also, the students are not able to get the full advantage of computers and privileges. It is a hassle to get on the Internet and we are limited to the sites we can view.
- The education process is a job well done, but not all students are treated fairly.
- A good way to enjoy our lunchtime more is by having a game room. Have some pool tables or video games. With the money made, we can use it for scholarships. Every morning and afternoon there is a lot of traffic. A good idea is making an exit that goes from Bus 83 to the back parking lot.
- Throughout my high school career I have noticed an increase in teachers that are coaches and teachers at the same time. This may not be a setback in most cases however, I believe in order for a teacher to teach at optimal level he/she must focus solely on one subject. I also believe the increase in coach/teacher employees is due to the fact of a lack of teachers period. A remedy obviously is teacher pay raises so the influence on new teachers is greater. I hope the Texas legislature realizes this problem and work together to solve it.
- We wait too long to eat lunch. We wait like 30 minutes.
- All of the educational performance in DHS is very good.
- Our education is OK here in Donna but there are a lot of changes to be made at a higher level like administration and politics. Politics is something that this district has a problem with and that in deed effects a lot of the way people in general see things. Thank you.
- Need new principal and chess team.
- More time to concentrate on college-bound topics. Would like to see more opportunities for us the students at grades 7 through 12 to manage our time as we see fit.
- School board members and employees intend to think that we have enough supplies or needs but in reality we don't.
- I feel harassed by teachers and security when they ask me to shave my facial hair.
- For the past three years I been coming to Donna High School, I have never had problems before. I like my classes and some of my teachers, I am happy for having been here.

- I have no comments, but this district could improve on small things. For example, they could have an open campus and other minor things.
- Academically we are strong as a school district although our discipline and all is not. Gangs and drugs have always been in this school and from the looks will be here for years to come.
- Fine arts - excellent, core classes - under average, C-T - acceptable.
- Fine arts - excellent, core classes - their OK, C-T - pretty good. The security guards need to loosen up a bit. They get mad for every little thing that you do wrong. Whether it wearing a small earring or just sitting on the balcony.
- It would be nice if we could have off campus lunch for the reason many people like eating at restaurants.
- The district should provide the students with highly qualified teachers. Currently, there are many teachers teaching a subject they are not certified in. They should just fill empty spots with teachers that aren't qualified. That is a problem because we aren't really getting educated by someone who is certified in that particular area. If the student ever have questions, sometimes those uncertified teachers don't know what to respond so they go ask other teachers.
- The best thing that I like about Donna High is the computer class. I'm taking a class called graphic arts and this class provides and teaches students more into the computer technology. My teacher said that other college students pay thousands of dollars just to learn what we students are learning in this class. Not just college students, also those who are interested in mastering computers. There are students here that can disassemble computers and put it back as it was or upgrade it. And these students do not have a master or bachelors degree, but with what they know I'd like to know it too.
- My English class is so boring because my teacher is always talking about Hawthorne the poet and I get tired of my teacher because he is always making us write essays about Hawthorne and it gets really frustrating.
- It's all about politics. If you don't have the hook up you don't have nothing. For instance I asked my teacher if I could go to the restroom, he said 'no.' A friend asked and he let him go. Politics I tell you.
- I'm a senior at Donna High School. We don't have enough materials (books). The bus is full, we sit 3 persons in one seat. Teachers are good to students.
- I really like this but I really think nothing wont change. Reason being because Donna is a corrupt little town. Meaning that this team is run by politics. That's all I have to say.

- The education here at Donna High School is cool. It's alright. I mean I learn but the only thing that I don't like is the facilities that we have. We need a new school.
- The performance at Donna High is good, but it could improve. During my college cause class for history, it has been already past a whole semester and we still have not received any books. I can understand that it is a STCC course but we need them because it's a course at Donna High.
- Our career and technology department has been very limited due to lack of funds. There is little awareness of the benefits the CATE program could bring. There is also very little money going into the programs themselves. Every year a new program is added to the line-up, yet there is not enough money as it is to support existing programs. As CATE students, we constantly have to 'fundraise' to have enough money for simple hands-on projects. I feel, as a student whose parents are taxpayers, that there should be an adequate amount of money going into these programs. After all, the district frequently has money to spread and spend on other programs but these. The skills we learn in the programs are the skills of the future, yet they are neglected because certain officials or board members choose to sponsor things that will bring them untimely benefits. I'm a senior student, but the situation is so bad I worry for future CATE students for their success and college. We need funds for supplies and projects.
- One problem is the funding in the career and technology.
- I feel we should have more of a choice selection at lunch, I also feel like we should be able to take drinks to classes without computers.
- I'm a career and technology student. I have asked my teacher why don't we do this project for class? He always answers we don't have money in our budget. I don't understand this because there is a lot of students that attend class in the career and technology department and there is suppose to be money at least to do something related to our class. I also think there is more money spent on buildings and furniture for the district instead of going to the students.
- I think that the educational performance of DISD is fine and doesn't need much improvement. However, I feel that students here should be more aware of scores, like in percentages of the important test scores and things students take. I would like to say that the Fine Arts and Science departments are the best here at Donna High.
- In my opinion, the educational performance of Donna ISD is pretty good. I learned so many things over here at Donna High School. The teachers that I had during this four years were great. They were the kind of teachers that would take the time to help their

students with any problem. They are easy to hang around. Now, I can't talk much to talk about the security in this school because I have no opinion at all toward them.

- We need better discipline. The students need to respect the teacher more. Dog collars should not be worn on students. No piercing on the face should be worn. We should have lockers. We should have computers in the class. Black nail polish on boys or girls should not be allowed. We should have metal detectors.
- I think that the district should have more security because there are a lot of drugs going around.
- No one ever asks us any questions on how we feel probable because we are too honest. It was time someone took us for consideration.
- Some students get no discipline for their behavior and their disruptness. Also, they leave the class without permission. Reason being there are some teachers who don't care and don't bother doing their work.

Appendix C
PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

(n = 200)
*Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Demographic Data

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Answer		
		32.5%	56.0%	11.5%		

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Answer
		2.0%	0.0%	90.0%	1.0%	2.0%	5.0%

3.	How long have you lived in Donna ISD?	0-5 years	6-10 years	11 or more	No Answer
		20.0%	16.5%	57.0%	6.5%

4.	What grade level(s) does your child(ren) attend?			
Pre-Kindergarten	12.5%	Sixth Grade	16.5%
Kindergarten	16.5%	Seventh Grade	14.5%
First Grade	14.5%	Eighth Grade	11.5%
Second Grade	13.5%	Ninth Grade	14.0%
Third Grade	12.0%	Tenth Grade	14.5%
Fourth Grade	17.5%	Eleventh Grade	7.0%
Fifth Grade	16.0%	Twelfth Grade	10.5%

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	9.0%	39.0%	28.5%	14.0%	9.5%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	meetings.					
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	9.5%	35.0%	23.5%	19.0%	13.0%
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	13.0%	37.0%	27.5%	10.5%	12.0%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	8.0%	35.0%	33.5%	11.0%	12.5%

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.	12.0%	43.0%	17.0%	19.5%	8.5%
6.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	10.5%	45.5%	20.0%	19.0%	5.0%
7.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	7.0%	39.5%	28.5%	16.0%	9.0%
8.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	6.0%	40.5%	37.0%	9.5%	7.0%
9.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a.) Reading	22.5%	54.0%	4.0%	12.0%	7.5%
	b.) Writing	19.5%	56.0%	4.0%	13.0%	7.5%
	c.) Mathematics	20.5%	56.0%	4.5%	12.0%	7.0%
	d.) Science	18.5%	55.0%	8.5%	11.0%	7.0%
	e.) English or Language Arts	20.0%	54.0%	7.0%	13.5%	5.5%
	f.) Computer Instruction	22.0%	53.5%	10.0%	10.0%	4.5%

	g.) Social Studies (history or geography)	19.0%	59.0%	8.0%	9.0%	5.0%
	h.) Fine Arts	20.5%	51.5%	12.5%	9.0%	6.5%
	i.) Physical Education	21.0%	57.0%	11.0%	6.5%	4.5%
	j.) Business Education	13.5%	44.5%	25.5%	12.0%	4.5%
	k.) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	16.0%	46.0%	26.0%	7.0%	5.0%
	l.) Foreign Language	11.5%	44.5%	26.5%	12.0%	5.5%
10.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a.) Library Service	19.5%	55.5%	12.0%	9.0%	4.0%
	b.) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	18.0%	51.0%	14.0%	11.0%	6.0%
	c.) Special Education	21.0%	48.0%	18.0%	8.0%	5.0%
	d.) Head Start and Even Start programs	13.0%	43.0%	32.5%	5.5%	6.0%
	e.) Dyslexia program	9.0%	24.0%	50.0%	10.5%	6.5%
	f.) Student mentoring program	10.5%	32.5%	37.5%	12.0%	7.5%
	g.) Advanced placement program	17.0%	46.5%	23.0%	9.5%	4.0%
	h.) Literacy program	11.0%	38.0%	34.5%	10.5%	6.0%
	i.) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	15.0%	27.5%	33.5%	11.5%	12.5%
	j.) Summer school programs	19.0%	51.0%	14.0%	8.5%	7.5%
	k.) Alternative education programs	13.5%	46.5%	23.5%	8.0%	8.5%
	l.) "English as a second language" program	20.5%	44.0%	21.5%	9.5%	4.5%
	m.) Career counseling program	15.0%	40.0%	24.5%	14.5%	6.0%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	n.) College counseling program	15.5%	37.5%	29.0%	12.0%	6.0%
	o.) Counseling the parents of students	15.5%	37.0%	18.5%	15.5%	13.5%
	p.) Drop out prevention program	13.0%	30.0%	33.0%	12.5%	11.5%
11.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	25.5%	41.0%	5.0%	14.0%	14.5%
12.	Teacher turnover is low.	9.0%	27.0%	41.0%	10.0%	13.0%
13.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	11.0%	23.5%	27.0%	20.5%	18.0%
14.	A substitute teacher rarely teaches my child.	9.5%	38.5%	24.5%	16.0%	11.5%
15.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	14.5%	49.5%	18.5%	12.0%	5.5%
16.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	18.0%	46.5%	14.5%	13.5%	7.5%
17.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	27.0%	56.0%	8.0%	5.5%	3.5%
18.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	16.0%	45.5%	18.5%	14.5%	5.5%
19.	The district provides a high quality education.	16.0%	41.0%	17.5%	12.5%	13.0%
20.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	13.0%	38.0%	19.0%	17.0%	13.0%

C. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

	Survey Questions					
21.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	16.0%	35.0%	13.5%	23.5%	12.0%
22.	District facilities are open for community use.	12.5%	39.0%	24.5%	16.5%	7.5%
23.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help students and school programs.	8.5%	30.5%	24.0%	24.0%	13.0%

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.	6.5%	28.0%	32.5%	19.5%	13.5%
25.	Schools are clean.	20.0%	52.0%	11.5%	11.0%	5.5%
26.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	16.0%	48.0%	14.5%	15.5%	6.0%
27.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	14.0%	45.5%	17.5%	16.5%	6.5%
28.	The district uses very few portable buildings.	7.0%	45.5%	26.5%	11.5%	9.5%
29.	Emergency maintenance is handled expeditiously.	10.5%	45.0%	28.5%	10.0%	6.0%

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.	6.5%	29.5%	30.0%	15.5%	18.5%

	Survey Questions					
31.	Board members and administrators do a good job explaining the use of tax dollars.	5.0%	24.5%	25.0%	19.0%	26.5%

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.	5.0%	25.0%	43.0%	15.0%	12.0%
33.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	5.5%	30.0%	38.5%	15.5%	10.5%
34.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	5.5%	23.5%	38.5%	20.0%	12.5%
35.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	4.5%	21.0%	48.5%	16.0%	10.0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	11.5%	53.0%	11.0%	15.5%	9.0%
37.	Textbooks are in good shape.	11.0%	49.5%	11.0%	15.5%	13.0%
38.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	20.5%	53.0%	8.0%	11.5%	7.0%

H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	My child regularly purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.	9.0%	30.5%	24.0%	22.5%	14.0%
40.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	33.0%	54.0%	6.5%	3.5%	3.0%
41.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	15.5%	28.5%	18.0%	19.5%	18.5%
42.	Food is served warm.	15.5%	47.0%	14.0%	13.0%	10.5%
43.	Students have enough time to eat.	10.5%	50.5%	6.0%	19.5%	13.5%
44.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	15.5%	61.5%	5.0%	9.5%	8.5%
45.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	9.5%	41.5%	17.0%	19.0%	13.0%
46.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	13.5%	54.5%	12.5%	11.0%	8.5%
47.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	20.0%	42.0%	14.5%	15.5%	8.0%
48.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	19.0%	51.0%	17.0%	7.5%	5.5%

I. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	My child regularly rides the bus.	24.5%	30.0%	21.5%	13.5%	10.5%
50.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	16.0%	29.0%	36.5%	12.5%	6.0%
51.	The length of the	11.0%	36.5%	33.0%	10.5%	9.0%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	student's bus ride is reasonable.					
52.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	20.5%	50.5%	20.0%	4.0%	5.0%
53.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	18.0%	45.5%	27.5%	4.0%	5.0%
54.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	19.0%	47.0%	28.0%	4.5%	1.5%
55.	Buses arrive and depart on time.	14.0%	44.0%	29.0%	8.0%	5.0%
56.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	13.0%	47.5%	27.0%	8.0%	4.5%
57.	Buses seldom break down.	13.5%	38.0%	34.0%	8.5%	6.0%
58.	Buses are clean.	13.0%	41.5%	37.5%	5.5%	2.5%
59.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	17.0%	37.0%	32.0%	7.5%	6.5%
60.	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	11.5%	41.0%	41.0%	3.5%	3.0%

J. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
61.	Students feel safe and secure at school.	13.5%	45.0%	14.0%	16.5%	11.0%
62.	School disturbances are infrequent.	8.0%	37.5%	24.0%	20.5%	10.0%
63.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	6.0%	20.5%	25.0%	23.5%	25.0%
64.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	5.0%	18.5%	25.5%	24.5%	26.5%

	Survey Questions					
65.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	4.5%	20.5%	24.0%	23.0%	28.0%
66.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	12.5%	53.0%	19.0%	9.5%	6.0%
67.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	10.0%	41.0%	22.0%	15.5%	11.5%
68.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	11.5%	49.5%	27.5%	5.5%	6.0%
69.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	15.0%	43.0%	13.5%	11.5%	17.0%
70.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	10.5%	34.0%	22.0%	21.0%	12.5%

K. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
71.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	14.5%	57.0%	15.0%	9.0%	4.5%
72.	Computers are new enough to be useful to teach students.	17.0%	54.0%	13.5%	11.5%	4.0%
73.	The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	16.5%	53.5%	15.0%	11.0%	4.0%
74.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills	18.5%	43.5%	18.5%	15.0%	4.5%
75.	Students have easy	19.5%	45.0%	21.5%	10.5%	3.5%

	access to the internet.					

Appendix C
PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

The following comments convey the parents' perception of Donna Independent School District and do not reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

- In some schools, there's not enough computers. Kids don't have access to computers every day.
- One Special Ed therapy speech and occupational are really necessary, especially for those special kids. Right now they aren't having their therapy as they should. I think they should hire more therapists to meet those kids needs.
- More and more kids are misbehaving at school. Parents have to work harder in straightening their kids behavior at home so that at school can be able to handle kids.
- I don't think kids should have to sell stuff for school funds since school should have sufficient funds for whatever the school needs.
- The district appears to have very good service. There are some questions that perhaps I should not have an opinion on, but the majority of the questions appear correct and I am sure of them.
- On transportation: I feel that the district really needs to hire school bus aides or attendants, because I feel that the bus driver already has a lot of responsibilities driving safe for our children and cannot keep an eye and discipline the children when he is driving. I think that this would make me feel so much better knowing that my kids are being watched on the bus.
- I think that our school district can set higher standards on our students. I also believe that our schools need more attention for our students.
- As a parent, I could say that Donna ISD is very good in explaining how to use the money especially when 2 years ago they were campaigning for the bond issue. Presently, the new middle school, which was a part of the project if the bond issue wins, has not been built and the taxpayers are asking where did the money go? Also, teachers are given extra job teaching the sex education without having them put their input on the curriculum.
- Teachers need better education or planning. Teachers need to know about respect, and how to teach respect too. Children are sick with viruses because school food is old or not cooked right, thrown on the plate, ladies with no gloves handling food, licking bottles of food.

- Money is being spent where it shouldn't be spent. Please look into every dollar every budget that is being made. Some teachers are not teaching they are just there for the paycheck. Some students at the high school are just given a grade, if you know what I mean. Law enforcement at the high school knows there are drugs and nothing is being done. Same goes for staff. They get moved left and right. But if you're a board member's relative or wife you know how that goes: expect a higher check or a higher position. Please it shouldn't be this way. One cannot say anything because you might have your kids out of an event or in the worst case, out of the classroom. Kids are not being taught anything at the high school if the teacher likes you. If the teacher doesn't like you, you fail, that's it for you. You will probably be repeating class in summer school. My opinion.
- One concern that I have is that principals in most schools in Donna are almost always being changed by the school board. I believe this is a problem because we never know who we need to talk to at the beginning of the school year when it is very important to have good communication with the campus principal.
- My children have been in other school districts. So far Donna ISD is the worst place to send your child to school. We are trying very hard to get our children out of this area.
- At times, security guards use unnecessary force with the students. When there is a conflict between students and teachers, the director gives side with the teachers and does not hear parent's opinion. Gives more preference to teachers and does not hear the whole story. I think school should first modify the attitudes of the staff, and then try to correct the students. Just because they are in a high position does not mean they can treat parents and students however they want. Students as well as parents have rights. This would be greatly appreciated if you look into this matter. There are many things that are not revealed totally, and I hope that this survey makes an improvement towards change.
- Donna is getting bigger and more students.
- This is my comment on my own children. My children tell me the programs on the computers at the high school need to be upgraded. Also the computers themselves. Like the art programs in the computers have not been upgraded in over 5 years. At Veterans Middle School, my child did not get to bring home a textbook because there weren't enough books.
- DISD does not provide awards for students that pass the TAAS because they say that Austin will not reward students for this because they are not worthy of such a reward. It is very shameful that the students have to make a very big sacrifice for this. My child cries just thinking of passing such a test. I hope you would award these children that work very hard for nothing.

- I have had an experience about the schools like the Veterans School where there is always kids roaming the halls during class time. And that is very wrong, because they are bothering other students. And I have heard professional teachers yell at the students very bad, and that just makes the kids get meaner than before. If you are there to teach you have to have patience with them. If not you are about to have the same reaction with them. That's all I have to say is to choose your teachers wisely. People that want to teach and are not just there for the money. Thank you.
- Speech therapy sessions should begin at the beginning of school, not in November or December.
- I feel that they should have a special classroom only for dyslexia students. But they throw them into the same class as regular students and this shouldn't be. Maybe there should be meetings with parents on dyslexic children. Face it, they walk, talk, move and even have tempers like us regular people. But something makes them tick different. Please, Carole Rylander, we need your help.
- Allow children to get proper tutoring and/or assistance with enough time not months prior to school year ending. Allow parents to speak for their side before making or taking a decision further than it is supposed to. Provide more after school tutoring for children who need it. Have enough personnel in each school to assist teachers with children who are in need of assistance and not one assistant for 4 or 5 teachers.
- I will admit that the education in the DISD is very different from McAllen's. My child is in Kindergarten and does not know how to print but is already learning script. Basically, teaching her to run before she can walk, so to speak. I seriously do not agree with that. Thank You.
- We need your help. Too many favors and too much money spent on lawsuits. Administrators paid too much. No one wants to speak up. Send the Texas Rangers, FBI, DEA, TEA, we have problems. We have low performing schools. Principals with no certificates. Teacher certification a big problem. No certificates. Can you help probably not? Think of the children. Schools built with bonds and fighting with city for help to build schools. We build a new stadium for our football team but can't finish other schools. Send someone fast. We're lost and need to be found. Gracias.
- The state should intervene and monitor the DISD board. Too many years have gone by with the board having intentions of self interest instead of the needs of the taxpayer. There is much political influence. The focus of the board is towards new schools and job placement for friends and relatives. As for the students, the percentage is very low on successful prepping for college

graduates as well as for successful job placement. Majority of students intellectual ability is below 12th grade.

- The one thing I think is important and needs improvement has to do with bus rides. I think that we need more supervision to control kids on the buses.
- I feel that their priorities are in the wrong place, not the classrooms and teachers/students needs. The administration office personnel are always giving themselves pay raises. Administrators that do not do a thing for the students or teachers. Where does all the money go?
- Although there are various programs for low income, nothing is done for the upper middle class who do not qualify for government assistance and are not well enough financially to provide for their children. In Donna ISD, you need to know someone to get things done, referring to school board and associates.
- I feel that the bilingual classes in the elementary schools are not effective to the whole school district. Students do not graduate at state level and brings down the educational system scores that are mailed out yearly. I've had relatives who had their child put in these programs and had a very hard time releasing them from these programs.
- I am very concern about Donna District. Donna needs better schools, more teachers, and more programs. These schools or districts need to get more involved with the community. In Donna, there is no money for more teachers, rooms, programs, or field trips for the students. I don't know how money is being spent in Donna but I know not enough for schools. For example, where my kids attend, there are not enough teachers to supervise the students during lunch that they have to punish the whole grade class to control them. That is outrageous. Another example, if a student is an A and B sometimes C student there are no programs to help them go higher unless they are flunking. They have to have a D or F to get in the program to help. We don't want our kids to stay low in their grades. What we would like is to keep our kids as an A honor student. But, they can't get there cause there are no programs provided to help them. I have sisters and brothers that lived in other cities which provide better education to their kids. Cause they have more programs, better teachers and schools, get more involved with the community. They have best teachers, schools, and programs. Compare to Donna, I know Donna is a little city but because of that it should get more involved. 90 percent of Donna schools are old schools. Donna has lost a lot of good teachers. They have gone to other cities to teach for better pay. As you see, I don't have a good education as you can see on my handwriting. I don't want my kids to be like me. I want the best education they

can have. I am a good taxpayer and I would like something done to this old city. Sincerely yours.

- Schools need for parents meetings not to talk about nutrition, but about our kids and learn ways of helping our kids. Get parents more involved in kids educations. Lets talk more about our teachers, schools, kids behavior, and number one our kids getting enough education. I would love more parents meetings talking about our kids, giving suggestions and ideas. We need to know more about our teachers and support them. Help them in different ways. I want to do more but I can't, cause I am not well educated.

- Look Donna, with my respects and concerns, is a city that needs a lot of improvements in the schools. The schools are terrible, education is low. Schools don't have or provide enough help to students. Donna needs good teachers and more teachers and programs. For example, just because students are A, B, and C students doesn't mean they don't need help. Donna provides help only to kids that are low but what about the others. Donna needs programs...a lot of them!

- The first 5 years of our kids are the best ones. Lets not forget that. What they learn the first 5 years is what makes them ready for Jr. High and High School.

- I have asked repeatedly for help with my child and other parents have also and no one seems to care. This has been 2 years going on now. I'm paying out of pocket for test and evaluations that the schools should have taken care of 2 years ago. Yet I still have to pay. Why? I'm trying to get my child the learning help she needs. I think the schools should get the people who have time to deal with this and to help these students.

- DISD spends too much on Athletic related programs. We have an improved stadium but my children don't have books to bring home. Football gets new uniforms and equipment all the time. Football players get away with low scores and tardies and absences, etc. I'm a parent of football players so I know this for a fact.

- I strongly believe that DISD uses too much money on football. We recently improved our stadium and are always getting new uniforms and equipment, yet our schools don't have books for students to take home. Football players get special privileges, get treated differently. I'm a parent of football players and I know it is for a fact. This treatment doesn't help them. Even coaches get more respect than other teachers in our community and that isn't right.

- As a parent and educator it infuriates me to see the conditions of our district. Our district has become a business rather than a learning institution. Some families in Donna see it as a sole means of support. It seems that our district has forgotten about the reason why we are here, to educate children. Somewhere along the line teachers and students have been left at the bottom of the barrel

while administrators and non-degreed personnel are fighting for that piece of the pie. All a person has to do is look at salaries and unnecessary positions eating up our money. Where's the equity in that?

- HELP! The board majority spends money foolishly. And it is not on the students or their education. The attorney has billed over $200,000.00 in less than six months. Question the latest land purchase. Frivolous lawsuits being settled out of court. Political retaliation is common. Students in the hallways after the bell rings. Board members relatives with substantial pay raises.

- Donna ISD used to be a great place to work for a few years ago, but lately if you don't for a Board Member you get moved or fired. Board members and high ranking school officials blatantly misuses district funds. They all say they are for the students, but there never seems to be enough money for the students, but if you look into it, Administrators are always raising their own salaries. Principals and administrators are spending almost half of all moneys from grants on workshops, instead of on students and teachers. Teachers are pulled out of the classrooms once or twice a week to go to in-services that should have been planned for the summer. New teachers are left to fend for themselves and are given very little help by administrators. Campuses are not given access to input their own requisitions for Federal monies. You also have many secretaries in Central offices and very little help at campuses. If the money is for the students, then you should concentrate on more personnel at the campuses instead of the main offices and where they don't have contact with students. We desperately need someone to come and look into the Donna ISD, because our students are suffering because of the misuse of funds and administrators who want to please board members, so they can get a raise.

- Parents with problem children rule the school board and thus stop necessary disciplinary action and other things. School board interferes with school TOO MUCH.

- I feel the state provides enough money to maintain a high quality of education in our school district. Most of the money goes to the school board members friends. These people are given made-up, unnecessary titles which will provide them with a high income to go along with the title. Though they lack the requirements for the job. The administrators high income hinders the education of our children. The school district also hires too many foreign teachers whose language the children can barely understand and whose beliefs greatly interfere with the children's education.

- The state needs to hire auditors or people who can come and investigate where the money the state sends the school district is used or to see that it is justly being used towards the education of

the children and not towards the benefits of administrators, relatives and friends incomes.

- First of all, your interpreter needs to learn how to interpret and know the actual and correct Spanish. Second the district needs to actually dedicate time to the kind of teachers and staff that they are hiring because some teachers look like they don't know a thing of what they are teaching, and last teachers really need to care and dedicate time to students and be a teacher because they love that profession and the students and not be one just because of the money.
- Rooms are overcrowded and there aren't enough teachers.
- Personnel are hired depending on who wins school elections.
- Security and police officers for the school are uneducated in law enforcement and juvenile laws.
- Too many gangs in the schools and no personnel to deal with them.
- Overworked teachers and assistant principals who don't do their jobs.
- The school district should be more aware of children being harassed and intimidated by others who are constantly bullying children because of their appearance. This kind of problem that we hear about in the nation where children commit suicide due to the "bullies" not being disciplined strongly. Most children will not go complain because of fear, but the school district should work more closely with children to know if he/she is going through this type of problem.
- I see many students standing on the bus. Some students are outside the window. I want the bus to wear seat belts all the bus driver.
- Well to start off we have a lot of employees who get promised a job just because they know someone in the school board. Meaning we have a lot of relatives of school board members working for a greater pay then someone who just gets hired. Another thing the cafeterias throw a lot of food that can be used for other children who come late and don't have time to eat.
- I have two wonderful boys and am proud that the oldest was extremely lucky to have great teachers to support him. On the other hand, the second son is a good student, but unfortunately the teachers he has had feel because he is a quiet student he does not need attention and did not see that he did not grasp the lesson. Some of the teachers are also hard to understand, since they are from foreign language. Overall if you compare DISD to a higher populated city, Donna is under average for education. It all depends on the parents to make their children focus on success, yet it is difficult if teachers cannot control their class for disruption.
- Suggestion: Principals and counselors to sit in during classes unexpectedly to evaluate the Teacher and Students. To keep more order and view both sides.

- Donna ISD needs more teachers and school staff to be fair with all the students not only the one that it's the teacher's or school staff student that have all the rights for everything where were opposite sex or Anglos or Hispanics all those kids have a heart and feelings too. Like my daughter was in athletic sports I had to take her out because she was never too good to play in any game and her grades were good so she could play and the coach told her that even if she passed your not good so go and sit down. When my daughter told me I went and talk to the principal and he told me that it was coach decision where she could play or not. So that's ONE.
- Second of her teachers told my daughter in open house mind you in front of everybody and me HE said (Mentodosa) means you liar real loud.
- Third, we have lots of gangs in Donna and specially in school. They never stopped them or anything. I think someone needs to put a stop to it because all the school we have instead of getting better its worst!
- Need to respect students concerns when being harassed by other children. Misconduct should not be tolerated or insubordination by teachers.
- Higher people need to come in and check all the schools because some teachers and staff and nurses are not treating all the students fairly. Only high class people are treated better.
- Nurses are harassing students and making them cry, etc.
- When a child is skipping or being tardy to classes we are not being notified. I reason I know when my kids are doing something wrong I checked every week to see how he or she is doing. The staff (Donna) need to be more responsible for our children.
- Make them feel safe not in danger.
- Please help our children feel safe.
- HELP NOW.
- Some of the questions I am not familiar.
- The school district is in serious need of an "overhaul". The school board is ineffective because they are more concerned with their position in the community then the community's children.
- I am very (extremely) disappointed in the way my children are being taught. I feel the teachers lack common sense, personality and education. Both my sons are failing because they are bored, confused and angry. My husband and I have met with principals that are very unorganized and teachers that give up very fast and prefer to blame the students instead of themselves. The performance of Donna ISD needs a lot of improvement.
- As a parent working for the district--I say we need more certified teachers willing and able to teach the students needs.

- As an employee, well we need stronger leaders--too much politics get in their way.
- My child suffered during her middle school years due to having one too many permanent subs in History and Math, who weren't certified or who had very little schooling and teaching experience.
- The school board should not be in charge of hiring employees. They create positions for unqualified personnel in secretarial, custodial, instructional assistants and their salary is twice as much as employees who've been in these positions for 15 plus years.
- Also, a new middle school is going to be built. Donna ISD purchased land knowing there weren't sewer or water lines as land is out of city limits. So they'll be asking for an increase in taxes.
- Donna High School has a serious drug problem, students consuming and selling drugs. More programs are needed to educate parents on how to give counsel to their children because the problem starts at home. Stable homes make stable children.
- The one thing I have a problem with is that they serve my child cold and sometimes rotten food. My other concern is the security guards like to flirt with the young girls and look at them in a bad way. I've witnessed these encounters.
- When it comes to education at Donna ISD, its who you know not what you know. Politics, politics a favor for a favor.
- Donna is getting bigger and more students, need to look into.
- My child has informed me that there are not enough computers available for the making of the yearbooks. I would like for the school board to help the yearbook staff by purchasing more computers to meet their needs.
- We have four children in Donna ISD. We are happy with the teachers, their teaching methods and with the administrative conduct. Their standards are excellent and their concern for our children is greatly appreciated.
- I feel there may be some major problems with textbook management.
- Students have problems accessing computers for homework assignments. Computers are not accessible after school hours.
- I strongly feel that parents from Donna should be given an opportunity to access my child's grades, absenteeism, and test scores via internet. I strongly feel that our school district should be broadcasting television programs and our community to keep me informed about my son's school and school districts.
- As a recent relocatee to the Donna area, I am extremely disappointed in the school system. Too much nepotism, too much of who you know rather than what you know. The curriculum is "dumbed" down for the students. I worry that my children are not getting the same caliber of education as they were in their previous

schools. The Donna school system needs major revamping! Less politics, more teaching!

- I have had five children go through Donna ISD. Compared to other schools I think we have a pretty good school compared to some that have a lot of problems.
- Donna ISD is a very well rounded and close net school district. Always has been in the past and hopefully will always be.
- Students need to be exposed to academic challenges while competing with other districts.
- Old schools need to be replaced with modern facilities to compete with neighboring schools.
- School board and administrators need to stay away from practicing nepotism to compadrismo when it comes to salary increases or promotions.
- Superintendent needs to be a better role model at all times and not let personal feelings interfere with running a school district.
- More effective and experienced educators promoting parental involvement is needed!
- Poor! Poor! Poor!
- This district is strictly run by politics! If you are not in favor of the right (winning) party you cannot get anything accomplished. One can't even keep his/her job. People (employees) that don't have an adequate education hold positions such as principals and curriculum specialists. And this is simply because they have family members on the school board.
- I've lived in Donna ISD and have always paid tuition to the PSJA District because we had heard so many bad things about the Donna ISD. We decided to send our children and they like it and I'm okay with my children's schools. The people in Donna are very united.
- I do not agree with teaching our children in Spanish. If you can accommodate the Spanish speakers, why can't you accommodate the English speakers. English is not a second language, it is the PRIMARY language of the United States of America. Also I do not believe in you have non-certified teachers or substitutes on a regular basis in the classroom, just to save money. For the taxes we pay we should have qualified teachers. Plus also the district stress the absenteeism rate of the students and expect 100% participation for students but teachers don't have to abide by this. I think teachers should set the example. When I was a kid, I don't remember my teachers being out so much.
- The problem here is with some of the teachers, a few teachers aides and some of the assistant principals. They don't listen to the students they don't investigate who did what to them your wrong. And it's the same with us the parent's. We go to the school office and were treated the same way as the children are. Don't blame the children for not wanting to learn it's the school staff that's not

doing their job right. Don't get me wrong not all teachers or principals are mean. Thank you.

- Ma'am, as a parent, I feel that the schools use of fundraising is made too much of a priority to students. There should be another way in which the school can raise funds to buy "benches" "trees" and other things that should be provided along with the completion of a new school. It's very hard to continually go from person to person "selling things" from brochures four to five times a year. This should be done or handled by the administration and not burdenly placed on the students or parents.
- I really feel the parent meetings should be in English, not just Spanish. I quit attending them because they are all in Spanish and I was very upset because I understood very little. That's at Salanis.
- There needs to be more qualified personnel such as teachers and security guards.
- At times when those that have the power to make decisions do not do it for the children bur for their own use and the children are the ones to suffer. Monies at times go to the wrong things when it should be for books, desks or teacher supplies. Teachers don't have the materials they need and yet are expected to perform. Politics are at times bad instead of good. Sad but true, what schools used to stand for--education--has become of social services for students and have forgotten how to learn the basics.
- I really think this is a good idea and has and will be helpful to each one of us.
- We strongly disagree with the director of transportation. The bus drivers leave the students at the edge of the street because before they didn't have time, now the drive in the back roads to complete their hour.
- The school district of Donna hires too many people in order to retain their vote in the following election.
- There are many workers working for the politicians and less for the students.
- My only concern about the Pre-Kinder students is that they rarely go out and run outside on the playground after lunch--they never have that chance to go play on the swings.
- The district has a great number of good teachers but are unable to deliver the best instruction due to the lack of support. There are some good principals but are unable to do their jobs because of the superintendent and the majority board members. Principals are forced to hire "party members" instead of the most qualified. Tax money is being wasted in creating positions promised as favors and giving raises to board members relatives ad supporters.
- To whom it may concern, what I don't like about the school board members is that they don't care about our kids they only care about the money. Because I've had problems with teachers that they

scream at my kids and they don't do nothing about it. Now on these days nobody cares about our kids. I'm talking about the teachers. Because my self, I've heard them yelling at the kids and they've told the kids that they don't care about them if they learn or not they are just there for the money. And I don't think this is right for the kids. My kids have brought to me so many complaints. Because I don't like for nobody to yell at my kids. Another thing is that I don't like is that they send the kids to sell stuff telling them that its for their field trips and they don't even take them no where. So what's the use of us paying school taxes. And also why do teacher drink good water while the children drink the ugly water. Well I have a lot more to say but I guess this is important so I wish you'll send someone to check this district.

- I'm not satisfied with the Donna ISD school board or the school teachers and staff.
- All I can say is that there are teachers that are really good at what they do and some that don't.
- Some counselors don't bother or make time to notify juniors and seniors of what classes are available or to help with what they might want to be.
- They need faster maintenance when it comes to A/C. Buses come too early and too late. Cafeteria food is too cold and kids get food poisoning. Some teachers punish students their way (to ugly) also they get late to class. They also have their favorite students. Sometimes they don't use the proper language. Some security guards let students leave campus. Get students out of class for about twenty minutes for no reason. Some get along with students too much. The school board says promises that they don't keep. Sometimes fountains are dirty and the water is very ugly and smelly and some classrooms have rats and roaches.
- There is a lack of adequate facilities to accommodate the needs of Special Education students from campus to campus.
- All elementary campuses have the neighborhood concept for regular education students, but cannot accommodate the needs for special education students.
- When there is an overload they push the special education classrooms to portable buildings.
- Therapy sessions offered to special education students are not adequate to meet the students needs. Parents who can afford to have their child serviced outside of the school are having to do so to get quality services for their children.
- Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct, when they support the right political group.
- The district has so few competent, experienced staff members with seniority, knowledge and skills, they are overlooked for promotions. The promotions are based on which political group

you support financially and the number of votes you offer for the upcoming board election.

- The employees who perform below the standards are the one's that are promoted to a higher position with an increase in pay.
- The district has an effective middle & high school athletic program.
- The district does not have an effective educational program that will allow all students to meet state standards.
- Some of my children still don't have books for math. It's 3/1/02 already! There are also no certified math teachers in most of our campuses.
- I feel that our students don't get the same quality education that other cities offer.
- I feel that Donna ISD is doing a good job. I feel and know that my daughter is in good hands when I drop her off in the morning at her school which is Donna HS. When I drop her off in the morning she is in a good mood. And when she is picked up she never complains about her teachers, she likes them all. So I am very happy about the educational performance of Donna ISD is doing for my child.
- I would like for all the personnel that work in the Donna ISD get survey the right way like they do the students. WE would get a big surprise on some workers and the way the school should be guided. Maybe the students would learn an ISD would have enough workers not overstaffed.
- I would like for the Donna ISD to have a summer school program for advanced students and not for those students that need to go.
- My child does not qualify for summer school because she does not need it--but I believe advanced students need to keep busy.
- Thank you for thinking about the school district in Donna, Texas. But, throughout the entire questionnaire, I responded no comment because the school doesn't communicate with us at all. Hopefully, they will worry more about the dropout students and the drug addicts. Hopefully there will be a rehabilitation center.
- Our scores for TAAS are very low and need to be improved. Our board members do not allow some people to speak at board meetings as long as others in open forum. The board members hires their family members and gives them raises when others have been there 10 years or more get less money. I've been to some TASBO meetings, we get great ideas on how to make the district more effective. However we get back and are not allowed to implement the info.
- My comment is that education is good but with more educational programs for the teachers and the parents of families, it could be much better. In our country, we need healthcare programs for parents that want and need to learn English.
- It is satisfactory.

- As the mother of my son, what can I say other than as of now, everything is OK. Thank you,
- We are very pleased with the support the school gives us. The teachers are very attentive and take care of my children and they give them good attention and teachings.
- I think the problem in this school district is that they do not have sufficient school buses because they arrive very early in the morning and very late after school because they have to do many routes because there aren't enough buses.
- Personally, I like the school and how my son's education is progressing. When my son started, he did not know any English. He has been in school for less than a year and he now knows English 100%. He is very smart, in such a short period of time, he already knows English.
- My son is very satisfied with the education in his school and with the food, he had a problem that one time they wanted to hit him. But there are many problems with gangs in the school and many students that don't want any problems change from school to old school in Donna.
- They treat them very well and teach them very well. They treat them the way they should be treated when they misbehave. They ask first the punishment and then they give it to them.
- I would like more attention to be paid to the teachers who run the Donna district, that the teachers be more advanced because I see the children of the school where my children go to school are very behind. That is my point of view and I would like for you all to confirm this for yourselves and visit the school.
- It is very good. But I have known and I have verified that sometimes there is too much homework for a 1st grader. There are 6 to 7 two-sided sheets of homework and sometimes they are simply annoyed with the work in the school to do so much homework.
- I am satisfied to share the comments about our children's education because nothing is more important than our children's education. Thank you.
- What I ask for the children under the Donna district is that there be a program like the ones that exist in other districts. That is to teach the children more. Other schools stay after class to teach them, like those who are behind in English.
- As parents, citizens, and tax payers for the past 30 years, the city of Donna has been deteriorating in many important aspects. Education is one of them that is important, but is lacking many improvements. Thank you for listening to these comments.
- I am a native born resident of Donna and I hope these letters call your attention to the garbage that is very close to 3 of the Donna schools. I want to ask the new governor of Texas to take those

dumpsters from here. Now that no one has paid attention to this, and all of our students are very close to these germs, please we need help. I ask in the name of many others for your help.

- Please put more time into the food served to the children. It is not sufficient lunch for the children who are in 5th-12th grades. No one in the older ages can fill up with the food that is given to them.
- To whom it may concern, the functioning of the school, whatever is fitting is good.
- I hope that you receive more economic and professional help so that our children turn out ahead and with good academic preparation.
- My comment is that the food is not pleasing to my children because it is different types of frozen foods and my children do not like cold food. They eat fresh food recently cooked. I need more people in the cafeterias.
- It has not been very long since I moved to Donna and I do not know the work of the school. But I do want them to pay more attention to the children and should not leave them alone in the classrooms and they should be taught to read more and take care of them so that they do not fight. Thank you.
- That the parent meetings have a time that the parents who work, who cannot attend during the school day. Thank you.
- I am very pleased that my children are studying in Donna because they have advanced a lot and they have learned the necessary material.
- My comments include: you do your job very well, you teach the children very well. The only comment I have heard from my daughter is that there is one teacher who hits the children when he has permission from the parents. I do not think this is right. They should not hit on anyone because there are other forms of punishment.
- I answered question number 23 that says that the school has many volunteers. Yes, but they are not careful with the children because the only thing they do is gossip. My daughter broke her left arm and they sent her by herself to the nurse. I am a working person, I go in to work at 8:00 AM and I have to leave my daughter in the classroom with the children alone because there is no one to take care of them because the teacher and the assistant don't arrive on time because they have to leave their children safe in their classes and our children do learn to stay alone and that's what happens in Donna schools. That's how my daughter broke her arm, the incompetence of the people who work in the school. And they think that with many apologies, everything is OK. The girl spent 4 months with a cast for that reason and you can see the assistant or the volunteers by 3 and 3, talking. And I have to work to support my children. I hope you understand my letter because I did not

study because I was an orphan. I hope you can do something. Thank you.

- Thanks to the teachers. My children have advanced in their studies. To now, I have not had any complaints of any sort. That's all Mrs. _____ has to say.
- I think the education shared by the professors in the Donna School district is good.
- As the parent of my children, I agree with all of the efforts given to my children. Thanks to the Donna School District- my children are very well at this point. We have not had any problems with our 3 children.
- Something I do not like in my son's school is that they have to buy their diploma for graduation at the end of the year.
- I have not been in Donna for very long. It was not long ago that I enrolled my children at Donna and they have treated them very well. For the most part, I do not have any complaints. It is a very responsible school all of the personnel is very nice and they have always treated me well.
- What we believe is that if they continue studying and they have a good education then they can continue on.
- As a mother, I want more economical daycare to provide the education for the children, and that they check on the children more, that they contract employees. I do not feel satisfied with the childcare in the school and bus.
- Please keep order when there are gang fights.
- That there be more variety of food and that it be more nutritious.
- Well, the children need more help learning to read and math. I have 2 children in 2nd grade and they have not learned to read. They know the letters and the school says that they do not have another class to help them. As the father of my family, I know that the Donna schools are providing good studies for my children and for all of the community. I answered this questionnaire in agreement with the school district where you will find my children. But I have heard that in the higher grades (7,8,9,etc) that there are problems with gangs and fights in the school. I worry because I have 2 sons and I don't know what the future holds for them at school. As mother of the family, I would like to have more security in the school and on the bus because the driver does nothing more than drive and he cannot do two things at once. They should put more personnel on the bus and I would also like the bus to stop at every house not every block. In my opinion, for the education of our children that are United States citizens, they should not be in bilingual classes because our children know how to learn English more than the children who come to the school for the first time. Those who come from another country need to learn in a bilingual

system not our citizen children. This is the case with my two sons who are confused with the two languages. Thank you.

- To me everything seems fine, the transportation, the food, the teachers, everything in general.
- The school is very pretty and very clean. Sometimes the students fight and they are taken to the office. Also, the teachers are good with me and with the children. The cafeteria gives good breakfasts and at lunch time. It's good for me but I don't know the other students. Well, that said for me to tell you about Donna ISD school district. Thank you, Sincerely.
- We would like for the school buses to pick up the students closer to our houses when it is raining or when it is cold because there is not any type of covering at the corner. There are some times when the children get sick.
- I hope you will help us with some bad children. I'm not saying mine are bad, but I want to comment on all of them. I want you all to know that the children need to be punished every once in a while, because if we do not show them what is right, we are to blame. Then, no one will be able to control them. That's why there are so many kids in correctional centers or in jail. I hope you understand me.
- In terms of the teachers, I have seen many who are motivated to see their students progress, but this is not all of the teachers.
- My daughter doesn't walk and she always comes home to me wet because she has peed because sometimes the nurse is not there or she is busy. There is no one to sit her in the restroom. She does not wet her pants in my house. She has problems with the nurse, she tells my daughter that she smells bad.
- The functioning of the school is excellent. The work of the teachers is perfect. In general, everything in the Donna district works well.
- I would like the school bus driver of bus #35 to wait a little longer at the school because I almost always have to go to the school for my son because he is in athletics or soccer and when he gets out, he misses the bus. I can't always go to pick him up until very late and he is by himself. Thank you.
- The education is good, but if a child is behind, they do not have anyone to help them. I had to help my daughter in the house until she was caught up with the children in the subject that she was behind in. And I don't like that the children have to sell items from brochures that the school gives them to recover funds. Thank you.

Appendix D
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

(n=75)
*Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Demographic Data

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response		
		32.0%	61.3%	6.7%		

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response
		6.7%	1.3%	80.0%	0.0%	2.7%	9.3%

3.	How long have you been employed by Donna ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
		16.0%	30.7%	17.3%	13.3%	18.7%	4.0%

4.	Are you a(n):	Administrator	Clerical Staffer	Support Staffer	No Response
		18.7%	26.7%	46.7%	8.0%

5.	How long have you been employed in this capacity by Donna ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
		26.7%	34.7%	14.7%	9.3%	9.3%	5.3%

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	2.7%	26.7%	17.3%	18.7%	34.7%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	meetings.					
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	2.7%	25.3%	13.3%	21.3%	37.3%
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	9.3%	24.0%	17.3%	12.0%	37.3%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	8.0%	22.7%	17.3%	17.3%	34.7%
5.	Central administration is efficient.	2.7%	33.3%	13.3%	26.7%	24.0%
6.	Central administration supports the educational process.	8.0%	30.7%	18.7%	16.0%	26.7%
7.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	2.7%	29.3%	28.0%	16.0%	24.0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	10.7%	28.0%	6.7%	22.7%	32.0%
9.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	4.0%	30.7%	13.3%	36.0%	16.0%
10.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	4.0%	33.3%	18.7%	30.7%	13.3%
11.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	4.0%	37.3%	28.0%	21.3%	9.3%
12.	The district has effective educational programs					

	for the following:				
	a) Reading	6.7%	41.3%	16.0%	21.3%	14.7%
	b) Writing	5.3%	33.3%	21.3%	26.7%	13.3%
	c) Mathematics	8.0%	46.7%	18.7%	14.7%	12.0%
	d) Science	5.3%	40.0%	21.3%	20.0%	13.3%
	e) English or Language Arts	5.3%	42.7%	17.3%	21.3%	13.3%
	f) Computer Instruction	8.0%	52.0%	14.7%	13.3%	12.0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	5.3%	42.7%	20.0%	21.3%	10.7%
	h) Fine Arts	14.7%	38.7%	17.3%	16.0%	13.3%
	i) Physical Education	12.0%	45.3%	16.0%	18.7%	8.0%
	j) Business Education	5.3%	50.7%	25.3%	13.3%	5.3%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	10.7%	28.0%	6.7%	22.7%	32.0%
	l) Foreign Language	10.7%	57.3%	17.3%	9.3%	5.3%
13.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	2.7%	44.0%	33.3%	13.3%	6.7%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	4.0%	56.0%	16.0%	13.3%	10.7%
	c) Special Education	1.3%	50.7%	12.0%	21.3%	14.7%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	4.0%	57.3%	10.7%	12.0%	16.0%
	e) Dyslexia program	2.7%	37.3%	29.3%	16.0%	14.7%
	f) Student mentoring program	0.0%	36.0%	18.7%	24.0%	21.3%
	g) Advanced placement program	2.7%	37.3%	21.3%	21.3%	17.3%
	h) Literacy program	6.7%	46.7%	21.3%	17.3%	8.0%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out	2.7%	34.7%	25.3%	20.0%	17.3%

	of school					
	j) Summer school programs	5.3%	25.3%	22.7%	24.0%	22.7%
	k) Alternative education programs	10.7%	46.7%	8.0%	20.0%	14.7%
	l) English as a Second Language program	9.3%	42.7%	18.7%	16.0%	13.3%
	m) Career counseling program	9.3%	42.7%	20.0%	14.7%	13.3%
	n) College counseling program	8.0%	30.7%	24.0%	24.0%	13.3%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	9.3%	41.3%	16.0%	16.0%	17.3%
	p) Dropout prevention program	5.3%	25.3%	17.3%	24.0%	28.0%
14.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	4.0%	21.3%	26.7%	30.7%	17.3%
15.	Teacher turnover is low.	9.3%	34.7%	9.3%	25.3%	21.3%
16.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	1.3%	20.0%	21.3%	28.0%	29.3%
17.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	2.7%	10.7%	18.7%	29.3%	38.7%
18.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0.0%	17.3%	14.7%	34.7%	33.3%
19.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	1.3%	13.3%	14.7%	33.3%	37.3%
20.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	1.3%	21.3%	29.3%	30.7%	17.3%
21.	The student-teacher ratio	5.3%	37.3%	12.0%	20.0%	24.0%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	is reasonable.					
22.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	4.0%	40.0%	14.7%	20.0%	21.3%
23.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	16.0%	60.0%	8.0%	10.7%	5.3%

C. Personnel Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	8.0%	34.7%	20.0%	25.3%	12.0%
25.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0.0%	18.7%	10.7%	21.3%	49.3%
26.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	1.3%	30.7%	16.0%	24.0%	28.0%
27.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	2.7%	13.3%	36.0%	25.3%	22.7%
28.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	2.7%	18.7%	20.0%	24.0%	34.7%
29.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	2.7%	9.3%	24.0%	21.3%	42.7%
30.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	1.3%	32.0%	20.0%	21.3%	25.3%
31.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	12.0%	66.7%	8.0%	6.7%	6.7%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	4.0%	14.7%	12.0%	21.3%	48.0%
33.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	1.3%	21.3%	20.0%	26.7%	30.7%
34.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0.0%	37.3%	18.7%	18.7%	25.3%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
35.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	5.3%	25.3%	8.0%	16.0%	45.3%
36.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	5.3%	36.0%	14.7%	21.3%	22.7%
37.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	4.0%	22.7%	16.0%	26.7%	30.7%
38.	District facilities are open for community use.	0.0%	28.0%	18.7%	26.7%	26.7%

E. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	2.7%	30.7%	25.3%	18.7%	22.7%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	4.0%	16.0%	16.0%	28.0%	36.0%
41.	Schools are clean.	1.3%	12.0%	25.3%	26.7%	34.7%
42.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	6.7%	56.0%	17.3%	9.3%	10.7%
43.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	4.0%	46.7%	6.7%	22.7%	20.0%
44.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	4.0%	26.7%	17.3%	33.3%	18.7%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
45.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	8.0%	40.0%	14.7%	21.3%	16.0%
46.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	1.3%	29.3%	20.0%	25.3%	24.0%
47.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	1.3%	22.7%	17.3%	37.3%	21.3%
48.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	0.0%	25.3%	24.0%	29.3%	21.3%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	Purchasing gets me	1.3%	26.7%	20.0%	25.3%	26.7%

	Survey Questions					
	what I need when I need it.					
50.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	5.3%	34.7%	9.3%	30.7%	20.0%
51.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	2.7%	32.0%	18.7%	29.3%	17.3%
52.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	2.7%	29.3%	26.7%	26.7%	14.7%
53.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	5.3%	49.3%	18.7%	17.3%	9.3%
54.	Textbooks are in good shape.	2.7%	33.3%	6.7%	30.7%	26.7%
55.	The school library meets students' needs for books and other resources for students.	4.0%	41.3%	13.3%	32.0%	9.3%

H. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
56.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	10.7%	50.7%	6.7%	12.0%	20.0%
57.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	2.7%	8.0%	17.3%	44.0%	28.0%
58.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	1.3%	4.0%	20.0%	42.7%	32.0%
59.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	1.3%	6.7%	10.7%	46.7%	34.7%
60.	Security personnel are	4.0%	42.7%	22.7%	13.3%	17.3%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	respected and liked by the students they serve.					
61.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	2.7%	29.3%	26.7%	26.7%	14.7%
62.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	5.3%	45.3%	18.7%	13.3%	17.3%

I. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	Students regularly use computers.	4.0%	34.7%	10.7%	20.0%	30.7%
64.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	18.7%	57.3%	9.3%	5.3%	9.3%
65.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	16.0%	48.0%	12.0%	13.3%	10.7%
66.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	8.0%	34.7%	21.3%	21.3%	14.7%
67.	The district meets students' needs in computer fundamentals.	17.3%	52.0%	8.0%	12.0%	9.3%
68.	The district meets students' needs in advanced computer skills.	13.3%	50.7%	13.3%	10.7%	12.0%
69.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	6.7%	36.0%	20.0%	22.7%	14.7%

Appendix D
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

The following comments convey district administrator and support staff perceptions of Donna Independent School District and do not reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

NARRATIVE COMMENTS:

- Donna Independent School District has a high rate of lawsuits against them. Donna ISD changes superintendents so often that a curriculum or leadership is lacking. Donna ISD is controlled by the school board politics.
- The district has committed all facility funding to educational buildings. The administration facilities have been neglected for decades. The district must invest in modern and technologically advanced administrative facilities in order to keep up with increasing local, state, and federal information reporting requirements. The local school board members are too involved in micromanaging the district for their own benefit. They do not seem interested in student achievement but devote much time to manipulating the school system to benefit their supporters. They often use their position as school members to hire supporters, which are often unskilled laborers. Thus resulting in overall lower quality district services. This contributes to over spending district payroll funds and not always receiving quality services from these laborers in return. New school facilities are not technologically designed. These facilities are being designed by professionals that are not technologically savvy. The district should consider new building design with technology in mind.
- We as educators need more training. Our ratios of students to teachers are ridiculous, especially in the Special Ed department. People in the classroom don't get paid enough to deal with all the work they do for our children. If we could help them maybe we wouldn't have any of our teachers and assistants seeking other jobs. The supplies we need we don't see for a couple of months. Employees at this district need to have some kind of accountability.
- In the elementary grades, they need to work on getting the lower level students prepared for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade. Many students come to those grades unable to read.
- You need to send someone here without the school board knowing you are coming, because if you let them know, they will fix the

things that are wrong. The school board members use the superintendent as a puppet. They should worry about the school, not themselves. They should raise the pay of people that clean the rooms and teacher aides.

- There is a lack of adequate facilities to accommodate the needs of Special Education students from campus to campus. Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct when they support the right political group. The district has so few competent experienced staff members with seniority, knowledge, and skills they are overlooked for promotions. The promotions are based on which political group you support financially and the number of votes you offer for the upcoming board election. The employees who perform below the standards are the ones that are promoted to a higher position with an increase in pay. The district has an effective middle and high school athletic program. The district does not have an effective educational program that will allow all students to meet state standards. Summer school program is not for all students. Students at the elementary level campuses are using computers for the AR and CCC programs, not for internet use, or the application of technology required by the state.
- The district breaks its policy of nepotism. The district does not have a pay scale for employees. Administration does not have credentials for position. Administration harasses employees and tells them to say nothing. Job vacancy announcements are posted only when supervisors want to post them. District policies are used only to their advantage.
- Do you have time to read a novel.
- You state you want money for classrooms and teachers, yet what happens to school support staff and facilities. The campus does not get enough state and federal funds for libraries, nurses, elementary PE, elementary fine arts, and facilities. Schools are forced to have fund raisers to supplement the local funds. Central administrative staff and board members are able to go out of state for in-services, yet most teachers cannot. Board members have laptop computers, most elementary schools do not. Board members and their family get money for room and food yet most teachers need to share a room if they go to a conference. Yes, please look at the school board's budget and how they spend it.
- The administrative and personnel reassignments that have occurred in recent years make it difficult to have a continuum of educational services. Personnel have openly stated having a guaranteed principalship position because of a brother or relative elected as a board member. Personnel are reassigned to departments or programs out of their expertise. There doesn't seems to be enough money for critically needed personnel, educational resources, or

buses, but a select few relatives to board members get promoted and get pay raises!

- I believe that DISD is not efficient in education, they don't provide high quality materials, not enough safety in the schools, there have been incidents where strangers go in to the classrooms and steal money and credit cards from the teachers. In my opinion, DISD needs a complete overhaul in administration.
- It's about our school budget: we ask if there's money to buy the students incentives or prizes to give to the students. They say there's no money. This is for the students to praise them when they are good in school.
- We need for the administrative office to stop getting more raises than they need, and pay the people working hard for the money.
- Donna has the potential to offer the best education possible to meet the needs of our students. However, the strong political involvement often dictates certain procedures which often cause conflict between campus administrators and central office personnel. Many administrators have lost hope and choose not to fight or stand up for the best interests of students. The spirit of making a difference has subsided. These attitudes sadden me. I have made the decision to move on. I refuse to accept directives which are not in the best interest of children.
- Note: Budget allocations especially in the federally funded programs are incorrectly being distributed. TEA cited our district in this area. Despite this citation, I encourage you to review this area and help our students receive the funds necessary to provide appropriate instruction.
- For one thing, our school board members run the district the way they want. They hire their relatives, friends, and wives to work in the district, and give them promotions and raises. Recently, the board purchased land for a new middle school and each acre was $11,500. A contractor from McAllen sold them 38 acres, but he purchased the acres from a Donna lady at $6,500 an acre. This Donna lady hadn't even sold the acres to the contractor when he sold it to the district double the price. Our board knew about the deal and they went with it. The board is not using the tax payers money wisely! They are forgetting about the students and teachers! And what is important to education!
- I believe they are doing a good enough job.
- I personally think that in order to have an effective, efficient, and stable educational learning environment for all of Donna ISD student, there has to be a low turnover of campus administrative staff. Unfortunately, in Donna there seems to be a constantly very high turnover of principals and administrators.
- The educational performance of the school is extremely low. Most teachers are working for DISD, not for the students needs or

success but for themselves. They are most interested in a paycheck. The reason for this is because when new board members are sworn in, they bring in their family and friends to work for DISD with very high paying checks and little or no experience. This in turn lowers the morale of all teachers/staff when everything comes to light. Hard-working people with a lot of experience at what they do are never appreciated or compensated for all that they do. Please, I urge you or TEA to come in. Not only to investigate, but to take over matters before there is no hope for our kids or hard working employees. Thanks.

- I feel we can in the educational department. We need to hire better prepared teachers and some administrators.
- While I am concerned with the review, I hope that whatever recommendations made by the state will be adhered to by DISD. There are a lot of areas that need improvement or a change of personnel, mainly in the support part, maintenance, construction and counselors districtwide. The district needs personnel that are leaders, that show a genuine interest in their jobs.
- The school board and main office administration have forgotten that the #1 concerns are the students, teachers and support personnel. They are more concerned about giving pay increased to relatives and close political friends. There is never enough money for student and teacher needs, but there is always money for increases and hiring new personnel when there is no need for those positions. All employees are afraid to speak out because of fear that they may be fired or reassigned. Someone from TEA needs to come in and investigate.
- I have 3 years with DISD and I work very hard and love my job. Thank you.
- Donna ISD does the best for its students in every area, the best possible. The areas that are marked "Disagree" are because I feel they need improvement.
- In my 20 years of experience with the Donna Independent School District, I have noticed the educational performance of Donna ISD deteriorate due to political influence first and foremost people being hired or given position advancements not for qualification but for political favors and/or nepotism. Because of this, the children of Donna lack the basic educational needs. Monies for education programs are being squandered in raises for certain individuals with political influences. I challenge you to come and observe the overall picture of the district educational performance.
- The district has an effective middle and high school athletic program. The district does not have an effective educational program that will allow all students to meet state standards. There was a time in the district when we had 7 of 9 elementary campuses with a mentoring program. Summer school program is not for all

students. Students at the elementary level campuses are using computers for the AR and CCC programs, not for internet use, or the application of technology required by the state.

- This district has the potential to be a really good district, but there is absolutely no leadership at the top. Anyone you ask will tell you that the superintendent is a "puppet" for the board. Positions are created to pay political supporters. Although I have no proof, there are rumors of "payolas" political oppression of employees. The board and the top administrators doe not have the education of the children as a priority. Their only concern is pay increases for their spouses, relatives, and supporters. Their concern is themselves. Come and investigate and you'll find out that it is probably worse than I have stated.

- The schools at one time had over 250 volunteers to help students and support the HOSTS program when 7 of 9 elementary campuses had the HOSTS program. The district's health insurance package does not meet my needs or the needs of my family. The district has a fair and timely grievance process for the political allies of the board members. Before the changes in the school board members in May 2001 election, there was an active facilities planning committee. The district has so few competent, experienced staff members with seniority, knowledge and skills they are overlooked for promotions. The promotions are based on which political group you support financially and the number of votes you offer for the upcoming board election. The employees who perform below the standards are the ones that are promoted to a higher position with an increase in pay.

- In Donna ISD, the students who get a better education are those whose parents are influential. Wait and find out next year when 3rd graders don't do well with TAAS. TEA has come to our district before. How Donna gets away with so much is incomprehensible. TEA doesn't find anything wrong but there is so many problems from board members and superintendent.

- I do not feel education is a top priority. There are too many political issues that do take top priority. Voters are promised jobs if they vote for those running for the board (see attached photo for salary raises for board member relatives). Some of us with college degrees make less than some of the board members' relatives. This district spends hundreds on lawyer fees, as well as payoffs for superintendents. This district suspends superintendents often with pay! Our salaries are not the same as the job market.

- Unfortunately, our district is run by local politics. Education and our children are not the priority, it is in the number of votes the politicians can get. They make empty promises to the community and never come through for our children. The administration at Donna ISD is also a direct result of local politics. It rarely recruits

from outside the district for top administrators such as superintendents. Instead, they hire from within and eventually have to pay off the superintendent. Donna has a history of settling lawsuits and then rehiring the people who sued them. More importantly, our children at DISD have no textbooks. My own child went through the fifth grade with no textbooks because there weren't enough to go around the district. It wasn't until several of us parents got together and brought the issue up that some of the campuses got textbooks. It is so unfair to our children to be denied not only textbooks, but PE equipment at the elementary level, librarians, and certified teachers. I really hope that TEA looks into this district, there is so much corruption, but everyone fears retaliation not only on our jobs but our families.

- Too much emphasis on state/federal testing. Somewhere we forgot the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and along with that morals, values, honesty, and responsibility.

- Need stronger instructional leaders. More programs for LD and slow learners. More clerical and support staff to keep all necessary paperwork from piling up on administrators and counselors. More support in curriculum departments. More district wide in-services on various aspects of school functions to make transitions for students between schools easier and to get everyone on the same page. Hire specific data entry personnel on each campus for PEIMS input to not have problems with funding. More instruction for administrators on available grants and grant writing. More incentives for students. Music programs in elementaries. Better outreach programs.

- A lot of employees are employed by the relatives who work for central office.

- I feel that our school is very TAAS oriented that they forgotten what a true education is. Our teachers are pressured to only focus on TAAS results and the fundamentals for learning are pushed aside. I also feel that our school district is influenced by politics; it's not how competent and qualified you are for a position, but who you know on the school board. That's why we have people who are not certified in administration positions and clerical staff making more money than professionals and staff with a degree. I really wish someone would help our district overcome some of these issues and get these power seeking board members out and get some board members and a superintendent that actually do for our students and staff and not for their family and friends.

- Too many people pay school board members for their jobs! Qualified people who are honest are not always considered! Many certified people who will not pay and they are not hired! Too many under certified administrators, etc. Please help us! People are

afraid to meet with you. The administration knows who talks! How? Everyone is afraid for their jobs!

- Several years back, state officials were sent to our district to monitor and put a stop to any wrong doing that was occurring. This resulted in monitors, which were befriended by the wrong doers, who reported back that "all was well in DISD". Ha, Ha. The top dogs at central office are bought and paid for by the politicians and vice versa. The politicians are paid well by the top dogs to hold those top positions. Forget the educations and what's best for the students. All they are interested in is filling their pockets with money. The school board members and the superintendent knows nothing about education. Assessment reports on student scores are camouflaged and sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon and rather than show their ignorance, board members applaud and fall for the sugary but yet false information. The students scores are great, causing our district to only regress. Because they pretend to believe what is presented to them (due to their lack of knowledge in the education field) everyone in the district goes around pretending that all is well. Well, all is not well, but if agencies such as your, whose bark is louder than your bite, come in again and get swayed by smooth talking politicians at central office, then the vicious cycle will continue and the children will continue to suffer. This community needs your help. Don't fall in their trap. The teacher morale is at an all time low. They have to work under principals that know nothing and do nothing because the bottom line is that they know nothing. They were assigned to positions because they knew the right people. The principals get excellent evaluations simply because they are in the right party! So the students suffer! HELP!

- Donna ISD is too political. Politics play a major part in all aspects of the school district, including the employees and students. There are too many funds missing in the district and too many kickbacks for the school board members. Employees are often hired because of who they know and not because of what their capabilities are.

- I feel that the overall educational performance is not good at Donna ISD due to the fact that teamwork is never used. Everyone wants to do their own thing. The lack of consistency reflects on the low educational performance at Donna ISD. Instructors should stop blaming other factors when it comes to teaching their students. It is their job to accomplish this goal.

- Although I did not get this questionnaire, I would like to be considered. I am an employee. As I write, one new elementary campus has 950 students. The Special Ed teacher is up to 80 IEPs per day. He is in a portable building and is not connected to CCC, etc. There is no intercom for emergency. Other people get raises while 4 diagnosticians deal with a caseload of over 250 students.

We don't get them because of salary and caseload. The focus is not on children and learning. It's on whose on the new board and creating new slots for friends/family. There is not enough input from teachers/staff for classroom specs, furniture, etc. Low bids rule-diagnosticians, speech therapists are always looking for rooms/space to test and provide therapy to students. Some principals are conscientious of their needs. Others have difficulty finding space. Transportation is lacking in the area of timely arrivals/departures. Some children miss out on 1st period an entire semester/year because there are not enough buses. Some children get picked up at 4:30. Imagine the time spent on the bus. TAAS scores are OK in Texas. They say we are ahead of the game on accountability. In comparison to whom? A Region I staff member said "If you compare us nationwide, we suck". We've come a long way, but we have a long way to go. You have the data. There are not enough teachers as is and students do not want to become teachers. We no longer just teach. Paperwork is horrendous. We are expected to sponsor clubs, work late, take work home, work on Saturdays, etc. and not get paid because we are "professionals". Professionals in the outside world get paid overtime and time and a half on holidays. No one works for free anymore. Not if you have families, homes, cars, and responsibilities. And God forbid if we get sick. I hope that you are truly going to do something with this survey. All we want is to be treated with dignity and respect. We deserve that. Weed out/get rid of the bad teachers and administrators. They give education a bad name. Most of us work hard and are willing to go that extra mile. Thank you, a pat on the back, anything would raise morale. The hiring of principals based on who you know not on merit and credentials is unethical. Send a mentor-do something. Come see for yourselves.

- There are a lot of good teachers, support staff, and programs. The general comment about Donna is "Don't go there". Or as one teacher said yesterday, "My friends asked why I come here. I'm leaving next year. I am a 1st year teacher. I had 35 science books that were incomplete (missing chapters, pages, etc). I got my teachers edition in January". And we wonder why?

- Donna Independent has a high rate of lawsuits against them. Donna ISD changes superintendents so often that a curriculum or leadership is lacking. Donna ISD is controlled by the school board politics.

- The Donna Independent School District is in the worst shape it has ever been in. Politics rule, staff members who have contributed to political campaigns and the "right" trustees get promoted and given raises; dedication to education and hard work go unnoticed and unrewarded; student needs are not met, and with the exception of a

handful of parents at each campus there is virtually no parental involvement.

- The current superintendent is known throughout the community as a "puppet" who does only what certain trustees tell him. He is famous for calling in staff and telling the "the board" wants you out, wants you transferred, wants you to resign, etc. His only interest in Donna ISD is make sure that he, his wife, and their cronies are looked after and taken care of.

- Most employees are afraid to voice their opinions and/or concerns because we are coerced by veiled threats as to uncertain employment - not directly from the superintendent or even top-level administrators but through supervisors and other support staff who are "in" with the board and superintendent.

- There are many things wrong with DISD. When you speak to staff, please do so in private and assure them their names will not be used - MOST PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP FOR FEAR OF LOSING THEIR JOBS.

- As for site-based decision-making - it is almost nil. Principals ARE NOT always allowed to recommend their own staff - they are made to take certain individuals. We continue to hire newly degreed, uncertified teachers.

- The parental involvement program is almost non-existent and is mostly limited to the handful of individuals that the parent center educators bring in. The only time parents are on campus is when there are problems with their children or at the elementary level when their children have to come in to perform at evening programs. They always leave as soon as their child's performance is over.

- Also most parent meetings are conducted in Spanish. We are a poor and 99.9 percent Hispanic area but most people speak and prefer English. Administrators do not take this into account and some people are offended at the assumption that parents do not speak or understand English.

- Thank you for coming in here and trying to help. DISD staff is probably one of the most oppressed in the state and worst of all our kids are losing out on the quality education they deserve.

Appendix E
PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

(n=5)
*Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Demographic Data

1.	Gender (Optional)	No Response	Male	Female
		0%	60%	40%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	No Response	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
		0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%

3.	How long have you been employed by Donna ISD?	No Response	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
		0%	20%	0%	40%	20%	0%

4.	What grades are taught in your school?	Pre K to 5th	6th to 8th	9th to 12th
		60%	0%	40%

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.	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
3.	School board members	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%

#	Statement					
	understand their role as policymakers and stay out of the day-to-day management of the district.					
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%
6.	Central administration is efficient.	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%
7.	Central administration supports the educational process.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%
8.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%
9.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%
10.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
11.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
12.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
13.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%
14.	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%

#	Item					
15.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%
16.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a) Reading	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%
	b) Writing	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	c) Mathematics	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	d) Science	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%
	e) English or Language Arts	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	f) Computer Instruction	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%
	h) Fine Arts	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
	i) Physical Education	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	j) Business Education	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	l) Foreign Language	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%
17.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%
	c) Special Education	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%

	e) Dyslexia program	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
	f) Student mentoring program	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	g) Advanced placement program	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	h) Literacy program	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%
	j) Summer school programs	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%
	k) Alternative education programs	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	l) quot;English as a second language" program	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
	m) Career counseling program	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	n) College counseling program	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
	p) Drop out prevention program	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
18.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
19.	Teacher turnover is low.	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%
20.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%
21.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
22.	Teachers are counseled	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	about less than satisfactory performance.					
23.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs, and art classes.	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%
24.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
25.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

B. Personnel Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
27.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
28.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%
29.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%
30.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%
31.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
32.	District employees receive annual	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	personnel evaluations.					
33.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%
34.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
35.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
36.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%

C. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
37.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
38.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%
39.	District facilities are open for community use.	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%

D. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff, and the board provide input into facility planning.	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
41.	Schools are clean.	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
42.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%
43.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%
44.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%

E. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
45.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
46.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
47.	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%

F. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
48.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%
49.	Purchasing acquires	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	high quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.					
50.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
51.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%
52.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
53.	Textbooks are in good shape.	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
54.	The school library meets students needs for books and other resources.	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%

G. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
55.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%
56.	Food is served warm.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
57.	Students have enough time to eat.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
58.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
59.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
60.	Discipline and order	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	are maintained in the school cafeteria.					
61.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
62.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%

H. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
64.	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
65.	Buses arrive and leave on time.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
66.	Adding or modifying a route for a student is easy to accomplish.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%

I. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
67.	Students feel safe and secure at school.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
68.	School disturbances are infrequent.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
69.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
70.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%
71.	Vandalism is not a	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	problem in this district.					
72.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
73.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
74.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%
75.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
76.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%

J. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
77.	Students regularly use computers.	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
78.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
79.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
80.	The district meets student needs in	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%

	computer fundamentals.					
81.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%
82.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
83.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Appendix E
PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL SURVEY RESULTS

The following comments convey the principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of Donna Independent School District and do not reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

NARRATIVE RESPONSES

- Decisions regarding personnel are made based on political issues.
- To comply with the state, the district is placed in the situation that it is forced to hire non-effective certified teachers.
- Politics affects sound educational decision-making.

Appendix F
TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS
Demographic Data/Survey Questions
Narrative Comments

(n=30)

*Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Demographic Data

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response
		63.3%	36.7%	0.0%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response
		13.3%	0.0%	76.7%	6.7%	0.0%	3.3%

3.	How long have you been employed by Donna ISD?	No Response	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
		0.0%	30.0%	26.7%	13.3%	16.7%	13.3%

4.	What grade(s) do you teach this year (circle all that apply)?	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5
		10.0%	13.3%	30.0%	6.7%	13.3%	30.0%	10.0%
		6	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
		26.7%	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%	23.3%	20.0%	20.0%

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.	6.7%	20.0%	36.7%	23.3%	13.3%
2.	School board members	3.3%	23.3%	33.3%	16.7%	23.3%

	listen to the opinions and desires of others.					
3.	School board members work well with the superintendent.	13.3%	16.7%	40.0%	10.0%	20.0%
4.	The school board has a good image in the community.	3.3%	16.7%	20.0%	30.0%	30.0%
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	3.3%	30.0%	26.7%	16.7%	23.3%
6.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	3.3%	26.7%	26.7%	23.3%	20.0%
7.	Central administration is efficient.	3.3%	36.7%	20.0%	23.3%	16.7%
8.	Central administration supports the educational process.	6.7%	40.0%	23.3%	10.0%	20.0%
9.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	3.3%	33.3%	46.7%	6.7%	10.0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	20.0%	33.3%	6.7%	30.0%	10.0%
11.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	6.7%	40.0%	6.7%	26.7%	20.0%
12.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	6.7%	36.7%	33.3%	13.3%	10.0%
13.	The needs of the work-	6.7%	43.3%	36.7%	3.3%	10.0%

	bound student are being met.					
14.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	6.7%	60.0%	3.3%	20.0%	10.0%
15.	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	10.0%	46.7%	10.0%	20.0%	13.3%
16.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	6.7%	40.0%	10.0%	23.3%	20.0%
17.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a) Reading	10.0%	50.0%	6.7%	20.0%	13.3%
	b) Writing	10.0%	46.7%	16.7%	20.0%	6.7%
	c) Mathematics	16.7%	60.0%	3.3%	13.3%	6.7%
	d) Science	10.0%	40.0%	13.3%	20.0%	16.7%
	e) English or Language Arts	10.0%	50.0%	10.0%	20.0%	10.0%
	f) Computer Instruction	6.7%	53.3%	16.7%	10.0%	13.3%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	10.0%	43.3%	16.7%	13.3%	16.7%
	h) Fine Arts	10.0%	36.7%	10.0%	16.7%	26.7%
	i) Physical Education	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	6.7%	10.0%
	j) Business Education	6.7%	36.7%	46.7%	3.3%	6.7%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	13.3%	43.3%	33.3%	3.3%	6.7%
	l) Foreign Language	6.7%	36.7%	46.7%	6.7%	3.3%
18.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a) Library Service	16.7%	60.0%	10.0%	10.0%	3.3%

	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	6.7%	50.0%	13.3%	20.0%	10.0%
	c) Special Education	13.3%	63.3%	13.3%	3.3%	6.7%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	6.7%	40.0%	43.3%	3.3%	6.7%
	e) Dyslexia program	6.7%	33.3%	40.0%	10.0%	10.0%
	f) Student mentoring program	13.3%	40.0%	30.0%	10.0%	6.7%
	g) Advanced placement program	6.7%	53.3%	26.7%	3.3%	10.0%
	h) Literacy program	10.0%	43.3%	30.0%	10.0%	6.7%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	3.3%	43.3%	36.7%	10.0%	6.7%
	j) Summer school programs	20.0%	50.0%	20.0%	3.3%	6.7%
	k) Alternative education programs	13.3%	53.3%	26.7%	3.3%	3.3%
	l) quot;English as a Second Language" program	6.7%	43.3%	23.3%	23.3%	3.3%
	m) Career counseling program	6.7%	43.3%	33.3%	10.0%	6.7%
	n) College counseling program	6.7%	30.0%	46.7%	10.0%	6.7%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	3.3%	36.7%	23.3%	23.3%	13.3%
	p) Drop out prevention program	3.3%	33.3%	40.0%	13.3%	10.0%
19.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	13.3%	43.3%	10.0%	23.3%	10.0%
20.	Teacher turnover is low.	3.3%	16.7%	13.3%	46.7%	20.0%
21.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0.0%	26.7%	10.0%	33.3%	30.0%

	Survey Questions					
22.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	0.0%	26.7%	23.3%	36.7%	13.3%
23.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0.0%	6.7%	10.0%	46.7%	36.7%
24.	Teachers are counseled about less-than-satisfactory performance.	0.0%	46.7%	23.3%	13.3%	16.7%
25.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	6.7%	56.7%	13.3%	13.3%	10.0%
26.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	6.7%	40.0%	13.3%	30.0%	10.0%
27.	The students-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	6.7%	56.7%	3.3%	23.3%	10.0%
28.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	16.7%	60.0%	16.7%	3.3%	3.3%

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%	20.0%	0.0%	53.3%	26.7%
30.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	13.3%	53.3%	6.7%	20.0%	6.7%
31.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0.0%	13.3%	26.7%	43.3%	16.7%
32.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	3.3%	20.0%	33.3%	30.0%	13.3%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
33.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	3.3%	13.3%	36.7%	26.7%	20.0%
34.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	10.0%	33.3%	10.0%	33.3%	13.3%
35.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	30.0%	63.3%	3.3%	0.0%	3.3%
36.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	3.3%	13.3%	16.7%	40.0%	26.7%
37.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	3.3%	26.7%	33.3%	23.3%	13.3%
38.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	3.3%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	13.3%
39.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	3.3%	33.3%	3.3%	30.0%	30.0%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	6.7%	53.3%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%
41.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	6.7%	43.3%	10.0%	26.7%	13.3%
42.	Schools have plenty of	0.0%	26.7%	13.3%	50.0%	10.0%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	volunteers to help student and school programs.					
43.	District facilities are open for community use.	6.7%	43.3%	13.3%	23.3%	13.3%

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%	43.3%	23.3%	23.3%	10.0%
45.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0.0%	23.3%	26.7%	30.0%	20.0%
46.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0.0%	13.3%	50.0%	16.7%	20.0%
47.	The quality of new construction is excellent.	3.3%	23.3%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%
48.	Schools are clean.	10.0%	66.7%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
49.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	6.7%	56.7%	16.7%	10.0%	10.0%
50.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0.0%	46.7%	13.3%	33.3%	6.7%
51.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	3.3%	50.0%	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly

		Agree		Opinion		Disagree
52.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0.0%	30.0%	36.7%	20.0%	13.3%
53.	Campus administrators are well-trained in fiscal management techniques.	0.0%	36.7%	33.3%	16.7%	13.3%
54.	Financial reports are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	3.3%	26.7%	26.7%	30.0%	13.3%

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%	36.7%	6.7%	26.7%	30.0%
56.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0.0%	43.3%	23.3%	23.3%	10.0%
57.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0.0%	43.3%	20.0%	26.7%	10.0%
58.	Vendors are selected competitively.	0.0%	50.0%	33.3%	13.3%	3.3%
59.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	6.7%	46.7%	16.7%	23.3%	6.7%
60.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	6.7%	30.0%	10.0%	36.7%	16.7%
61.	Textbooks are in good shape.	6.7%	60.0%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%

	Survey Questions					
62.	The school library meets students' needs for books and other resources.	3.3%	46.7%	13.3%	26.7%	10.0%

H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	33.3%	13.3%	30.0%	23.3%
64.	Food is served warm.	0.0%	60.0%	13.3%	20.0%	6.7%
65.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	6.7%	80.0%	3.3%	6.7%	3.3%
66.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes	3.3%	56.7%	16.7%	20.0%	3.3%
67.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	10.0%	56.7%	6.7%	13.3%	13.3%
68.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	16.7%	56.7%	16.7%	10.0%	0.0%
69.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	10.0%	76.7%	10.0%	0.0%	3.3%

I. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
70.	School disturbances are infrequent.	6.7%	56.7%	10.0%	16.7%	10.0%
71.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	3.3%	10.0%	16.7%	53.3%	16.7%
72.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0.0%	6.7%	16.7%	56.7%	20.0%
73.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0.0%	13.3%	20.0%	53.3%	13.3%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
74.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	10.0%	56.7%	16.7%	6.7%	10.0%
75.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	13.3%	50.0%	20.0%	3.3%	13.3%
76.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	16.7%	43.3%	33.3%	3.3%	3.3%
77.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	13.3%	33.3%	6.7%	33.3%	13.3%
78.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	13.3%	30.0%	10.0%	40.0%	6.7%

J. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
79.	Students regularly use computers.	10.0%	73.3%	6.7%	6.7%	3.3%
80.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	13.3%	43.3%	13.3%	26.7%	3.3%
81.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	10.0%	46.7%	20.0%	20.0%	3.3%
82.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	13.3%	60.0%	10.0%	10.0%	6.7%
83.	The district meets students' needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	13.3%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	3.3%
84.	The district meets	10.0%	33.3%	30.0%	16.7%	10.0%

	students' needs in classes in advanced computer skills.					
85.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	20.0%	60.0%	6.7%	10.0%	3.3%

Appendix F
TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

The following comments convey the teachers' perception of Donna Independent School District and do not reflect the findings or opinion of the Comptroller or review team. The narrative comments are the actual comments received.

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

- Money is kept in the upper levels of education (board, superintendent, etc.). Teacher's salaries are not competitive with other school districts. There is a high turnover rate. I feel that the district is not doing all they can do for the children. They need to allocate more funding for better teachers, programs and any necessary materials needed for the improvement of our future (teachers, lawyers, doctors, policemen, etc.). We have to serve the children and we need to provide everything to facilitate their educations.
- Unfortunately, I believe students are not getting the education they deserve. Without the administration's support in discipline matters, it's difficult to conduct effective lessons in the classroom because of disruptive students. As you can tell from my responses, Donna ISD has several shortcomings.
- If Donna administrators would allow more teachers to attend conferences that are offered during the school year to help bilingual teachers to keep up with current issues facing our students, it would be a great help. Instead, only one or no teachers are sent per campus. Also, they put too much emphasis on computer programs to meet the TEA's technology requirement instead of allowing the students to learn the basic fundamentals of computers.
- Donna ISD hires the relatives of board members and gives them promotions and increases in salaries.
- Donna ISD students wear all kinds of clothing that would not be permitted in other school districts.
- Donna ISD has a major problem with drugs and alcohol on campus.
- Donna ISD does not support their teachers or their staff.
- Money should be allocated equally and fairly to all.
- The student performance on TAAS is so poor. None of the students are pushed since they do not do any homework assignments. There is no leadership to improve the student performance. The central office administrators are so low performing that they never have any vision to better the school. The funds are not allocated

properly. The computers are not maintained properly. There are no software applications to enhance the teaching. The test score is not used to identify student needs. It is a mess.

- Too much money for TA's who don't work and assist office personnel only.
- There are about 10 secretaries in office that could be USED to help in the classrooms instead. Most of time they only socialize.
- Even the secretary has a secretary!
- CUT the Fat!
- Repairs used to be made in a timely manner.
- Purchasing procedures force teachers to guess way in advance what is needed the next year--many times the requests are out of date by the time they are ordered or personnel changes or course changes have made them obsolete.
- Donna High School is a recognized campus and all the other schools are acceptable. So, Donna ISD is a good school district.
- The Donna Independent School District has such potential to be a great district, but it is constantly being undermined by politics. It has been made known to us that several central office employees have received pay increases for less days work. These people are either related to school board members or close acquaintances. It is also said that the school board members control the superintendent's actions. One thing I know as fact is the shabby construction of the new school I work at. This same construction company was rehired by our school board members to build another school.
- The survey may reflect my dissatisfaction, but I did answer as I felt appropriate. Unfortunately, it seems as if our school board members are the ones to have the last say so in many things that are going on in our district. Even though we have our district leaders they are not really allowed to make wise decisions because they feel manipulated by board members. Leaders are threatened by our board members that if they fail to make the decisions the school board members want our leaders may loose their jobs. One thing that keeps me with the district is that I'm a Donna resident. I really hope that someone really well evaluates the surveys and that they produce great outcomes.
- I have worked for this district over 10 years now. I have watched every year to see if the district would improve but I have yet to see it. I am so disappointed with our school board. We have so much politics floating around that nothing seems to get done. The new schools that were built are leaking from the ceiling and yet they had the same company make other new school projects. We know we have a mold problem and it has not been taken care of yet!
- Being new to the school district I don't have a clear time picture of everything that's included in the educational picture. But all in all,

those areas that I have seen are in good condition. (Computers, AR reading, clean facilities).

- Donna ISD is a great district to work for and the staff is wonderful to work with, everyone is willing to help and cooperate. I hope to continue working for Donna ISD for many years.
- I feel that the school district needs to have consistency on whatever new programs it implements, and give the program at least 3-5 years to see results. Our problem is that we don't wait long enough to see results and change programs frequently without considering the benefits it has on the student needs.