

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

August 24, 2000

The Honorable George W. Bush
The Honorable Rick Perry
The Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney
Members of the 76th Legislature
Commissioner James E. Nelson

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to present our performance review of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD).

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

We have made a number of recommendations to improve Ricardo ISD's efficiency. We 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 32 detailed recommendations that could save Ricardo ISD \$175,490 over the next five years, while reinvesting more than \$57,200 to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to reach nearly \$118,290--savings that the district can redirect to the classroom.

We are grateful for the cooperation of Ricardo ISD's board, staff, teachers, parents and community members. We commend them for their dedication to improving the educational opportunities for our most precious resource in Ricardo ISD--our children.

I also am pleased to announce that the report is available on our Web site at <http://www.window.state.tx.us/tspr/ricardo/>.

Sincerely,



Carole Keeton Rylander
Comptroller of Public Accounts

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander selected the four districts in Kleberg County--Kingsville ISD, Ricardo ISD, Riviera ISD, and Santa Gertrudis ISD for a school performance review. After difficulties in securing consultants to assist with the reviews, the Comptroller's office began the reviews in May 2000. Based upon more than three months of work, this report identifies Ricardo ISD's exemplary programs and suggests concrete ways to improve district operations. If fully implemented, the Comptroller's 32 recommendations could result in net savings of more than \$118,290 over the next five years.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review

Soon after taking office in January 1999, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander consulted school district officials, parents and teachers from across Texas and carefully examined past reviews and progress reports to make the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) more valuable to the state's school districts. With the perspective of having been 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 approach is designed to give local school officials in Ricardo ISD and in other Texas communities the ability to move more of every education dollar directly into the classroom. Comptroller Rylander also has ordered TSPR staff to share best practices and exemplary programs quickly and systematically with all the state's school districts and with anyone else who requests such information. Comptroller Rylander has directed TSPR to serve as a clearinghouse of the best ideas in Texas public education.

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

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

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

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

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

TSPR in Ricardo ISD

On May 15, 2000, TSPR began its performance review of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD). Ricardo ISD presented a challenge to TSPR since it had not reviewed a district with a student population of under 600 students since its initial 1991 pilot project. Most of the school districts reviewed by TSPR have fallen in the range of moderate to large school districts.

The Comptroller's office selected SoCo Consulting, Inc., an Austin Texas-based consulting firm, to assist the agency with this review. The TSPR team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents, business leaders and community members and held a public forum on May 16, 2000 from 5-8 p.m. in Ricardo's school cafeteria. To obtain additional comments, the review team conducted focus group sessions with teachers, and business leaders. The Comptroller also received letters from a wide array of parents, teachers and community members, and staff received calls to the Comptroller's toll-free hotline.

Fourteen campus and central administrators and support staff; 12 teachers; and 43 parents; completed written surveys as part of the review. Details from the surveys and public forums appear in **(Appendices A and B)**.

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).

Ricardo ISD selected peer districts for comparisons based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The selected peer districts were Agua Dulce, Banquette, Driscoll, Freer, Premont, Riviera, and Skidmore-Tynann. TSPR also compared Ricardo ISD to other school district averages in TEA's Regional Educational Service Center (RESC 2), to which Ricardo ISD belongs and to the state as a whole(**Exhibit 1**).

Exhibit 1
Student Characteristics of Ricardo ISD
and Peer Districts
1999-2000

District	Enrollment	Percent of African American	Percent Hispanic	Percent Anglo	Percent Other	Percent Economically Disadvantaged
Agua Dulce	364	0.8%	67.0%	31.0%	1.9%	46.7%
Banquette	798	0.0	78.3	21.6	0.1	70.1
Freer	1,059	0.1	79.1	20.5	0.3	61.8
Premont	967	0.1	91.4	8.5	0.0	81.6
Ricardo	577	0.3	74.4	25.1	0.2	58.6
Riviera	552	0.4	66.5	32.9	0.2	58.7
Skidmore-Tynan	689	0.6	58.3	41.1	0.0	55.4
RESC 2	109,986	3.8	65.5	29.4	1.3	56.0
State	4,002,227	14.4	39.5	43.2	2.9	48.9

Source: Texas Education Agency, PEIMS 1999-2000.

During its three-month review, TSPR developed 32 recommendations to improve operations and save taxpayers nearly \$176,000 by 2004-05. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach \$118,290 by 2004-05.

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 3**. Many TSPR recommendations would not have a direct financial impact but would improve the district's overall operations.

Acknowledgments

The Comptroller's office and SoCo Inc. wish to express appreciation to the Ricardo ISD Board of Trustees, Superintendent Don Jones, district employees, students, parents and community residents who helped during the review. Special thanks go to Karen Varnell, assistant to the superintendent, who served as Ricardo ISD's liaison and arranged for office space, equipment and meeting rooms, organized the findings meeting, and responded to data requests and accommodated the review team's needs.

Ricardo ISD

Ricardo ISD is located in Kleberg county, about 50 miles south of the city of Corpus Christi. The county seat is located in Kingsville. The population of the county is largely Hispanic, making up 72.5 percent of a population of 31,453, according to the 1990 U.S. Census. There are two major, four-year universities located in close proximity: Texas A&M University - Kingsville and Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi. The public school enrollment of the county is 6,449 students.

Ricardo ISD has two schools that are located on one campus: an elementary and a middle school that includes students from pre-K through grade eight. Enrollment for 1999-2000 totaled 577 students. Sixty-four percent of the student body of the district is considered economically disadvantaged. The district is served by the Texas Education Agency's RESC 2 in Corpus Christi.

Because the district does not have a high school, it buses its high school students, ninth through twelfth grades, to one of five campuses: King High School; Academy High School; Riviera High School; a special education high school located on the campus of King High School; and a vocational high school located on the campus of King High School.

In 1999-2000, Ricardo ISD's minority student composition was 74.9 percent of total enrollment, with 74.4 percent Hispanic, 0.3 percent African American, 0.2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Nearly 59 percent of Ricardo ISD's students were classified as economically disadvantaged, compared to the state average of almost 49 percent in 1999-2000.

In 1999-2000, Ricardo ISD's two schools were rated as "Academically Acceptable" by the Texas Education Agency. In 1998-99, 75.1 percent of all Ricardo ISD students passed the TAAS compared to 45.0 percent in 1994-95. The performance gains over this same period are even more significant for Hispanic students.

In 1999-2000, the district employed a staff of 72 employees, with teachers accounting for 39 positions or nearly 54 percent of Ricardo ISD staffing. The student-to-teacher is 14.8:1 compared to the state average of 14.9:1. The district had expenditures of \$ 3.1 million in 1998-99; in 1999-2000, that figure increased to \$3.6 million. In 1998-99, 26.9 percent of Ricardo ISD's revenues were generated locally, 68.4 percent came from the state and 4.7 percent came from the federal government.

In 1999-2000, Ricardo ISD spent 54.2 cents of every tax dollar on classroom instruction compared to the state average of 52 cents. Ricardo ISD's spending pattern is a marked improvement over 52.3 cents in 1998-99. Per-pupil expenditures in 1999-2000 were \$6,316, up from \$5,087 in 1998-99.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

TSPR identified numerous "best practices" in Ricardo ISD. Through commendations in each chapter, the report highlights model programs, operations and services provided by Ricardo ISD 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 local needs. TSPR's commendations are listed below.

- Ricardo ISD links most of its written plans to the budget. The district's facilities master plan, site-based decision making plan, campus improvement plan and its technology plan are tied into the budget and are thus developed with an eye toward the funding and expenditures consequences of every action and plan.
- Ricardo ISD takes effective action to keep attendance high. When a student is absent for a period of time, the principal calls the student's home to let the student's parents know of the absences. If a student is still reluctant to attend school, the principal and deputy sheriff of the county will visit the student. This practice is a strong deterrent to truancy.
- The superintendent involves all levels of the administration and the board in budget development. Faculty and staff are involved in budget formulation, and the superintendent gives department heads control over how their budgets are spent.
- By developing precise bid specifications and allowing bidders to compete for projects without specifying an exact bid amount, Ricardo ISD's projects usually come in under budget.
- Ricardo ISD uses effective preventative maintenance schedules for its facilities and its buses.

Key Findings and Recommendations

TSPR found Ricardo ISD to be a well-run district where students, parents and staff were satisfied with the education being offered through the district. While the district has shown remarkable improvements in student performance and employee morale over the past 18 months, there are still some areas where Ricardo ISD could improve its operations. TSPR's recommendations stress planning and coordination throughout the district

District Organization Management

Develop written procedures for key staff areas. It is typical for a smaller district to rely on the institutional knowledge of key personnel to run the district. But even small staff changes can have dramatic effects on the smooth running of the district. TSPR recommends that the district develop written procedures for the key jobs and establish cross-training over time.

Review PEIMS reporting process and identify any weaknesses. TSPR found that not all department managers were actively involved in reviewing PEIMS data before submission to the Texas Education Agency. By establishing a systematic approach to the review of the data submitted to TEA, Ricardo ISD can ensure that the most knowledgeable staff in the district have had an opportunity to verify data.

Education Service Delivery

Work with Regional Education Service Center 2 to identify grant opportunities. Ricardo has had considerable success with identifying and successfully competing for grant funding in the area of technology. However, other areas of the educational program have not benefited from the same efforts. According to district staff, the district does not have sufficient resources to seek other grant funding. RESC 2 has successfully helped other districts in the area to locate grants for at-risk or community education programs. By identifying problems in the district that might be addressed through grants and seeking assistance from RESC 2 in identifying and applying for grants that target these needs, Ricardo ISD could find needed funding.

Develop structured staff development offerings that support district goals and objectives. Ricardo ISD employees expressed satisfaction with the level of staff development approved by the district. However, some employees felt unsure of the usefulness of some the training they had taken. The district should take a more active role in identifying the types of staff development that would be most useful to employees in performing their jobs, and tie training to employee performance measures and other criteria used to help employees in their jobs.

Financial Management

Restructure the district's bank accounts to maximize interest income. The district is currently achieving a 2 percent return on funds kept in the bank. By moving to other investment opportunities including TexPool, the district could realize an additional \$24,000 annually in interest earnings.

Operations

Participate in the State Power Program to reduce utility expenditures. Ricardo paid almost \$93,000 in 1998-99 on utilities. By participating in the newly-created State Power Program, the district could lower energy expenditures by four to five percent saving \$3,680 per year.

Establish a meals per labor hour standard and staff accordingly. In 1999-2000, the district had a deficit in its food services operation. By establishing a meals per labor hour standard, the district could gain greater efficiency in its food services expenditures and move toward making the food services operation self-supporting in a year.

Savings and Investment Requirements

Many TSPR's recommendations would result in savings and increased revenue that could be used to improve classroom instruction. The savings 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 32 ways to save Ricardo ISD more than \$175,000 in gross savings over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities will cost the district more than \$57,000 during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of \$118,290 by 2004-05.

**Exhibit 2
Summary of Net Savings
TSPR Review of Ricardo Independent School District**

Year	Total
2000-01 Initial Annual Net Savings	\$26,298
2001-02 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$25,498
2002-03 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$25,498
2003-04 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$25,498
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$25,498
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2000-2005	\$118,290

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 3**. The page number for each recommendation is listed in the summary chart for reference purposes. Detailed implementation strategies, timelines and the estimates of fiscal impact follow each recommendation in this report. The implementation section associated with each recommendation highlights the actions necessary to achieve the proposed results. Some items should be implemented immediately, some over the next year or two and some over several years.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exhibit 3 Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

	Recommendation	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	Total 5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1-District Organization and Management								
1	Prepare more detailed board minutes. p. 21	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
2	Evaluate options for conducting an inexpensive demographic study of the district. p. 25	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$10,000)
3	Assess the feasibility of adding a high school and other high school options based on information from a demographic study. p. 28	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
4	Develop and implement a set of standard operating procedures for key functional areas and train all staff in their application. p.32	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
5	Review the current PEIMS reporting process and identify any	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	

	weaknesses that would allow incorrect reporting of data. p. 34							
6	Develop performance measures for managers of support services, and incorporate them into the annual evaluation process. p. 35	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
7	Contact the Dean of Education and the Dean of Business Administration of both area Texas A&M campuses to establish intern programs in education and finance. p. 37	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
	Totals-Chapter 1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$10,000)
Chapter 2-Educational Service Delivery								
8	Use Process Manager software to identify development improvement opportunities among the faculty at Ricardo ISD. p. 52	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
9	Analyze the performance of the academic teams to determine how the district might improve student performance. n.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	

	55							
10	Document the percentage of time that an aide instead of a specialist provides campus support, and use the findings to improve the level of professional support from the special education cooperative. p. 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
11	Explore opportunities for Internet or distance learning instruction to expand services for gifted and talented students. p. 67	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
12	Work with Region 2 to determine how the district might be able to receive more grant funding. p. 70	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
13	Develop structured staff development offerings that directly support district goals and objectives. p. 72	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
14	Establish a part-time position for a technology intern to assist the director of Technology. p. 77	(\$8,800)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$47,200)	
	Totals-Chapter 2	(\$8,800)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$47,200)	\$0

Chapter 3-Financial Management

15	Use sub-accounts to track performance by key areas. p. 89	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
16	Resolve the computer interface problem to improve finance management activities. p. 90	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
17	Eliminate the manual purchasing request form by automating the purchase order process. p. 90	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
18	Implement procurement cards for purchases from selected local vendors. p. 92	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
19	Establish procedures requiring senior management to review payroll reports before checks are released. p. 93	\$0	\$0				\$0	
20	Develop tabulation sheets for all sources of cash on each campus and use two people to retrieve and count cash. p. 94	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
21	Poll employees to	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	

	determine if they are willing to share the cost of higher premiums if the district chose to select a health insurance carrier that provides a plan with better coverage. p. 98							
22	Restructure all of the district bank accounts to achieve a market rate of return on excess cash. p. 100	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$123,180	
	Totals-Chapter 3	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$123,180	\$0
Chapter 4-Operations								
23	Purchase cleaning chemicals that will not kill the septic system enzymes and/or determine if there is a leak in the pipes. p. 106	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
24	Participate in the State Power Program to receive a discount in the district's utility bills. p. 109	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$18,400	
25	Revise the work order completion procedures to include recording time taken and parts used for all work orders including emergencies. p.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	

	113							
26	Establish a meals per labor hour standard and staff accordingly. p. 116	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$33,909	
27	Enlist the support of students, staff and parents to develop strategies for increasing participation in breakfast and lunch on campus. p. 118	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
28	Develop daily procedures to address food temperatures and inventory of perishable foods. p. 119	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
29	Establish a district policy to control the sale of foods in competition with meals served under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. p. 120	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
30	Modify the work order system used by the transportation department and track repairs by bus. p. 127	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
31	Assess critical safety maintenance needs and plan to address these	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	

	issues each summer before the start of school. p. 130							
32	Explore strategies to physically separate elementary and middle school in school suspension programs. p. 132	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
	Totals-Chapter 4	\$10,462	\$10,462	\$10,462	\$10,462	\$10,462	\$52,310	\$0
	TOTAL SAVINGS	\$35,098	\$35,098	\$35,098	\$35,098	\$35,098	\$175,490	\$0
	TOTAL COSTS	(\$8,800)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$47,200)	(\$10,000)
	NET SAVINGS (COSTS)	\$26,298	\$25,498	\$25,498	\$25,498	\$25,498	\$128,290	(\$10,000)

5 Year Gross Savings	\$175,490
5 Year Gross Costs	(\$57,200)
Grand Total	\$118,290

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD) in four subsections:

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

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

School districts in Texas are predominantly independent school districts. An independent school district board sets policies, selects key management, establishes property tax rates and approves staffing levels, pay rates and the annual budget. It also determines facility needs and calls bond elections as necessary to support those needs.

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

BACKGROUND

Ricardo ISD is located in Kleberg County, about 50 miles south of the City of Corpus Christi. The county seat is in the City of Kingsville. The county's population is largely Hispanic, making up 72.5 percent of 31,453 county residents, according to the 1990 U.S. Census. There are two major, four-year universities located in close proximity; Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. The public school enrollment of the county is 6,449 students. The largest employers are educational services, medical services and the Department of Defense. Ranching, farming and oil and gas production are also key components of the county's economy.

Ricardo ISD has two schools that are located on one campus: an elementary and a middle school that includes students from pre-K through grade eight. Enrollment for 1998-99 totaled 602 students. Sixty-four percent of the student body of the district is considered economically

disadvantaged. The district is served by the TEA's Regional Education Service Center 2 (RESC 2) in Corpus Christi.

The district does not have a high school. The district buses its high school students, ninth through twelfth grades, to one of five campuses: King High School; Academy High School; Riviera High School; a special education high school, located on the campus of King High School; and a vocational high school, located on the campus of King High School.

For this review, Ricardo ISD selected peer districts for comparison based upon similarities in size, location, enrollment and property value. The districts chosen were Agua Dulce, Banquete, Driscoll, Freer, Premont, Riviera and Skidmore-Tynan. Their enrollment and accreditation status are presented in **Exhibit 1-1**.

Exhibit 1-1
Ricardo ISD and Peer District Enrollments and Accreditation Status
1998-99

District	Enrollment	Accreditation Status
Freer	1,074	Recognized
Premont	981	Academically Acceptable
Banquete	850	Recognized
Skidmore-Tynan	718	Academically Acceptable
Ricardo	602	Academically Acceptable
Riviera	567	Academically Acceptable
Agua Dulce	393	Academically Acceptable
Driscoll	269	Academically Acceptable

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) 1998-99.

Ricardo ISD had budgeted revenues of \$3.6 million in 1998-99, the last full year for which audited financial statements are available. Compared to its peer group, Ricardo was third from the bottom in total dollars. In revenue per student, Ricardo was second lowest of its peer group (**Exhibit 1-2**).

Exhibit 1-2
Ricardo ISD Budgeted Revenues Compared to Peer Districts
1998-99

District	Total Revenue (millions)	Revenue/ Student
Agua Dulce	\$2.9	\$7,380
Banquete	\$5.8	\$6,826
Driscoll	\$2.0	\$7,448
Freer	\$6.6	\$6,120
Premont	\$5.8	\$5,931
Ricardo	\$3.6	\$5,891
Riviera	\$4.4	\$7,671
Skidmore-Tynan	\$4.1	\$5,640

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Ricardo ISD's total operating expenditures for 1998-99 were \$3.1 million. Compared to its peer group, Ricardo ISD had the third-highest operating expenditures in total dollars. Ricardo ISD had the lowest operating expenditures per student of the group (**Exhibit 1-3**).

Exhibit 1-3
Ricardo ISD Budgeted Operating Expenditures
Compared to Peer Districts
1998-99

District	Total Operating Expenditures (millions)	Total Operating Expenditures Per Student
Agua Dulce	\$2.5	\$6,407
Banquete	\$5.8	\$6,272
Driscoll	\$1.9	\$6,894
Freer	\$6.5	\$6,023
Premont	\$5.7	\$6,819
Ricardo	\$3.1	\$5,087

Riviera	\$4.3	\$7,510
Skidmore-Tynan	\$3.91	\$5,439

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

In 1998-99, Texas school districts received an average of 51.2 percent of their revenue from local sources, 44.3 percent from state sources and 3.5 percent from federal sources. Ricardo ISD and its peer districts, with the exception of Driscoll, all had a lower percentage of local revenue and a higher percentage of state revenue than the state average (**Exhibit 1-4**).

Exhibit 1-4
Ricardo ISD, State and Peer District Revenue Sources
as a Percentage of Total Revenues
1998-99

District	Local/Other Revenue	State Revenue	Federal Revenue
Agua Dulce	47.8%	50.0%	2.2%
Banquete	35.8%	60.2%	4.0%
Driscoll	54.7%	42.4%	2.8%
Freer	46.1%	51.2%	2.7%
Premont	29.9%	65.3%	4.9%
Ricardo	26.9%	68.4%	4.7%
Riviera	49.2%	48.4%	2.4%
Skidmore-Tynan	23.9%	73.4%	2.7%
Texas	51.2%	44.3%	3.5%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Ricardo ISD spends 52.3 percent of its revenue on instruction, about average compared to peer districts, and slightly more than the state average of 51.2 percent (**Exhibit 1-5**).

Exhibit 1-5
Ricardo ISD and Peer District Expenditures for Instruction as a
Percentage
of Total Expenditures
1998-99

District	Total Expenditures	Expenditures for Instruction	Instruction as Percentage of Total Expenditures
Agua Dulce	\$2,867,227	\$1,411,078	49.2%
Banquete	\$6,467,230	\$3,223,173	49.8%
Driscoll	\$2,060,505	\$1,140,860	55.4%
Freer	\$6,560,420	\$3,407,451	51.9%
Premont	\$6,152,624	\$3,121,051	50.7%
Ricardo	\$3,158,223	\$1,650,602	52.3%
Riviera	\$4,282,483	\$2,329,647	54.4%
Skidmore-Tynan	\$3,973,033	\$2,254,265	56.7%
Texas	\$23,092,945,910	\$11,830,068,827	51.2%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD) in four subsections:

A. GOVERNANCE

Each independent school district in Texas is governed by an elected Board of Trustees that derives its legal status from the Texas Constitution and the Texas Legislature. The board must function in accordance with applicable state and federal statutes, court decisions and applicable regulations pursuant to state and federal law.

Under Section 11.151 of the Texas Education Code, each board has specific statutory powers and duties, including:

- Govern and oversee the management of the public schools in 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 implementation;
- Levy and collect taxes and issue bonds;
- Select tax officials, as appropriate to the district's need;
- Prepare, adopt and file 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 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 achieving those objectives;
- Receive bequests and donations or other money coming legally into its hands in the name of the district;
- Select a 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 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.

The effectiveness of a district's organization and management may be evaluated against six critical success factors. Districts should have:

- A clear direction with a vision and goals stated in a planning document;
- An efficient and logical organizational structure that supports site-based decision making (SBDM);
- A planning, budgeting and improvement process that ensures resources are used efficiently and support district goals;
- A thorough and objective performance evaluation system;
- Sound and consistently applied policies that comply with applicable laws; and
- Board actions that demonstrate board members' understanding of their role as planners, policymakers and performance monitors.

The Ricardo ISD board consists of seven members elected at-large for three-year terms. Terms are staggered so that the term of one-third of the trustees expires each year. Elections are held annually. **Exhibit 1-6** is a list of board members at the time the review was initiated.

**Exhibit 1-6
Ricardo ISD Board of Trustees
1998-99**

Name	Title	Term Expires	Years of Experience	Occupation
Carol Cannon	President	5/2000	2	Student/Housewife
Charles Saverline	Vice President	5/2002	0	Celanese Plant Worker
Brenda Lukefahr	Secretary	5/2002	3	College Research Associate
Suzie Howard	Member	5/2001	1	Registered Nurse
Gary Pamplin	Member	5/2003	0	Federal Civil Service
Carol Radford	Member	5/2000	23	Housewife
Robert Zavala	Member	5/2001	0	Celanese Plant Worker

Source: Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

Board members told the review team that before the hiring of the new superintendent, there had been instability in the leadership of the district. There had been three different superintendents since 1997-98. The board members told the review team that they felt they had been too involved in the district supervision and administrative details under the previous two superintendents.

The board used several methods in their searches for superintendents. In 1997, the board used a placement agency. The superintendent selected at that time was with the district for less than a year. In 1998, the board used the Texas Association of School Boards to help in its selection process. The superintendent stayed with the district for slightly more than a year.

Before the most recent superintendent search, the board decided to play a more active role in the screening and selection process. Once the district's needs were assessed, the board developed selection criteria. The board received and reviewed employment applications in closed sessions. Five finalists were selected and interviewed. The board then narrowed the field to two applicants and set up second interviews. On July 6, 1999, the board selected a new superintendent, Dr. Don Jones. Each board member interviewed said that the selection process was thorough and produced the best result.

Each board member interviewed was extremely pleased with the changes in Ricardo ISD under Dr. Don Jones. Board members agreed that Dr. Jones fully understood the issues facing Ricardo ISD and was moving quickly and strategically to address each issue. As a result of the board's confidence in Dr. Jones, members have been able to focus more on policy and less on administrative issues.

COMMENDATION

The Ricardo ISD Board of Trustees used a systematic approach to identify needs in a superintendent and used a cost-effective method of superintendent selection.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD's board members indicated that there was an overall atmosphere of trust, respect and cooperation among board members. Each member said that there is mutual respect among members, and the board works well together. Board members also said that this level of trust and respect extends to the superintendent and the district administration. In the past, board members indicated that it had been difficult to reach agreement on issues. However, most votes are now unanimous.

The review team found the board members well-prepared for board meetings, and members asked well thought-out questions. The process moved quickly and data supported all agenda items.

COMMENDATION

The board has worked with the administration to establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

FINDING

From September 1998 through May 2000, the board held 21 regular meetings and 19 special meetings (**Exhibit 1-7**). Twelve of the special meetings took place between May 27, 1999, when the previous superintendent resigned and July 6, 1999 when Dr. Jones was approved by the board.

**Exhibit 1-7
Number of Ricardo ISD Board Meetings
1998 through May 2000**

Year	Number of Regular Board Meetings	Number of Special Board Meetings	Average Length of Meetings
1998-99	12	19	4 hours
1999-00 (through May)	9	0	2.5 hours
Total	21	19	

Source: Ricardo ISD Board meeting minutes, 1998 through May 2000.

Before Dr. Jones' appointment, board meetings had averaged four hours in length. Now, agendas are provided well in advance, and the meetings are much better organized. Since Dr. Jones became superintendent, the average meeting length has been reduced to two and a half hours, according to Ricardo ISD board meeting minutes. Board members said that they review their information packets before each meeting, and each member's time is spent more effectively on district policy.

COMMENDATION

By providing the board members with the board packet before each meeting, the superintendent has reduced the length of board meetings and has kept meetings focused on fact-based decision making.

FINDING

Although minutes are prepared in a timely fashion following each board meeting, they do not provide much detail. A short paragraph is included for each agenda item, but it gives no detail on the discussions held on each topic. Only the resolution is recorded. Therefore, it is difficult to determine what the issues behind each agenda item were without attending the meeting.

The board minutes are kept to maintain a detailed record of the issues facing the district. Any member of the community should be able to request the minutes and gain a clear understanding of the issues.

Exhibit 1-8 provides an example of what information should be contained in the board minutes for each agenda item. The example is for illustrative purposes only.

Exhibit 1-8 Sample Board Minutes

AGENDA ITEM 17-3: PROPOSED TAX INCREASE FROM \$1.400 TO \$1.410		
GROUP DISCUSSION		
<p>The agenda item came up for discussion at 7:45. Dr. Jones, superintendent of Ricardo ISD, presented the proposed budget for the coming school year. He discussed the need to hire additional staff in the technology department and for special education, and his desire to continue the educational strides made in 1999-2000. Community members were not in favor of raising the tax base and voiced the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The past success occurred within the current budget;• The tax is too high for most of the homeowners in the school district; and• If the district would lean on the county to collect delinquent taxes, there would be plenty of money available. <p>After an hour and 15 minute open forum, the board closed discussion for a vote.</p>		
MOTIONS		
Motion:	Motion Made by:	Motion Seconded by:
The district will not raise the tax rate for the 2000-01 fiscal year.	Suzie Howard	Carol Radford

Votes Taken			
Board Member	In Favor	Opposed	Abstained
Carol Cannon	X		
Chuck Saverline	X		
Brenda Lukefahr	X		
Suzie Howard	X		
Carol Radford	X		
Robert Zavala	X		
Gary Pamplin	X		
Resolution Summary			
The board voted unanimously not to recommend a tax increase for 2000-01.			

Source: SoCo Consulting, Inc.

Recommendation 1:

Prepare more detailed board minutes.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	During the meeting, the secretary takes detailed notes including what was said and by whom.	September 2000
2.	In preparing the minutes, the secretary divides each topic into the following sections: agenda number and title; group discussion; motions made; votes taken; and resolution.	September 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD) in four subsections:

B. PLANNING

A sound planning process includes the following parameters: specific district goals and a mechanism to measure the realization of these goals; detailed planning documents for each activity; a demographic study; and a long-range plan based on findings from the demographic study.

State law requires the district to prepare improvement plans for the district and for each campus. The focus of the improvement plan is on improving student performance and the objectives in it are clearly defined. A site-based decision-making committee plan and a technology plan also are prepared each year. Site-based teams set goals and objectives for their specific plans.

Exhibit 1-9 presents the district goals for the 1999-2000 school year.

Exhibit 1-9 District Goals for 1999-2000 School Year

Goal	Description
1	All students will achieve their full learning potential.
2	A well-balanced and appropriate curriculum will be provided to all students.
3	Quality personnel will be recruited and retained.
4	Parents will be full partners in the education of their children.
5	A safe and drug-free environment that maximizes learning and promotes discipline will be promoted.

Source: Ricardo ISD District/Campus Improvement Plan, 1999-2000.

The key to setting goals is having a means of measuring their success. Ricardo ISD has in place procedures for appraising performance throughout the school year. The board uses the Superintendent Appraisal Process to judge whether the superintendent is meeting his responsibilities in reaching the district goals. (**Exhibit 1-10**).

Exhibit 1-10
Superintendent Appraisal Process

Appraisal Components
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Superintendent evaluation checklist.• Commissioners' recommended student performance domain.• Summative conference with resume prepared by the superintendent and the board president.
Appraisal Calendar
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• September: Board conducts formative goal-setting conference with the superintendent and establishes written priority goals.• December: Board conducts a review of priority goal process. The superintendent and board president prepare a written resume of the conference.• June: Board conducts a review of priority goal process. The superintendent and the board president prepare a written resume of the conference.
Intervention Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One or more indicators on the superintendent checklist are rated unsatisfactory.• The board determines that less-than-satisfactory progress has been made on goals discussed in the formative conference.

Source: Ricardo ISD.

The superintendent uses the Principal Appraisal Process to ensure that the principals are on target for meeting the district's goal. **(Exhibit 1-11).**

Exhibit 1-11
Principal Appraisal Process

Appraisal Components
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal evaluation checklist.• Commissioners' recommended student performance domain.• Summative conference with resume prepared by the superintendent and the board president.
Appraisal Calendar

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September: Submit commissioner-recommended student performance domain report. October - November: Superintendent conducts formative/goal-setting conference. June: Superintendent completes evaluation checklist and conducts summative conference.
Intervention Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One or more indicators on the principal evaluation checklist are rated unsatisfactory. Fewer than 65 percent of any group is passing. Overall attendance rate is less than 94 percent and no gains were achieved. The superintendent determines that less-than-satisfactory progress on goals discussed in the formative conference has been achieved.

Source: Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

The district prepares several planning documents that appear in **Exhibit 1-12**.

Exhibit 1-12 District Planning Documents

Document	Point Person	Purpose	Involved Parties	Linked to Budget
Facilities Master Plan	Superintendent and Business Director	To plan for required facility improvements	Ricardo ISD staff and management community members	X
Site-Based Decision Making Plan	Superintendent	Encourages decision making at the source	Ricardo ISD staff, faculty and management	X
Campus Improvement Plans	Superintendent	To develop specific areas in the educational delivery system that require	Ricardo ISD faculty and management	X

		improvement, set standards and identify means of attaining improvement goals.		
Technology Plan	Superintendent	To develop criteria for enhancing technology's role in the education process	Ricardo ISD faculty, technology coordinator and management	X
Demographic Study	Superintendent	To identify emerging trends that will affect enrollment and facility requirements	Ricardo ISD staff, management, board and community members	
Budget	Superintendent and Business Director	To facilitate the efficient use of limited dollars.	Ricardo ISD staff, management and board	X

Source: Ricardo ISD.

Although the district does not link the demographic study to its budget, most other written plans are linked.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD links most of its written plans to the budget.

FINDING

One of the more critical elements of the planning process for the district is the budget. The budget lays the groundwork for everything that can be accomplished in the next fiscal year. School districts do not have access to unlimited resources, and must therefore plan carefully. Ricardo ISD distributes its budget calendar to all department heads to enlist their input in the budget and to set deadlines and keep the process on track.

Exhibit 1-13 summarizes the district budget calendar for the preparation of the 2000-2001 budget.

Exhibit 1-13 Ricardo ISD Budget Calendar 2000-2001

Scheduled Date	Activity	Responsible Person
December 15, 1999	Present recommended budget calendar and guidelines to the board for approval.	Superintendent
January 20, 2000	Meet with administrative staff and discuss budget process, calendar and allocations. Organize the Budget Committee (Superintendent, Business Manager, Payroll Clerk and Principals).	Superintendent and business manager
January 21, 2000	Principals meet with staff to review budget procedures and release of preliminary allocations, and to distribute forms and print-outs.	Principals, administrators
January 24-31, 2000	Campus Site-Based Decision Making Committees meet to establish goals and allocate campus resources.	Principals
February 1-25, 2000	Individual budgets developed and reviewed by grade leaders, chairpersons and administrators, and submitted to business office.	Business manager, principals, administrators
February 16, 2000	Results of TASB salary study presented to board.	Superintendent, TASB representative
February 28, 2000	Salary and stipend projections completed.	Superintendent
March 10, 2000	Preliminary campus and department printouts are completed and delivered to principals and supervisors.	Business Manager
March 22, 2000	District compensation plans presented to board.	Superintendent
March 29, 2000	Campus budget reviewed by SBDM committee for approval of preliminary budgets and submission to business manager.	Principals
April 3, 2000	Budgets reviewed by District Budget Review Committee.	Superintendent
April 10, 2000	Finalize all preliminary budgets and	Business manager

	prepare district budget.	
April 19, 2000	Preliminary budget presented to the board.	Superintendent and business manager
May - August 2000	Present final budget to board for approval.	Superintendent and business manager.

Source: Ricardo ISD Business Manager.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD uses a budget calendar to guide the budget process, and includes input from each member of the staff.

FINDING

The district does not have an updated demographic study that projects enrollment trends to 2004-05. Ricardo ISD's enrollment has decreased by 7.1 percent since the 1995-96 school year. The sharpest decline has been elementary enrollment, where enrollment dropped 11.9 percent (**Exhibit 1-14**). A significant decline in enrollment can also have a dramatic impact on future facilities and staffing needs.

Exhibit 1-14
Ricardo ISD Student Enrollment by School
1995-96 through 1998-99

Grade Level/School	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
Ricardo Elementary School	435	425	386	383	(11.9%)
Ricardo Middle School	213	211	234	219	2.7%
Total	648	636	620	602	(7.1%)

Source: TEA, AEIS 1995-96 through 1998-99.

According to district staff, the last demographic study was conducted in 1996 for about \$10,000. However, to be useful for planning purposes, a demographic study should be conducted at least every five years. Enrollment trends have a significant impact on all aspects of educational services and should be carefully tracked.

Recommendation 2:

Evaluate options for conducting an inexpensive demographic study of the district.

Ricardo ISD should examine possibilities for obtaining a demographic study with minimal fiscal impact. The district should contact area districts to determine if any have conducted demographic studies that might be useful. In addition, the district should contact Texas A&M University-Kingsville to determine if the school would conduct a demographic study using student help. Finally, Ricardo ISD should consider options for partnering with a neighboring district to conduct a demographic study.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager contact neighboring districts to see if any have recent demographic studies that might be useful to Ricardo ISD. If no demographic studies fitting Ricardo ISD's needs exist, the business manager discusses the possibility of sharing costs for a demographic study.	September 2000
2.	The business manager also contacts Texas A&M University-Kingsville to determine if the school might provide assistance in conducting a demographic study.	September 2000
3.	The superintendent and business manager prepare a recommendation to the board for a demographic study based on their research.	October 2000
4.	The board votes on the administration's recommendation for the demographic study.	October 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

The district should attempt to find methods of conducting a demographic survey economically. However, it should budget \$10,000 for a survey based on the cost of the last survey conducted for the district.

Recommendation	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Evaluate options for conducting an inexpensive demographic study of the district.	(\$10,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

FINDING

In the early 1990s Ricardo ISD devised a master facilities plan in conjunction with an architectural firm from Corpus Christi. The plan was both detailed and followed to the letter. Few cost overruns were experienced, and facilities are in good shape.

The district has developed a subsequent five-year facilities plan with the same architectural firm. The first project was approved by the board during the May board meeting.

This plan will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4 of this report. However, it should be noted that the central administration of Ricardo ISD has taken an active role in planning future facilities that will enhance the education of its students.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD has prepared and followed its master plan to the letter, with minimal cost overruns.

FINDING

In the past school year, the district has discussed the possibility of adding a high school but does not have sufficient information upon which to determine the cost-benefit to the district. With no high school, the district must bus high school students to either Riviera or Kingsville High School, and pay tuition for each student directly to the receiving school, for a cost of about \$426,000 a year (**Exhibit 1-15**). The state also pays these schools nearly \$4,000 per student since these students are included in their Average Daily Attendance (ADA) numbers. Ricardo ISD pays and absorbs all transportation costs associated with delivering the students to the receiving high school campuses.

The State, however, reimburses Ricardo ISD. For 1999-2000, Ricardo ISD received \$439,000 from the state to cover transportation and administrative costs.

Exhibit 1-15
Tuition Fees for Ricardo ISD High School Students
1999-2000

Receiving School	Number of Students Transported	Tuition per Student Paid to the Receiving School	Annual Cost to Ricardo ISD
King High School	126	\$1,859	\$234,189
Riviera High School	96	\$2,000	\$192,000

Academy High School	17	\$0	\$0
Total	239	\$3,859	\$426,189

Source: Ricardo ISD 1998 Planning Documents.

The topic continues to be of interest to a number of school board members who discussed the prospect of building a new high school in Ricardo. The primary reason for building the high school seems to be a result of the community feeling that Ricardo students are treated differently at other high schools. This is understandable since in small communities like Riviera and Kingsville, many of the school children have been together since elementary school. There is no way to change the fact that the Ricardo ISD students will initially be outsiders. However, each board member felt that a new high school would ultimately be unwise. Ricardo ISD is a relatively poor district with declining enrollment, and the resources to run a high school simply are not available. The students can now choose their high school environment from one of the following:

- King High School provides the students with an opportunity to participate in a strong athletic program;
- Riviera High School maintains the small community feeling; and
- Academy High School has a fine arts program.

Board members did not believe that Ricardo ISD could provide their students with the same options, due to limited resources. Ricardo ISD does not use debt financing for any of its programs. Building a high school would require a significant capital outlay, and the district has yet to identify the means to build a new high school, let alone to operate it. The arguments for and against building a high school are found in **Exhibit 1-16**.

**Exhibit 1-16
Pros and Cons of Building High School**

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students would not have to be bused off Ricardo ISD campus avoiding \$426,190 in costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students would lose the ability to choose what kind of high school experience they want, as each high school provides different options.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a small-town sense of community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of providing a quality education appears to be beyond the district's current financial means.

	district's current financial means.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would increase average daily attendance for the district, resulting in \$950,311 in state funding annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding for extracurricular activities would not be available.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would lose the reimbursement received from the state for busing the students to area high schools.

Source: Interviews with Ricardo ISD Central Administrative Staff and Board Members.

The Ricardo ISD superintendent has discussed with Academy management the prospects of sending all Ricardo ISD high school students to Academy High School in the future, without charging tuition. There has been some reluctance on the part of Ricardo ISD students and parents to do this since Academy is largely a fine arts high school, and does not have a strong athletic program. However, with the increased funding from the increase in ADA, Academy could make an effort to channel some money into its fledgling athletic program.

Recommendation 3:

Assess the feasibility of adding a high school and other high school options based on information from a demographic study.

Ricardo ISD should keep the issue of high school options for its students on the annual planning agenda. In the meantime, Ricardo ISD should continue meeting with Academy officials to determine if sending all future Ricardo ISD high school students to Academy would be the viable alternative.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board and superintendent review student enrollment trends once the results of the demographic study are available.	December 2000
2.	The superintendent uses the demographic study to develop a cost-benefit analysis for adding a district high school.	January 2001
3.	The board shares the results of the cost-benefit analysis with the	Ongoing

public when considering the prospects of adding a high school.	
----------------------------------------------------------------	--

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD) in four subsections:

C. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL

Ricardo ISD is managed by a superintendent and senior staff members who report to the superintendent. As specified by Section 11.201 of the Texas Education Code, the superintendent is primarily responsible for:

- Administrative responsibility for the planning, operation, supervision and evaluation of the educational programs, services and facilities of the district and for annual performance appraisals of the staff;
- Administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all district personnel;
- Termination or suspension of staff members or the non-renewal of staff members' term contracts;
- Day-to-day management of district operations;
- Preparation of district budgets;
- Preparation of policy recommendations for the board and administration of the implementation of adopted policies;
- Development of appropriate administrative regulations to implement board policies;
- Leadership in attainment of student performance; and
- Organization of the district's central administration.
- The following charts compare Ricardo ISD's staffing with the selected peer districts (**Exhibit 1-17**).

Exhibit 1-17
Ricardo ISD Staffing Compared to Peer Districts
1998-99

District	Teachers	Professional Support	Campus Admin.	Central Admin.	Educational Aides	Auxiliary Staff
Agua Dulce	55.9%	3.3%	4.8%	1.7%	7.1%	27.2%
Banquete	57.0%	5.3%	3.7%	1.5%	9.9%	22.5%
Driscoll	51.1%	8.1%	2.0%	3.9%	17.7%	17.2%
Freer	54.0%	2.4%	1.2%	1.2%	12.0%	29.2%

Premont	57.4%	5.0%	4.7%	2.8%	12.3%	17.8%
Ricardo	54.8%	4.7%	2.7%	2.0%	8.3%	27.5%
Riviera	57.2%	4.2%	3.1%	2.1%	9.9%	23.6%
Skidmore-Tynan	51.5%	5.9%	3.6%	2.3%	13.6%	23.0%
Texas	51.4%	7.2%	2.5%	2.5%	10.3%	27.7%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

The percentage of staff full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the district in 1999-2000, by category, is described in **Exhibit 1-18**.

Exhibit 1-18
Ricardo ISD FTE's
1999-2000

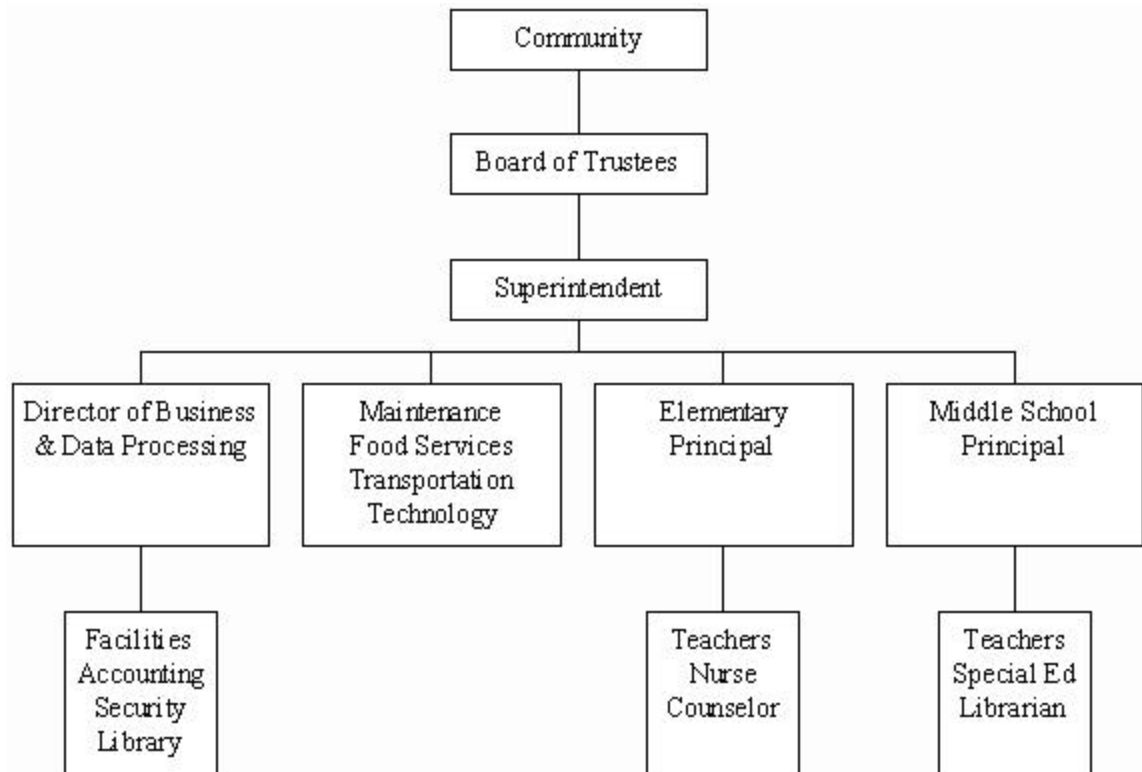
Category	Number of FTEs	Percent of FTEs
Teachers	40.7	54.8%
Professional support	3.5	4.7%
Campus administration	2.0	2.7%
Central administration	1.5	2.0%
Educational aides	6.2	8.3%
Auxiliary staff	20.4	27.5%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has a flat organizational chart. Flat organizations have more positions reporting directly to management positions. **Exhibit 1-19** presents the organizational structure of the district. Ricardo ISD's ratio of employees reporting directly to the superintendent is 7 to 1.

Exhibit 1-19
Ricardo ISD Organization Chart
1999-2000



Source: Ricardo ISD.

Under this organization structure, Ricardo ISD administrators perform the following duties:

The superintendent is responsible for the effective execution of policies adopted by the local board. The superintendent manages the administration of all district operations and assigns personnel responsibilities.

The director of business and data processing directs and manages the operation of all financial and business services for the district.

The elementary and middle school principals direct and manage the instructional program and supervise operations at the campus level. They provide instructional leadership to ensure high standards of service. They also direct the implementation of district policies and instructional programs and manage the operation of all campus activities.

The technology manager provides support for microcomputers, networks and technology- related equipment, and serves as the primary contact for current and future technology and information infrastructure development and maintenance.

The food service manager directs the cafeteria staff in providing nutritious meals to students. The manager is also responsible for ordering, preparing and distributing food, and preparing all federal reports for reimbursement on the National School Lunch Program.

The maintenance supervisor directs, coordinates and monitors maintenance and custodial operations of the district. The supervisor also establishes cleaning schedules and procedures to maintain a high standard of safety, cleanliness and efficiency of building operations and grounds.

The transportation supervisor directs and manages the transportation and vehicle maintenance of all district-owned vehicles. The supervisor is responsible for the safe and efficient operation of the Transportation Department.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD has a flat organizational structure with minimal levels of management.

FINDING

The superintendent meets with his senior staff every Friday morning. Each meeting begins with the food services, technology, maintenance and transportation supervisors briefing principals about projects underway on their respective campuses and relevant student issues. At this time, principals are allowed to present their concerns, discuss future projects and raise questions about issues presented by the supervisors. The operational supervisors are then dismissed, and educational or staff development issues or concerns are discussed. After discussing the concerns, the superintendent presents issues for the week and provides districtwide direction to members of the educational team.

The working relationship between the superintendent and first-line management team allows open dialogue and disagreement, when necessary, on critical issues. Members of the superintendent's

administrative staff praised the superintendent for the manner in which he manages the district. Each member of the administrative staff told the TSPR review team that the weekly meetings are extremely productive and rarely last more than two hours. Each said they were encouraged to bring their concerns and issues to the meeting for consideration.

Interviews and focus group comments indicate that Ricardo ISD staff is loyal to the district and supportive of its efforts. More than 90 percent of the staff interviewed commented on the positive change under the new

central and campus administrations. Most felt that the focus of the district was on the students and on improving their academic skills.

COMMENDATION

The superintendent's management style encourages open dialogue and allows district administrators to participate in decisions affecting the operation and management of the district.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has taken steps to ensure fairness and consistency in employee hiring and appraisal. The district developed and circulated a District Hiring Procedures Manual that was updated in January 2000. Key job descriptions have been developed and are distributed to staff. The district put into place an annual performance appraisal process for each staff member. Both staff members and supervisors are involved in setting job goals. The superintendent and the principals have developed an appraisal process that is strictly followed and constantly reviewed.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD consistently applies its hiring procedures and appraisal tools to all staff.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has no documented procedures in many areas to guide district operations. In a district the size of Ricardo ISD, many key functional areas are handled by one position, making it critical for employees to be cross-trained. Operating procedures that document these functions are important to ensure that tasks can be accomplished in the event of an absence or sustained illness of key staff.

Recommendation 4:

Develop and implement a set of standard operating procedures for key functional areas and train all staff in their application.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager identify key function.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent appoints staff to prepare department	October 2000

	procedures.	
3.	Appointed staff prepare detailed operating procedures for key functions.	December 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

FINDING

When providing certain information to the Texas Education Agency, not all Ricardo ISD program managers are required to review the data. Texas school districts are required to submit information to TEA at three times during the year as part of the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data collection: in October, initial information on student enrollment, annual budget and staffing is submitted; in February, audited financial information for the prior fiscal year is submitted; and in June, final student data is submitted. This information covers general district information, plus information in special areas that determines funding for the next fiscal year, including: special education, bilingual education, Career and Technology Education, and gifted and talented education.

Ricardo ISD's PEIMS data is entered in the EDP system and transmitted to the regional service center. In the past there have been some inconsistencies in the way the data was reported. This has made it difficult for management to compare results from year to year.

According to the business manager, before entry in the system, the information is reviewed and approved by each principal and forwarded to the superintendent for final review and sign-off. However, transportation and food services managers do not verify their information.

Information reported to TEA by Ricardo ISD reflects some discrepancies for the past school years (**Exhibit 1-20**). The decline in expenditures for student transportation and food services may be a reporting error rather than an actual decrease in spending.

Exhibit 1-20
Ricardo ISD General Revenue Fund Expenditures
by Function
1997-98 through 1999-2000

Function (Code)	1997-98 Actual	1998-99 Actual	1999-2000 Budgeted
--------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-----------------------

Instruction (11, 95)	\$1,719,672	\$1,605,602	\$1,975,559
Instructional Related Services (12,13)	\$64,908	\$77,903	\$81,927
Instructional Leadership (21)	-	-	-
School Leadership (23)	\$84,590	\$123,144	\$141,065
Support Services - Student (31, 32, 33)	\$97,749	\$129,134	\$119,753
Student Transportation (34)	\$155,465	\$159,455	\$1,667
Food Services (35)	\$245,400	\$260,630	-
Cocurricular/Extracurricular Activities (36)	\$56,654	\$57,329	\$64,470
Central Administration (41, 92)	\$233,200	\$238,385	\$110,106
Plant Maintenance and Operations (51)	\$320,778	\$301,715	\$119,650
Security & Monitoring Service (52)	-	-	-
Data Processing Services (53)	\$36,995	\$63,976	\$41,682
Other	\$103,260	\$95,947	\$988,399
Total Budgeted Expenditures	\$3,118,671	\$3,158,223	\$3,644,278

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1997-1999 and Ricardo ISD.

Recommendation 5:

Review the current PEIMS reporting process and identify any weaknesses that would allow incorrect reporting of data.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent forms a committee with all PEIMS reporting personnel to identify any weaknesses in the current PEIMS data collection and sign-off process.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent and PEIMS committee write guidelines for all PEIMS reporting personnel to follow when reporting, checking and signing off on PEIMS reporting.	October 2000
3.	The superintendent implements the new PEIMS reporting guidelines.	November 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The appraisal forms for managers of support services do not include performance measures. While these positions are evaluated annually, there are no objective criteria to assess their performance against.

A best practice often used by school districts is to develop objective criteria related to job duties. For example, **Exhibit 1-21** presents suggested performance measures for certain areas of school operations.

Exhibit 1-21
Performance Measures by Position

Position	Performance Measure
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual cost of overtime• Number of square feet per custodian• Employee attendance• Use of outside contractors
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percent of on-time arrivals and departures• Cost per mile• Cost per student transported
Food Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation rates• Survey results• Meals per labor hour• Commodities offered/used
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of incidents• Closure rate

Source: SoCo Consulting, Inc.

Recommendation 6:

Develop performance measures for managers of support services, and incorporate them into the annual evaluation process.

Each performance indicator must be objective and measurable and should include employee input in its development. Each supervisor must be made aware of the indicators by which they will be measured, and the targets they are expected to achieve. These performance measures should be

identical to those used to evaluate the progress towards the completion of the strategic plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with management to develop performance measures for each position.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent incorporates performance measures into the performance evaluation process.	October 2000
3.	The superintendent gathers information during the year related to the newly established performance measures.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented using existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD) in four subsections:

D. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A high level of community involvement can be reached when the district actively asks for the input of the community and responds quickly to their suggestions and ideas. An effective school district community relations program can be established through regular communication with the media, parents, business and community leaders, students and employees.

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

The TSPR review team initiated the study by conducting an open community forum at the school cafeteria where any resident could come and express his or her views either verbally to one of the TSPR team members, or provide written comments about any aspect of the district's operations. The majority of the participants in the public forum were board members (**Appendix A**).

FINDING

Ricardo ISD publishes a monthly newsletter that is sent to parents. This newsletter is professional and provides parents with information about events occurring in their children's school.

Ricardo ISD also has established a number of events that are geared toward involving the parents with issues at Ricardo ISD. One example includes the annual FunFest, which is an October festival that is well attended. The district makes an effort to post board meeting agendas and school information at these events.

When there are problems with students, either with truancy, absenteeism, discipline or performance, the principals contact the parents to apprise them of the situation. During these conversations, the principals also attempt to ascertain whether conditions at home may be contributing to the problem. The district elicits the input and support of the parents in addressing any problems with their children

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD is actively communicating with parents and soliciting their support in their children's education.

FINDING

The district has an active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Many parents volunteer within the school in the nurse's office, the library and for field trips. The organization has put on fundraisers for items like library books. Additionally, the organization makes donations of items the district might need. The PTO sponsors the FunFest each year.

COMMENDATION

The PTO has helped the district raise funds, and contributes to other projects.

FINDING

The district also contributes to the community by opening up its facilities to the public. Each year, the Boys and Girls Club have community basketball leagues in the district gymnasium. Additionally, the student nurse runs a flu shot clinic for the community each fall.

COMMENDATION

The district is a valued partner in the local community.

FINDING

While Ricardo ISD has established relationships with local colleges for student teachers, it has not taken full advantage of the resources that may be available in the form of student help. Texas A&M University has two campuses in close proximity to Ricardo ISD. Both of these universities are four-year institutions and offer a wide curriculum of study. Ricardo ISD has not taken full advantage of the opportunity to partner with either campus. There is a tremendous resource pool for establishing intern programs for preparing grant research and proposals, and providing financial analysis. These programs would prove invaluable for the university students by providing the opportunity to use their skills in the work environment under a controlled setting, and Ricardo ISD could tap into a highly educated personnel market without having to incur any additional staffing costs.

Recommendation 7:

Contact the Dean of Education and the Dean of Business Administration of both area Texas A&M University campuses to establish intern programs in education and finance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent meets with both deans to determine how best to integrate their curriculum needs with Ricardo ISD's staffing needs.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent designs job descriptions and criteria for university credit.	September 2000
3.	The university placement offices select suitable candidates.	September 2000
4.	The superintendent designates appropriate management staff to select from candidates.	October 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter reviews key areas of Ricardo Independent School District's (ISD) educational service delivery system, including:

- A. Student Performance
- B. Special Programs
- C. School Management
- D. Instructional Technology

BACKGROUND

Ricardo ISD has two schools: an elementary school with students in Pre-K through fifth grade, and a middle school with students from sixth through eighth grade. The total enrollment during the 1998-99 school year was 602 students, of which 383 were elementary students (64 percent) and 219 were middle school students (36 percent). Enrollment for 1998-99 is described in **Exhibit 2-1**.

Exhibit 2-1
Ricardo ISD Enrollment
1998-99

Ricardo ISD Schools	Enrollment	Percent of Enrollment
Elementary	383	64%
Middle	219	36%
Total	602	100%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1998-99.

The student-to-teacher ratio in Ricardo ISD was less than the state average from 1996-97 to 1998-99 (**Exhibit 2-2**). During the three-year period, Ricardo ISD had a decrease in the student-to-teacher ratio of 3.2 percent. The state student-to-teacher ratio declined slightly during that period. Teachers are happy to see the decrease in class size. In the focus groups a number of them stated that they did not want to see class sizes grow at Ricardo. They believe that the reduced class size contributed to the increase in TAAS scores, since they were able to give their student more individualized attention.

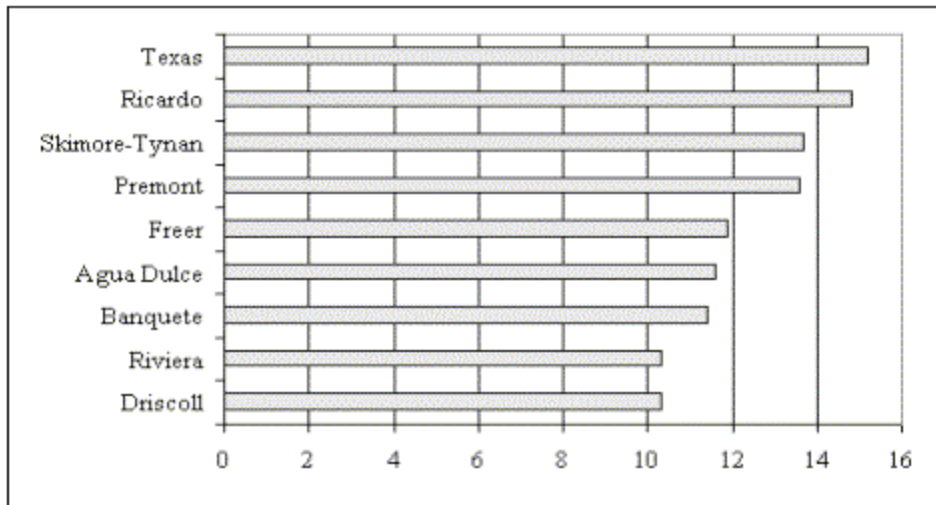
**Exhibit 2-2
Ricardo ISD and State Student-Teacher Ratio
1996-97 through 1998-99**

	1995-96	1997-98	1998-99
Ricardo	15.3	15.2	14.8
Texas	15.5	15.3	15.2

Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99.

Even though Ricardo ISD's student-to-teacher ratio is below the state average, it trails all of its peer districts (**Exhibit 2-3**).

**Exhibit 2-3
Ricardo ISD, Peer District and State Student-to-Teacher Ratio
1998-99**



Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter reviews key areas of Ricardo Independent School District's (ISD) educational service delivery system, including:

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Since 1993, Texas has rated and accredited districts and schools based upon specific performance measures including the reading, writing and math portions of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and dropout and attendance rates. Districts are evaluated each year, and beginning with the 1995-96 year districts were rated exemplary, recognized, academically acceptable, academically unacceptable or unacceptable.

The enrollment and accreditation status for Ricardo ISD and its peer districts are presented in **Exhibit 2-4**. Ricardo ISD received the accreditation level academically acceptable. The majority of Ricardo ISD's peer districts are also academically acceptable. During the 1998-99 school year, only two peer districts received an accreditation of "recognized."

Exhibit 2-4
Ricardo ISD and Peer District Enrollments and Accreditation Status
1998-99

District	Enrollment	Accreditation Status
Agua Dulce	393	Academically Acceptable
Banquete ISD	850	Recognized
Driscoll	269	Academically Acceptable
Freer	1,074	Recognized
Premont	981	Academically Acceptable
Ricardo	602	Academically Acceptable
Riviera	567	Academically Acceptable
Skidmore-Tynan	718	Academically Acceptable

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1998-99.

Ricardo ISD has been judged academically acceptable since 1993. Although the district has carried this accreditation for a number of years, the new administration was not satisfied with this level of student

performance. At the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, district officials set new goals and performance standards; the key goals are presented in **Exhibit 2-5**. The new administration wanted to work hard to increase TAAS scores in every grade level. Several enhancements were made to the district's curriculum.

**Exhibit 2-5
District Goals for 1999-2000 School Year**

Goal	Result
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will score in the 85th percentile in all areas of the TAAS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students in every grade, every ethnic group and economic bracket scored better than 85 percent on every area of the TAAS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The middle school will implement a dropout tracking program to follow-up on all graduating students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In progress.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievement gaps among the various subgroups will be reduced by 10 percent on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievement gap between the various subgroups has been lowered in every area with the widest variance at 6 percent.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campuses will implement a strong core curriculum focusing on the TAAS, and the Standards for Academic Excellence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core curriculum focuses primarily on these performance criteria.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campuses will include in the curricula citizenship, patriotism and respect for laws and other citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pledge of Allegiance is recited each morning, the district held a Veteran's Day assembly and a group of students made a field trip to the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campuses will integrate technology into the their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district purchased a number of software packages that have been

<p>curriculum.</p>	<p>included in the core curriculum, such as Accelerated Reader and Sharon Wells math.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campuses will implement a drug and alcohol curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has a drug and alcohol curriculum.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campuses' curricula will address needs of special populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district participates in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, which places children that have difficulty with English in classes with an ESL accredited teacher. • The district's special education program is in consort with the Laguna Madre Special Education Cooperative. The district has a pull-out program where students go to special classes once or twice daily for special attention. • The district has a gifted and talented program for its students who comply with the criteria. It is also a pull-out program where students go to a gifted and talented class for one hour each day.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Superintendent will recommend salary schedules, including employee benefits, that will be competitive with surrounding school districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board approved teacher raises during the May 17, 2000 meeting. The district is still working to improve employee benefits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campuses will effectively communicate with parents through the use of newsletters, memorandums, notes, progress reports, teacher/parent conferences, newspapers and radio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district prepares a monthly newsletter and sends it to parents. • Progress reports are sent every 6 weeks. • Teacher/parent conferences are called as needed.

stations.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The campuses will involve parents in discipline matters by requiring attendance at administrative and/or teacher initiated conferences that pertain to their children's conduct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When discipline is an issue, principals call parents and the issue is usually taken care of.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The campuses will implement programs to ensure student safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sheriff's department deputy is on site every day.

Source: Ricardo ISD District/Campus Improvement Plan, 1999-2000.

Almost two-thirds of Ricardo ISD's students are classified as economically disadvantaged (64%). Ricardo ISD has made a strong commitment to these students, with some success-the gap between the non-disadvantaged students and the disadvantaged student narrowed from 1997-98 to 1998-99.

An average of 48 percent of the state's students are classified as economically disadvantaged. Ricardo ISD has about 10 percent more economically disadvantaged students than the state average.

The percent of Ricardo ISD students classified as economically disadvantaged increased by 2.4 percent of the total student population from 1996-97 to 1998-99, while the state's percentage remained constant. **(Exhibit 2-6).**

The district's staff and faculty indicated that the growth in this student population is due to several factors, including parents moving to urban areas to seek employment. Many of the remaining families are already on federal assistance or cannot find jobs within the small, rural communities in the area.

Exhibit 2-6
Ricardo ISD and State Economically Disadvantaged Students
as a Percentage of Total Student Population
1996-97 through 1998-99

Entity	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent
--------	---------	---------	---------	---------

				Change
Ricardo	63.5%	61.6%	64.0%	2.4%
Texas	48.1%	48.5%	48.5%	0.1%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99.

Compared with its peer districts, Ricardo ISD ranks fourth. However, all of the peer districts exceed the state average with the exception of one, Agua Dulce (**Exhibit 2-7**).

Exhibit 2-7
Ricardo ISD and Peer Districts Economically Disadvantaged
as a Percentage of Total Student Population
1998-99

District	Economically Disadvantaged Students	Peer Rank
Agua Dulce	48.1%	9
Banquete	73.4%	3
Driscoll	78.8%	1
Freer	61.6%	5
Premont	77.5%	2
Ricardo	64.0%	4
Riviera	57.0%	7
Skidmore-Tynan	60.3%	6
Texas	48.5%	8

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

FINDING

The curriculum at Ricardo ISD elementary and middle schools is driven by two basic programs: Accelerated Reader for reading and Sharon Wells for math.

Exhibit 2-8 summarizes the software packages used to augment the district's curriculum.

**Exhibit 2-8
Curriculum Software
1998-99**

Software Package	School Usage	Audience	Purpose	Benefits	When Implemented
TexStar	All	Teachers	To develop lessons plans aligned with text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows teachers to develop more complete lesson plans. 	1999-2000
Accelerated Reader	All	Students	To test reading skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases reading skills. Students enjoy reading. Students read at the appropriate reading level. 	1996
STAR	All	Students	To assess reading comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides measuring tool. 	1998-99
A+	1 st -3 rd & 8 th	Students	To prepare for TAAS with simulated testing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages learning. Reinforces learning. 	1998-99
Process Manager	All	Teachers	To identify areas of improvement and pinpoint at-risk students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies at-risk students. Allows program to be tailored to individual 	1999-2000

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> needs. • Can identify teachers in need of assistance. 	
--	--	--	--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

These tools have had a significant impact on student achievement since 1998-99, with TAAS scores surpassing expectations. The administration and faculty believe that the difference has been a result of the integration of these software packages into the curriculum.

Student performance on both state and national standardized tests is an indicator of the success of the educational delivery system. Since 1990-91 in Texas, the state has administered the TAAS to measure student performance in reading and math in grades, 3-7 and 8; in writing in grades 4 and 8; in science and social studies in grade 8. TAAS gauges grade-level skills at a passing rate established by the State Board of Education. Schools, districts, regions and TEA use the results for planning and district accountability.

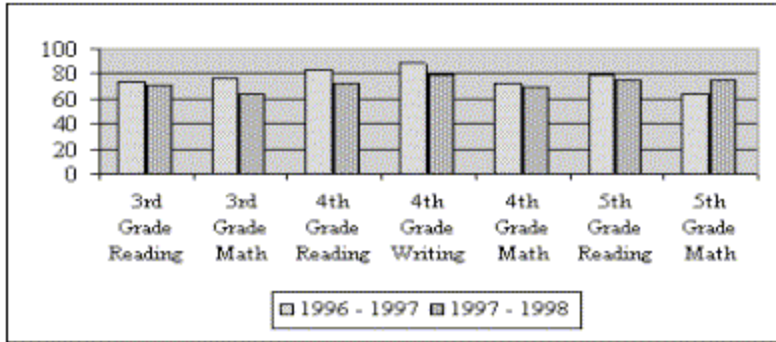
Exhibits 2-9 through 2-11 compare the elementary TAAS scores from the 1996-97 to 1999-2000 school years. In 1997, scores fell in every subject and grade, with the exception of fifth grade math, which rose 11.2 percent. No grade level tested at the 85 percent threshold that was established by the district in 1999.

The results were more positive in 1998, with the scores increasing in every subject and grade level with the exception of fifth grade math. However, the only grade levels that met the 1999 standard were fourth grade writing, with an excellent 98.2 percent passing rate and fourth grade math, with a 87.5 percent passing rate.

As the exhibit indicates, TAAS results were up in every grade and in every subject. Every grade level performed better than the 1999 standard. In celebration, two staff members shaved their heads to show their support of and pride in their students. Teacher focus groups were understandably thrilled with the results. The TAAS scores are a clear indication that the new curriculum is having an impact. The results reflect well on the administration, faculty and the student body.

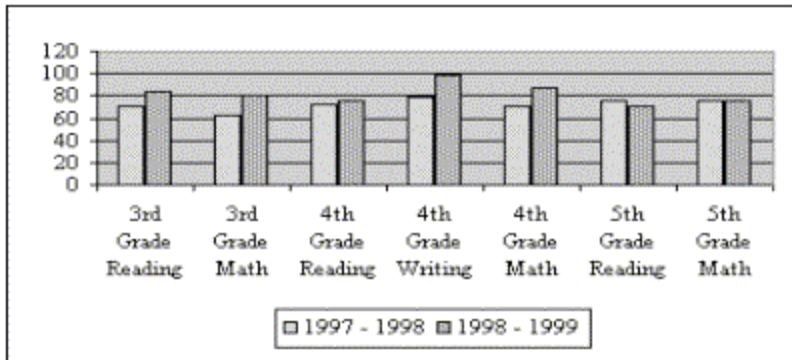
Exhibit 2-9
Percentage of Ricardo ISD Elementary Students Passing TAAS

1996-97 versus 1997-98



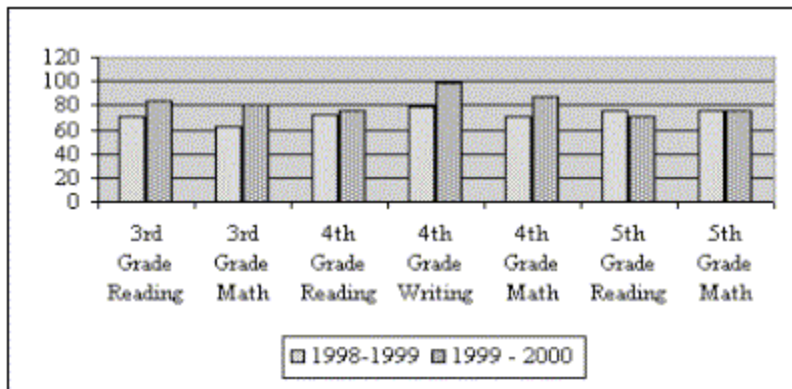
Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99, and Ricardo ISD.

**Exhibit 2-10
Percentage of Ricardo ISD Elementary Students Passing TAAS
1997-98 versus 1998-1999**



Source: TEA, AEIS 1997-98 through 1998-99, and Ricardo ISD.

**Exhibit 2-11
Percentage of Ricardo ISD Elementary Students Passing TAAS
1998-99 versus 1999-2000**



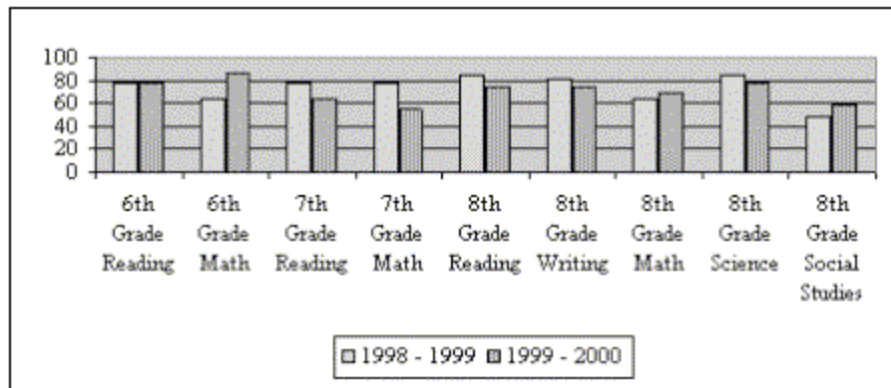
Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99, PEIMS 1999-2000.

Exhibits 2-12 through 2-14 compare the middle school TAAS scores from the 1996-97 to 1999-2000 school years. In 1997, the sixth grade reading and math scores were higher than the 1996 scores. Both seventh grade reading and math fell significantly. The eighth grade results were mixed, with reading, writing and science scores down from 1996 levels, and math and social studies scores rising. When evaluating these scores against the 85 percent threshold established by the district in 1999, only sixth grade math reached the target level, with 87 percent.

During 1998, the benefits of the Accelerated Reader program begin to appear. Reading scores were up in the seventh and eighth grade, with sixth grade scores falling off by 5.4 percent. Math scores were also beginning to benefit from the Sharon Wells program that was introduced in the upper grade levels. Math scores in every grade level increased over 1997 levels. Science and social study scores in eighth grade also increased. Writing scores, however, decreased. In terms of the 85 percent target, all grades and subjects were above the target except for sixth and eighth grade reading, and eighth grade science and social studies.

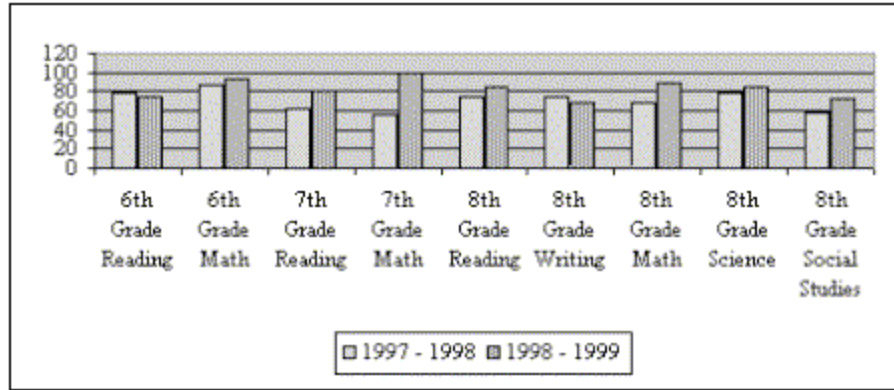
As the exhibit indicates, TAAS results were up in every grade and in every subject, with the exception of seventh grade math, which fell from 100 percent to 96 percent. Every grade level performed better than the 1999 standard. The biggest improvement was in eighth grade writing, an area that had historically been weak. The Ricardo ISD middle school targeted writing throughout the year. The students took practice exams and exchanged the exams with Banquete ISD to be graded. The district primarily targeted reading, math and writing in its goal setting. The district may want to evaluate its eighth grade science and social study curriculum as well.

Exhibit 2-12
Percentage of Ricardo ISD Middle School Students Passing TAAS
1996-97 versus 1997-98



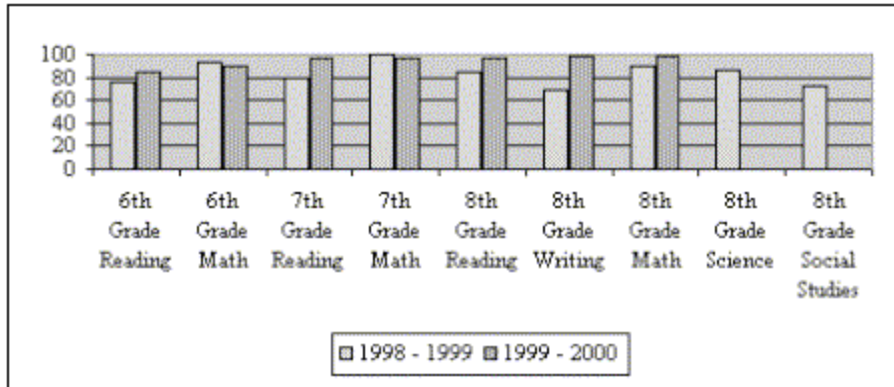
Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99, and Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 2-13
Percentage of Ricardo ISD Middle School Students Passing TAAS
1997-1998 versus 1998-1999



Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99, and Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 2-14
Percentage of Ricardo ISD Middle School Students Passing TAAS
1998-1999 versus 1999-2000



Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99, and Ricardo ISD.

COMMENDATION

The faculty at Ricardo ISD have helped students improve their TAAS scores in reading, writing and math.

FINDING

In interviews, elementary and middle school teachers expressed few concerns about the curriculum offered at Ricardo ISD. The tremendous improvement in TAAS scores are a strong indication of the success of the district in meeting its performance objectives. **Exhibits 2-15** and **2-16** present the 1999-2000 TAAS scores for elementary students and for middle school students, respectively.

Exhibit 2-15
Ricardo ISD Elementary School TAAS Results
1999-2000

Grade/Subject	TAAS Score
Third-Reading	89
Third-Math	90
Fourth-Reading	94
Fourth-Writing	100
Fourth-Math	94
Fifth-Reading	92
Fifth-Math	92

Source: Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 2-16
Ricardo ISD Middle School TAAS Scores
1999-2000

Grade/Subject	TAAS Scores
Sixth-Reading	84
Sixth-Math	90
Sixth-Reading	96
Sixth-Math	96
Sixth-Reading	96
Sixth-Writing	99
Sixth-Math	99
Sixth-Science	N/A
Sixth-Social Studies	N/A

Source: Ricardo ISD.

The Ricardo ISD faculty used several methods to highlight student progress. There were charts in each classroom that tracked the success of each student. The learning environment in each classroom was aimed at encouraging students to learn. The desks were arranged to support communication and allowed for individual assistance when necessary.

Ricardo ISD set up a reading resource center in each elementary school to encourage students to read. The circulation of books from the library increased from 200 books per day to 700.

Ricardo ISD faculty stated that if students were taught to read and taught to enjoy reading, the students would be eager to learn in all areas. Therefore, the district focused on increasing the reading level of each student. The curriculum used technology, such as Accelerated Reader, partnered with STAR, a computer test, to focus on improving reading skills of the Ricardo ISD students.

Exhibit 2-17 illustrates the volume of books read in the elementary school by May 17, 2000.

**Exhibit 2-17
Number of Books Read
Elementary Campus
May 17, 2000**

Grade	Number of books
First Grade	1,423
Second Grade	5,298
Third Grade	6,857
Fourth Grade	4,338
Fifth Grade	3,794

Source: Ricardo ISD District/Campus Improvement Plan, 1999-2000.

The Sharon Wells math program was introduced in 1998-99 in fifth through eighth grade. In 1999-2000, the program was introduced in the fourth grade. Sharon Wells is a structured math program intended to help students gain a basic understanding of math principles. A consultant from Sharon Wells comes to the campuses every six weeks and assists teachers in resolving operating problems with the software.

Teacher focus groups had high praise for both the Accelerated Reader and Sharon Wells programs. They stated that these programs have helped their students tremendously and TAAS scores "went through the roof" as a result. The focus group felt the school has done a great job aligning the curriculum and the improvement in the TAAS scores were due to "great planning and better strategies and programs being brought to the school."

The district TAAS results for 1999-2000 were a vast improvement over previous years. The available AEIS data does not contain 1999-2000 data, and all comparisons to the state and peers are for the 1998-99 school year.

COMMENDATION

The district met and exceeded its goal of at least an 85 percent pass rate on the TAAS.

FINDING

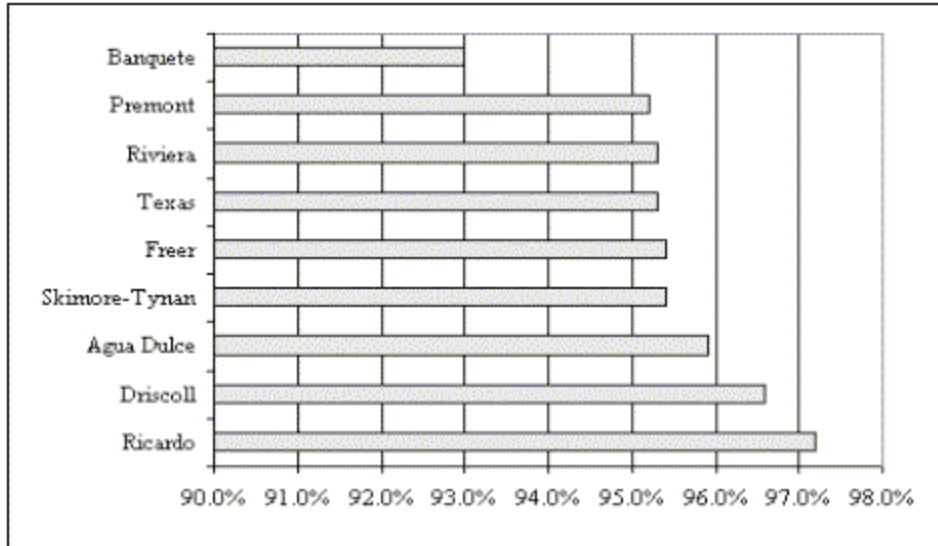
Additional measures of the effectiveness of the educational delivery system include student attendance and the number of students who drop out of school. Dropout rates are not applicable to Ricardo ISD, since it only provides elementary and middle school education. Although students at that level do occasionally drop out, it is such a rare occurrence that it would be of no benefit to evaluate Ricardo ISD in terms of its dropout rate.

Attendance is a district priority. When a student has been absent for a period of time without a written parent's excuse, the principal calls the student's home to let the parents know that the student has not been in school. If the parent is unable to convince the student to go back to school, the principal, with the Deputy Sheriff, will go to the student's home. This acts as a tremendous deterrent to truancy.

Exhibit 2-18 compares Ricardo ISD's attendance rate with its peer districts, the region and the state. According to data from 1997-98, Ricardo ISD has the highest attendance rate of its peers and exceeds the regional and state averages.

Exhibit 2-18 Attendance Rates of Ricardo ISD Students Compared to Peer Districts and State

1997-98



Source: TEA, AEIS 1997-98.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD takes effective actions to keep its attendance rate high.

FINDING

As mentioned earlier, Ricardo ISD uses a software package called Process Manager to augment the district's curriculum. The Process Manager software allows faculty and administrators to identify areas where student improvement is required, but Ricardo ISD does not use this feature. The areas for student improvement identified by Ricardo ISD for the 1999-2000 school year are detailed in **Exhibit 2-19**.

**Exhibit 2-19
Ricardo ISD Improvement Targets**

Subject	Population Target
Reading	Hispanic (71.2%) Economically Disadvantaged (66.7%)
Math	Hispanic (77.5%) Economically Disadvantaged (73.8%)
Writing	All students (85%)

Source: Ricardo ISD Campus Improvement Plan, 1999-2000.

Although Ricardo ISD has been successful in identifying student needs by integrating Process Manager into its curriculum, it has not used it to identify teacher improvement opportunities. This can be an extremely valuable tool to incorporate into the district's staff development planning. Areas where teachers need improvement can be immediately identified, counseled, mentored and monitored.

Recommendation 8:

Use Process Manager software to identify development improvement opportunities among the faculty at Ricardo ISD.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The principals identify the teachers of the students performing below average and see if there is a correlation.	September 2000
2.	The principals use the results to determine staff development needs.	Ongoing

IMPACT This recommendation could be implemented using the district's existing resources.

FINDING

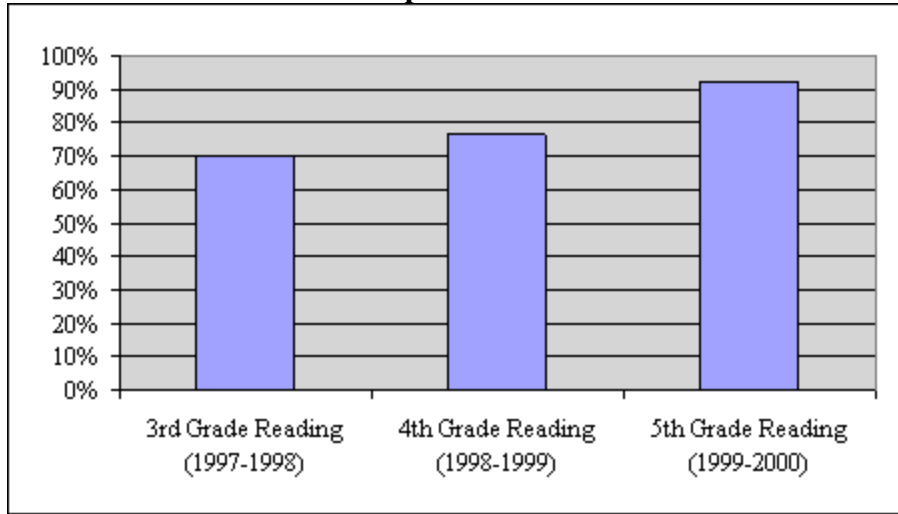
The degree to which curriculum in Ricardo ISD is vertically integrated between the elementary and middle campuses is weak. It is important to consider vertical integration when setting goals for the district. A student who performs exceptionally well in elementary school must be adequately prepared to advance to middle school. The same is true for middle school students who will advance to high school. Vertical integration of curriculums is a critically important component of the district's commitment to its students.

Each campus has set up academic teams to help improve vertical integration within their campus. For example, the middle school math team is composed of sixth, seventh and eighth grade math teachers. These teams provide a valuable resource for each other, helping plan the best means for assisting students in advancing to higher grades. In addition, any potential limitations or weaknesses in one program can be identified and modified as needed. Furthermore, all grade level teachers share ideas and teaching strategies.

As a means of judging the vertical integration of the Ricardo ISD curriculum, the review team analyzed the progress of the same population from the third grade through the eighth grade. The results are presented in

Exhibits 2-20 and 2-21, and track elementary students from 1997 to 2000 to evaluate the vertical integration success from one grade to the next within the elementary school.

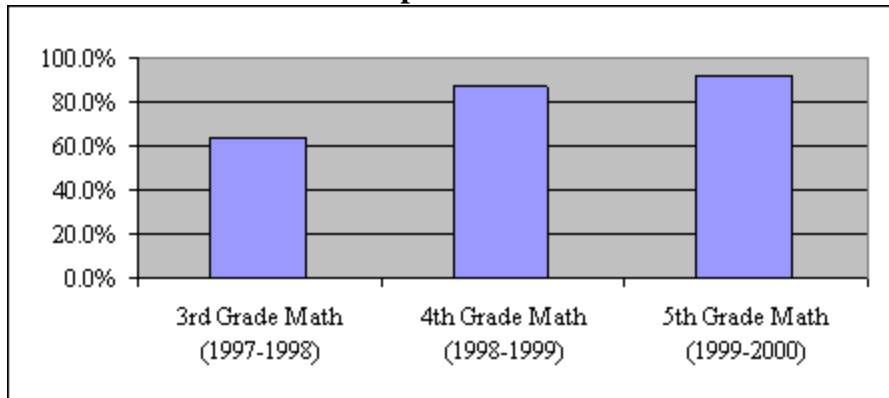
Exhibit 2-20
Tracking Elementary Reading TAAS Results
In Same Population 1997-2000



Source: TEA, AEIS 1997-1999 and Ricardo ISD.

The graph clearly demonstrates that the reading skill of the group has continued to grow each year. This is a strong indication that they have been well prepared in prior grades.

Exhibit 2-21
Tracking Elementary Math TAAS Results
In Same Population 1997-2000

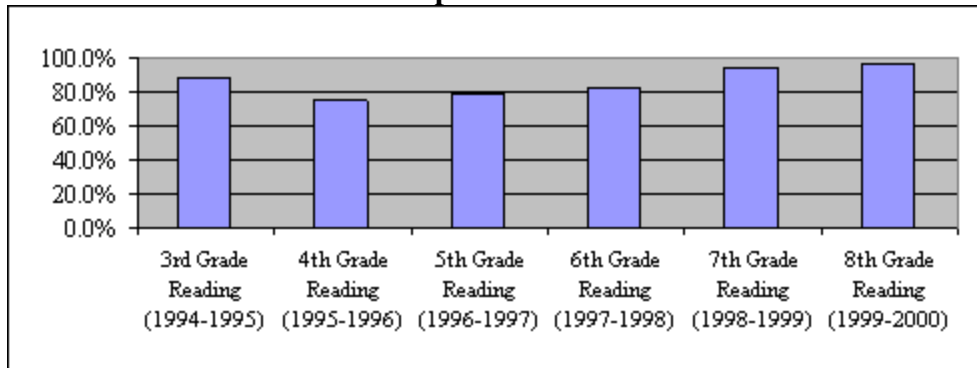


Source: TEA, AEIS 1997-1999 and Ricardo ISD.

Again, the students are improving as they progress through the elementary school. This indicates that the students have sufficient math skills to progress to the next grade.

Exhibits 2-22 and 2-23 follow the 1998-2000 eighth graders from third grade to evaluate the vertical integration between the elementary and middle school curriculum.

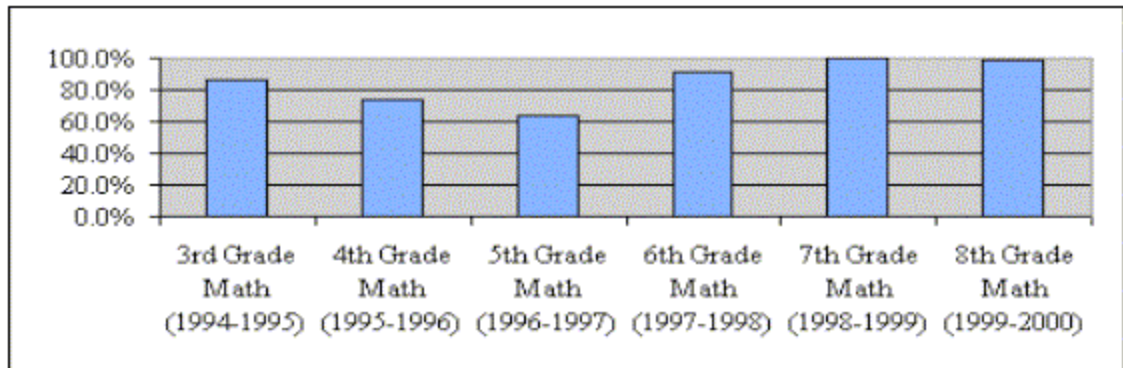
Exhibit 2-22
Tracking Middle School Reading TAAS Results
In Same Population 1994-2000



Source: TEA, AEIS 1994-1999 and Ricardo ISD.

In this population, the reading difficulty experienced between third and fourth grade affects the students through the sixth grade. Performance from the sixth grade through eighth rises each year. This finding indicates that a problem existed in the preparation these students received in the third grade. Once the students reached middle school, their reading passing rates increased. This suggests students are well prepared in middle school to progress to the next grade.

Exhibit 2-23
Tracking Middle School Math TAAS Results
In Same Population 1994-2000



Source: TEA, AEIS 1994-1999 and Ricardo ISD.

Again, there seems to have been a problem in the early elementary development. Math passing rates fall off considerably in both the fourth and fifth grade. Once the students reached middle school their passing rates increased substantially, with a 100 percent passing rate in 1998-99. The elementary curriculum was not effectively preparing its students for advancement. The problem appeared to be with the third grade curriculum in 1995-1996. However, when reviewing the progress of 1999-2000's sixth graders, the decline had been corrected. The middle school has historically prepared its students well to advance. With the strong elementary program now in place, the middle school results should continue to improve.

Recommendation 9:

Analyze the performance of the academic teams to determine how the district might improve student performance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The elementary and middle school principals meet to select team members.	September 2000
2.	The elementary and middle school principals establish goals and objectives for each academic team.	September 2000
3.	The elementary and middle school principals set up monthly meetings to discuss any issues that may arise.	September 2000
4.	The elementary and middle school principals report status to the superintendent each month.	September 2000
5.	The superintendent reports status to the board each quarter.	January 2001

FISCAL IMPACT This recommendation could be implemented using the district's existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter reviews key areas of Ricardo Independent School District's (ISD) educational service delivery system, including:

B. SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The special programs discussed in this section are mandated by state and/or federal laws, and are designed to provide students with quality educational services that meet their individual learning needs. This section includes:

- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Special Education
- Gifted and Talented

Although the state sets minimum guidelines for providing special programs to its student population, each district has wide latitude in implementing these programs. The school board can control the level of funding these special programs receive, and parents may also influence expenditures for special education programs.

Exhibit 2-24 summarizes the special programs as a percent of the school's total population.

Even though Ricardo ISD's student-to-teacher ratio is below the state average, it trails all of its peer districts (**Exhibit 2-3**).

Exhibit 2-24
Ricardo ISD Special Programs
1999-2000

Program	Enrollment	Percent of Total Enrollment
Bilingual/ESL	31	5.1%
Special Education	65	10.8%
Gifted and Talented	34	5.6%
Total	130	21.5%

Source: Ricardo ISD Bilingual/ESL Program.

Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language

Ricardo ISD does not have enough students to warrant its own bilingual program and must rely upon the experience of its teachers in serving students who have difficulty learning English. To address this issue, principals take into consideration a student's ability to read, write and understand English when assigning the student to a teacher.

Ricardo ISD's student population is 75.9 percent Hispanic. This ethnicity of the district has remained fairly constant from 1996-97 to 1998-99 (**Exhibit 2-25**).

Exhibit 2-25
Ethnicity of Ricardo ISD Student Population
1996-97 through 1998-99

Ethnic Group	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Anglo	24.2%	21.8%	23.6%
Hispanic	74.8%	76.6%	75.9%
African American	0.3%	1.3%	0.3%
Other	0.7%	0.3%	0.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99.

The ethnic composition of Ricardo ISD's student population is very similar to its district peers, with Hispanic students comprising the majority of the enrollment. However, Ricardo ISD more closely mirrors the county than its peers. (**Exhibit 2-26**).

Exhibit 2-26
Ethnicity of Student Populations
Ricardo ISD versus Peer Districts
1998-99

Peer Group	Anglo	Hispanic	African American	Other
Agua Dulce	35.1%	63.6%	0.5%	0.8%
Banquete	22.0%	77.9%	0.1%	0.0%
Driscoll	13.0%	87.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Freer	20.8%	78.9%	0.3%	0.1%

Premont	8.7%	91.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Ricardo	23.6%	75.9%	0.3%	0.2%
Riviera	35.6%	63.3%	0.9%	0.2%
Skidmore-Tynan	40.1%	59.2%	0.7%	0.0%
Texas	44.1%	38.6%	14.4%	2.8%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

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

Exhibit 2-27 compares the ethnicity of the teachers and students at Ricardo ISD to the state average. The percent of Hispanic teachers at Ricardo ISD is high, though not as high as the Hispanic student population.

Exhibit 2-27
Ricardo ISD Teacher Ethnicity versus Student Ethnicity
1998-99

Ethnic Background	Ricardo ISD Teacher Population	Texas Teacher Population	Ricardo ISD Student Population	Texas Student Population
Anglo	41.7%	74.6%	23.6%	44.1%
Hispanic	58.3%	16.3%	75.9%	38.6%
African American	0.0%	8.2%	0.0%	12.4%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

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

The student enrollment of Ricardo ISD's peer districts is also predominantly Hispanic. **Exhibit 2-28** compares the Hispanic student and teacher populations in Ricardo ISD with its peers. Ricardo ISD compares favorably to its peer group with respect to the ratio of Hispanic teachers to Hispanic students with a 1:1.3 teacher-to-student ratio. This compares with a state ratio of Hispanic teachers to Hispanic students of 1:2.3. The average ratio of Hispanic teachers to Hispanic students for the peer districts is 1:1.6.

Exhibit 2-28
Teacher Ethnicity versus Student Ethnicity
Ricardo ISD versus Peer Districts
1998-99

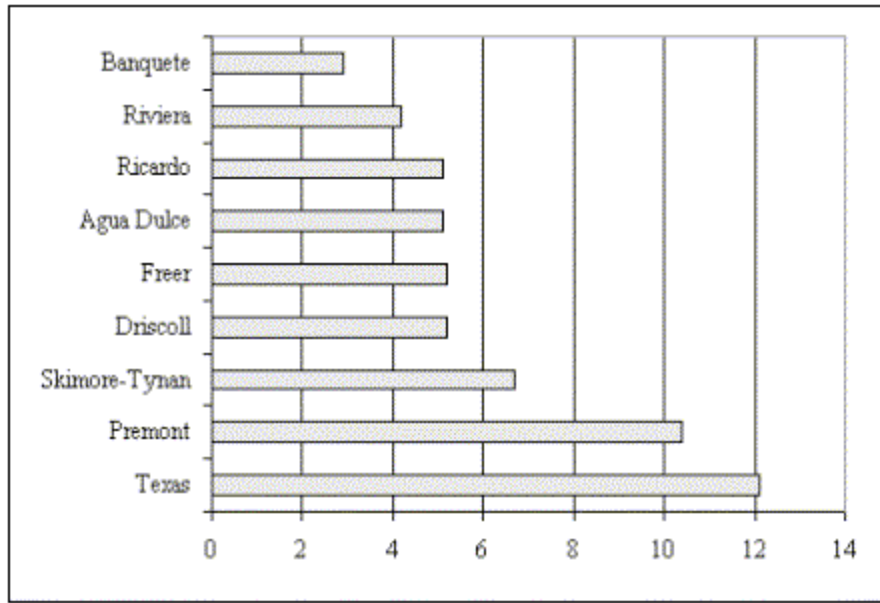
Peer Group	Hispanic Teachers	Hispanic Students
Ricardo	58.3%	75.9%
Agua Dulce	28.8%	63.6%
Banquete	26.8%	77.9%
Driscoll	50.0%	87.0%
Freer	65.6%	78.9%
Premont	72.3%	91.2%
Riviera	43.7%	63.3%
Skidmore-Tynan	22.9%	59.2%
Texas	16.3%	38.6%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

The district had one of the lowest percentages of students in the ESL program among its peers, a somewhat surprising result given its large Hispanic student population. The district has ten teachers who are certified ESL teachers. These teachers' classes are largely Hispanic so that they can provide assistance as needed. These children are not in a special class but have been placed with a special teacher. **Exhibit 2-29** compares the number of students in the ESL program, as a percentage of total enrollment, against its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-29
Ricardo ISD ESL Program Enrollment versus Peer Group

1998-99



Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

FINDING

As illustrated in the preceding exhibits, Ricardo ISD has a good balance between Hispanic teachers and students. The district has taken the time to ensure that all of the students that have difficulty with English are in classes with certified teachers. The fact that the district does not have special classes for these students provides the opportunity for them to interact with English speaking students on a regular basis. This helps the students by increasing their exposure to English and encourages them to become proficient with the language.

In addition, Ricardo ISD spends the highest percentage of its instructional budget of it peer group on Bilingual/ESL programs. (**Exhibit 2-30**).

**Exhibit 2-30
Instructional Operating Program Expenditures
For Bilingual/ESL Education
1998-99**

District	Bilingual/ESL Education
Agua Dulce	3.2%
Banquete	0.3%

Driscoll	0.0%
Freer	0.6%
Premont	0.4%
Ricardo	3.3%
Riviera	0.2%
Skidmore-Tynan	1.6%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

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

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD has a strong commitment to educating students who have difficulty with English.

Special Education

Services for special education students are federally mandated and must meet specific state and federal guidelines. The most comprehensive federal law governing special education is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In order to meet the requirements of IDEA, school districts complete a sequence of steps listed in **Exhibit 2-31**.

Exhibit 2-31 Steps to Meet Requirements of IDEA

Required Steps	
1)	Pre-referral intervention in regular education. When a student experiences academic problems in regular education, intervention can and should occur to remediate academic problems. Pre-referral intervention can be implemented by individual teachers or by committees or teams charged with the responsibility of providing remedial strategies. If the strategies initiated in regular education do not result in improved achievement, a referral is made to special education.
2)	Referral to special education for evaluation. Referring a student to special education means writing an official request, supported by documentation. Teachers, counselors, parents, administrators and the student can initiate a referral. Included in the referral information must be an explanation of steps that have been taken in regular education to try to remediate the student's problem before the referral.

3)	Comprehensive non-discriminatory evaluation. Once a student has been referred, the district must provide a comprehensive non-discriminatory evaluation, commonly referred to as an assessment, within a prescribed amount of time.
4)	Initial placement through a committee meeting. After the evaluation is complete, a meeting is held to discuss the results of the evaluation, decide if the student qualifies for special education services in one of the 13 federal special education categories, and if so, write a plan for educating the student. In Texas, the committee is commonly referred to an ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) committee and, according to federal guidelines, parents must be included as active participants in the process.
5)	Provision of educational services and supports according to a written Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The IEP developed by the ARD committee includes information about which classes the student will take, how much time will be spent in regular education, the type of service delivery model, related services like speech therapy or counseling, mode of transportation and several other considerations required by state and federal law.
6)	Annual program review. Each year after a student's initial qualification and placement, a review is conducted to assure the provision of an appropriate program for the student. In this annual ARD meeting, the results of any evaluations are discussed, progress reviewed, goals re-written, decisions made regarding placement and programming and a new IEP written.
7)	Three-year re-evaluation. Every three years the student may again be given a comprehensive individual assessment. Another ARD is held to discuss the results of the re-evaluation and determine if the student still qualifies for special education. Again, a complete IEP is written and plans are made for its implementation.
8)	Dismissal from the special education program. If and when a student no longer meets special education eligibility criteria, he or she is dismissed from special education and services are no longer provided. The ARD committee must make this decision.

Source: Public Law 101-15, the 1997 amendment to the IDEA.

At every stage of the special education process and throughout a student's tenure in special education, state and federal guidelines must be followed. If there are disagreements or objections related to evaluation, placement or service delivery, students and their families have the right to due process. School districts do not have the burden of demonstrating that their special education services are the best possible; however, the education provided must meet the individual needs of each student. Special education is an important issue in any school district because the costs associated with

special education are high. While the federal government mandates specific special education services, its share of the funding for special education is usually less than 10 percent, with the rest of the costs paid from state and local funds.

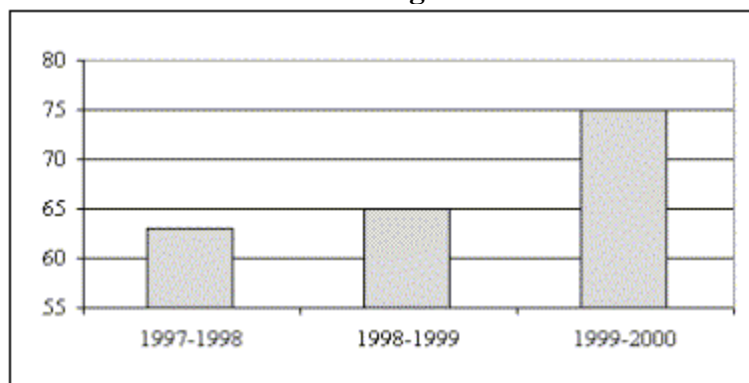
Two special education teachers and two aides are responsible for coordinating the delivery of comprehensive specialized education and related services to Ricardo ISD students who meet the program's state and federal eligibility requirements. This may include specialized education, supplementary aids or transportation.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD tries to mainstream its special education students into the general student population. The elementary and middle schools each have one special education teacher and one teacher's aide. The program is a pull-out program, where the students are removed from their regular classrooms once or twice a day for special reading, math and writing instruction.

Ricardo ISD's special education program serves about 75 students or 12.5 percent of the students at Ricardo ISD. From 1997-98 to 1999-2000, the enrollment has grown 20 percent (**Exhibit 2-32**).

Exhibit 2-32
Ricardo ISD Special Education Enrollment
1997-1998 through 1999-2000



Source: TEA, AEIS 1997-1999 and Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 2-33 presents a summary of the special education programs at Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 2-33
Special Education Programs
1999-2000

Program/Service	Description	Delivery
Essential Learning System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: Reading Mastery • Math: Sharon Wells • Language: State Adopted Language 	Helps prepare students for mainstreaming by enhancing content mastery, teaching life skills and adjusting individual behavior. Each school has one teacher and one aide.
Diagnostic Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosticians provide psychological evaluation through a local special education cooperative. • School principals evaluate students and make referrals. • School counselor available. 	Ricardo ISD has a diagnostician assigned to them by the cooperative. Each school has one principal. The district has one counselor.
Speech Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech pathologist provide language and articulation speech services to identified students through the cooperative. 	Ricardo ISD has a speech pathologist assigned to them by the cooperative.
Related Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational therapist • Physical therapist • Auditory and Visual Services • Counselors • Music Therapist 	All available through the cooperative.
Homebound	N/A	N/A

Source: Laguna Madre Special Education Cooperative and Ricardo ISD.

To provide the necessary services, Ricardo contracts with a local special education cooperative to supplement its special education services.

Ricardo ISD uses the cooperative to determine if students meet the criteria for special education. If a teacher believes that a particular student is eligible for special education, he/she must fill out a referral form. The principal and the counselor at Ricardo ISD complete the referral forms. The referral form is signed by the principal and sent to the cooperative. The referral, if completely filled out, is logged and given to the diagnostician that works with Ricardo ISD. The diagnostician then makes his/her report within 60 calendar days of the date that the referral was first initiated by Ricardo ISD. Before any testing can be done on a student, the parents must give written consent and must receive a copy of the *Procedural Safeguards* and have its contents explained. After receiving the permission the diagnostician schedules the student for the appropriate testing.

Ricardo ISD has participated in the special education cooperative, Laguna Madre Special Education Cooperative, since 1996 with two other school districts, Kingsville ISD and Kenedy County Wide ISD. The cooperative's board consists of each school district's superintendent. The board elects two officers, a chairman and a vice-chairman of the board. All members meet twice a year. The board has three primary functions:

- To establish policies necessary to provide comprehensive special education services for eligible disabled children in the participating school district;
- To determine the efficiency of operation of general activities and the overall value of the program; and
- To annually approve an operating budget for cooperative management.

Exhibit 2-34 lists the cooperative staff members available to Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 2-34
Types of Disabilities
Laguna Madre Special Education Cooperative

Job Title	Number of Staff
Diagnosticians	6
Counselor	1
Vision Teacher	1
Homebound Teacher	1
Director	1
Secretary	1

Speech Therapists	5
Motor Skills Aides	2
Transition Specialists	2
Occupational Therapist	Part-Time
Physical Therapist	Part-Time

Source: Laguna Madre Special Education Cooperative.

The services provided by the special education program are categorized into four types:

- Diagnostic Services: gather information about each student assessed, determining eligibility into the program and determining the most appropriate educational placement and programming;
- Instructional Services: provide eligible students instruction appropriate to their overall educational needs;
- Related Services: support instructional services provided for each student; and
- Supplementary Aids and Services: any service or product that the Special Education Cooperative provides that is designed to enable each student to handle or transition into the mainstream.

Exhibit 2-35 lists the types of disabilities dealt with by the cooperative and the number of Ricardo ISD students having that disability.

**Exhibit 2-35
Number of Disabled Students at Ricardo ISD by Type of Disability**

Disability	Elementary	Middle School	Total
Orthopedic Impairment	5	2	7
Mental Retardation	0	0	0
Emotional Disturbance	3	0	3
Speech Impairment	19	0	19
Learning Disability	15	28	43
Autism	1	0	1
Auditory Impairment	0	0	0
Visual Impairment	0	1	1
Deaf-Blindness	0	0	0

Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0	0
Multiple Disabilities	0	0	0
Other Health Impairment	1	0	1
Total	44	31	75

Source: Laguna Madre Special Education Cooperative and Ricardo ISD.

The district encourages students to take the TAAS, although 27 of the 75 students are exempt. This population includes 15 elementary school students and 12 middle school students.

The TAAS makes up a large part of a student's education. Encouraging special education students to take the test, if they wish, makes them feel more a part of the overall community, and they can take pride in the district's accomplishments as well.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD attempts to mainstream its special education students into the regular student population and encourages these students to participate in the entire educational process, including TAAS testing.

FINDING

A large portion of the special education support from the special education cooperative is provided by aides rather than the professional staff. A diagnostician is assigned to Ricardo ISD to keep a regular weekly schedule on the campus. The diagnostician is responsible for performing the testing, sitting in on all Admission, Review and Dismissal meetings, writing up progress reports and conferring with parents and teachers about a particular student's progress.

Ricardo ISD also has a speech therapist assigned to the district. The speech therapist is required to keep a regular weekly schedule on the campus, and is responsible for student instruction, testing, report and schedule writing and sitting in on speech-only ARDs.

There have been mixed reviews of the effectiveness of the cooperative from other school districts. Riviera pulled out of the cooperative in 1997 citing that it did not serve the district's needs properly. However, the special education teachers at Ricardo ISD seem satisfied with the performance of the cooperative.

Recommendation 10:

Document the percentage of time that an aide instead of a specialist provides campus support, and use the findings to improve the level of professional support from the special education cooperative.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The principals prepare a sign-in sheet for Laguna Madre staff.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent sets a policy that the cooperative staff must sign in every time they are on site.	September 2000
3.	The principals close the log out at the end of each month.	September 2000
4.	The principals tally the number of times an aide performed the service that contractually should have been performed by a specialist.	October 2000
5.	The principals report the findings to the superintendent and director of the cooperative.	Quarterly
6.	The superintendent negotiates improvement.	Quarterly

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Gifted and Talented Program

Since 1987, state law has required that all Texas school districts have educational programs to serve the needs of gifted and talented (G/T) students, and that programs be available in all districts and at all grades. Gifted and talented students are characterized as having high levels of achievement, intellectual and academic ability, creativity, leadership skills and talent in the visual and performing arts.

Districts are required to have a systematic process for identifying gifted and talented students. TEA issues guidelines for the identification of gifted and talented students in an effort to ensure all these students receive a quality education. Additionally, funding for the identification of gifted and talented students and programs is available through the Texas Foundation School Program. This program is intended to provide gifted and talented programs for students from various cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Districts can receive state funds for gifted and talented programs serving up to 5 percent of a district's total student population.

Texas funds gifted and talented education at 0.12 percent for up to 5 percent of the student population. In other words, districts receive an additional 12 percent of the average daily attendance for up to 5 percent of its gifted and talented student population.

Ricardo ISD's gifted and talented program has 34 students in grades K-8. This figure represents 5.6 percent of total enrollment. The district allocated 2.6 percent of its instructional expenditures to the gifted and talented program. Among its peer groups, Ricardo ISD ranks second in the percentage of the instructional budget going to G/T (**Exhibit 2-36**).

Exhibit 2-36
Gifted and Talented Program Expenditures as a Percent of Total
Ricardo ISD versus Peer Group
1998-99

District	G/T as a percent of Total Budget
Agua Dulce	0.6%
Banquete	0.3%
Driscoll	-
Freer	0.2%
Premont	0.5%
Ricardo	2.6%
Riviera	0.2%
Skidmore-Tynan	2.2%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

The gifted and talented program is a pull-out program where each student spends one hour per day in the gifted and talented classes. The district has one teacher for the gifted and talented program.

The selection criteria for the gifted and talented program involves a five-part evaluation:

- intellectual ability (standardized test);
- achievement (standardized test);
- creativity (standardized test);
- portfolio of student work; and

- teacher referral based on observable gifted behaviors.

The process for being selected to participate in the gifted and talented program entails:

- a student is nominated;
- the student is tested;
- the results of the tests are evaluated;
- the parents are notified; and
- if desired, an appeal can be filed and the process repeated.

Recommendation 11:

Explore opportunities for Internet or distance learning instruction to expand services for gifted and talented students.

Since the district cannot easily increase the teaching staff for the G/T program, Ricardo ISD should explore other options for expanding the classes available to G/T students.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The principals examine classes offered via the Internet or distance learning for students and enlists the support of students in these activities.	September 2000
2.	The principals determine which of the classes identified would be challenging in the spirit of the G/T program.	October 2000
3.	The principals recommend possible computer-based G/T classes to the superintendent.	November 2000
4.	The superintendent share the findings of the principals with the Board of Trustees for approval.	December 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

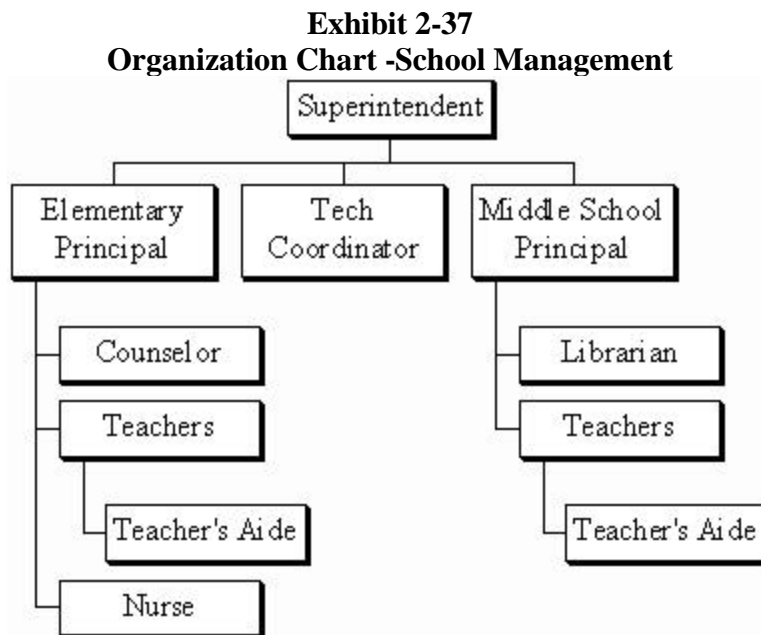
EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter reviews key areas of Ricardo Independent School District's (ISD) educational service delivery system, including:

C. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

The superintendent is the primary instructional leader in the Ricardo school district. He is assisted by one elementary and one middle school principal in developing the curriculum, evaluating the curriculum and the mix of programs offered, and making changes as needed. Neither principal has been with the district for more than two years. During interviews, several faculty members noted that before the arrival of the new principals, the teaching environment was unstable, complicating the job of focusing on student achievement. However, most felt that the new principals had added stability and direction to the schools.

Both schools share a counselor, school nurse, librarian and technology supervisor. **Exhibit 2-37** shows the school management organization chart for Ricardo ISD.



Source: Ricardo ISD.

Teacher turnover in 1998-99 at Ricardo ISD was high compared to peer districts (**Exhibit 2-38**). However, the administrative staff did not believe

that there was a problem with teacher turnover. Because the sample size is fairly small, when one teacher leaves it can have a significant impact on the overall statistics. In 1999-2000, two teachers left Ricardo ISD. One retired and one went to a different district. During focus groups, teachers spoke highly of serving as teachers at Ricardo ISD and appreciated the high level of community involvement and the advantages of teaching in a small district, such as smaller class sizes. Additionally, the district has little difficulty recruiting teachers and can attract experienced teachers to fill vacancies.

Exhibit 2-38
Ricardo ISD and Peer District Teacher Turnover
1998-99

District	Number of Teachers	Turnover Rate
Agua Dulce	34	18.0%
Banquete	75	15.8%
Freer	90	3.4%
Premont	72	18.7%
Ricardo	41	17.1%
Riviera	55	9.3%
Skidmore-Tynan	52	9.8%
Texas	259,739	15.5%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Teachers in Ricardo ISD average 11.1 years of experience, including 6.6 years of experience with Ricardo ISD. About half of the total experience of Ricardo ISD teachers has been outside Ricardo ISD (**Exhibit 2-39**).

Compared to its peer districts, Ricardo ISD teachers have an average amount of experience. Freer ISD teachers have the highest level experience among the districts, with an average of 15.5 years of teaching experience. Driscoll ISD teachers are the least experienced. Teachers at Premont have the highest average number of years of experience with the district among the peer group. Driscoll ISD teachers have been with their district for the shortest amount of time, compared to peer districts. Within the state, teachers have an average of 11.8 years of experience. Statewide, teachers have been with the same district an average of eight years.

Exhibit 2-39
Ricardo ISD and Peer District Teacher Average Years of Experience
1998-99

District	Total Years of Experience	Experience with the District
Agua Dulce	13.2	7.7
Banquete	12.9	7.4
Driscoll	7.5	5.1
Freer	15.5	6.6
Premont	14.6	9.2
Ricardo	11.1	6.6
Riviera	12.6	8.1
Skidmore-Tynan	10.3	5.9
Texas	11.8	8.0

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD is a small district with an elementary and a middle school. The elementary school principal has been with the district for two years. The 1999-2000 school year was the middle school principal's first year with the district.

The review team saw many examples of effective communication between the superintendent, the principals and the faculty. Regularly scheduled meetings occur each week between the superintendent and his staff, and between the principals and faculty. Elementary teachers provide the principal with their lesson plans each Friday and middle school teachers give lesson plans to their principal each Monday. In focus groups, faculty indicated that regular meetings help keep teachers abreast of activities in the district and allow teachers to share their concerns as a group.

The district developed academic teams to improve the delivery of educational services to students. There are two types of academic teams in place. One includes faculty peers across disciplines within the same grade levels. The other teams are composed of faculty peers from different grade levels within the same discipline.

The review team found a high level of communication between campus administrators and faculty. Lesson plans are reviewed individually with teacher and approved with feedback from them. Teachers told the review team that there had been a significant improvement in the lines of communication since the new administration joined Ricardo ISD.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD school management has created a cooperative environment where feedback is encouraged and considered in decision making.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD staff said the district does not have sufficient resources to determine what grants might be available to the district in areas other than technology. Possible areas to explore include at-risk programs and community education programs.

Almost two-thirds of the enrollment at Ricardo ISD (64 percent) is economically disadvantaged and could also be at-risk. **Exhibit 2-40** summarizes the number of at-risk students that have been identified, by campus.

**Exhibit 2-40
Ricardo ISD At-Risk Students**

Campus	Number of Students	Percent of Total Enrollment
Elementary	22	3.75%
Middle School	98	16.3%
Total	120	19.9%

Source: Ricardo ISD.

While student achievement has been good in Ricardo ISD (a pass rate greater than 85 percent on the TAAS) the administration has not effectively sought federal funds that could be available for at-risk students. However, the time needed to pursue possible grant funding is beyond the capability of existing staff, who must focus on the core responsibilities of their jobs.

Recommendation 12:

Work with Region 2 to determine how the district might be able to receive more grant funding.

Region 2 should be able to provide more focused assistance to the district once Ricardo ISD leadership can articulate specific needs that might be eligible for grant assistance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent, managers and principals brainstorm to identify issues in school management that might be suitable to address with grant funding.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent and the business manager contact Region 2 for assistance in determining available grant funds in specific areas identified through the brainstorming.	October 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD conducts staff development programs for teachers as part of the in-service training before the school year and throughout the year. Before the arrival of the current superintendent, staff development was not considered a priority. Under the new administration, education goals drive staff development. Faculty members are encouraged to pursue any courses that will contribute to the education goals of the district. Staff development courses offered to teachers during the 1998-99 year appear in **Exhibit 2-41**.

**Exhibit 2-41
Ricardo ISD Staff Development Courses
1998-99**

Course	Date Offered
General Education Courses	
First Aid/CPR Training	September 14, 1999
Technology Training Courses	
TIF Tech2 Technical & Foundation	September 15, 1999
TEKstar Training for Teachers	December 6, 1999

TIFTech2 Policy & Leadership	October 6, 1999
Education Development Courses	
Strategies for Success	October 28, 1999
Selling Up! To Teach Higher Order Thinking Skills	December 3, 1999
Modifications to Support Diverse Elementary Learners	September 21, 1999
Leveraging Funds on Schoolwide Campuses	December 9, 1999
Arts	
Music and Phonemic Awareness	November 5, 1999
Management Development Courses	
Principal Appraisal Training	September 22, 1999
Principal Assessment - School Administrator Skills	November 9, 1999
Superintendent Appraisal/Student Performance	September 28, 1999
Mathematics	
Math TEKS/TAAS - Grade 6	October 6, 1999
Math TEKS/TAAS - Grade 7	September 27, 1999
Math TEKS/TAAS - Grade 8	October 14, 1999
Reading	
Utilizing Reading Renaissance in the Classroom	October 1, 1999
Writing	
40 Days to Mastery on TAAS Writing	September 15, 1999
Science	
Science TEKS Vistas	October 5, 1999
Foreign Language Courses	
ESL Strategies/Curriculum	September 17, 1999

Source: Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD faculty members stated that while the district often approves staff development opportunities identified by the faculty, there is no structured staff development plan at Ricardo ISD. It is done informally on a case-by-case basis.

Many school districts develop staff training schedules and choices to support objectives set out in the district improvement plan. Districts also enlist the support of Site-Based Decision Making Committees (SBDMs) to recommend staff development offerings before the beginning of the school year based upon input solicited from teachers, the technology coordinator, and principals.

Recommendation 13:

Develop structured staff development offerings that directly support district goals and objectives.

Grade-level differences should be recognized and incorporated into the plan. In addition, the district needs to carefully evaluate what is available through RESC 2 and work with the center to provide useful training to district employees.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with SBDM committees to solicit ideas/needs for staff development from teachers by grade level.	September 2000
2.	Principals supply the SBDM committees with recommended staff development needs based upon results of annual teacher evaluations.	September 2000
3.	The SBDM committees solicit information from RESC 2 regarding probable course offerings and locations for the 2000-01 school year.	October 2000
4.	The SBDM committees review the recommendations from all sources and recommend a staff development plan to the principals and superintendent.	October 2000
5.	The principals schedule staff development days within the district and identify alternative staff development opportunities offered through RESC 2.	November 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

The costs for RESC 2 training are usually nominal, and many training sessions are free to member districts. By making better use of RESC 2, training should be accommodated within the district's current staff development budget. However, the district must target specific types of courses that support achievement of district objectives and work more directly with RESC 2 so that training meets teachers' needs.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter reviews key areas of Ricardo Independent School District's (ISD) educational service delivery system, including:

D. INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Instructional technology includes computer hardware and software applied to support the learning process in the classroom. Computers and technology are used for instructional purposes at every school in the district. All schools have computers in most classrooms. These are used for instructional, as well as administrative purposes. The Ricardo ISD library is automated.

According to Ricardo ISD's technology inventory, the district has 258 computers. Of these, 203 or 78.7 percent, are located in the schools.

The technology function within Ricardo ISD is coordinated by the director of technology. Responsibilities include analyzing hardware and software needs for the district, preparing grant requests for funding, troubleshooting equipment and conducting staff training. The director provides support for software and hardware in the following areas: **(Exhibit 2-42)**.

Exhibit 2-42
Computer Support Areas

Area	Research	Grant Prep	Purchasing	HW	SW	Training
Business Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instructional computing	X	X	X	X	X	X
Library		X		X	X	X

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

The district installed a local area network (LAN) and wide area network (WAN), and plans to install 160 new computers classrooms before the beginning of the 2000-01 school year, allowing each classroom to have four computers once all new hardware has been installed.

The current inventory of Ricardo ISD software is included in **Exhibit 2-43**.

Exhibit 2-43
Ricardo ISD Inventory of Software
1998-99

Software Package	School Usage	Audience	Purpose
TexStar	All	Teachers	To develop lessons plans aligned with text.
Accelerated Reader	All	Students	To test reading skills.
STAR	All	Students	To assess reading comprehension.
A+	1 st -3 rd & 8th grade	Students	To prepare for TAAS with simulated testing.
Process Manager	All	Teachers	To identify areas of improvement and pinpoint at-risk students.

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

The technology expenditures from 1997-99 are compared in **Exhibit 2-44**. There has been a decrease in the amount spent per student each year in terms of supplies and materials. There were no capital outlays in 1997-98 and very few in 1998-99. The increase in the professional services reflects the hiring of a technology coordinator in 1998-99.

Exhibit 2-44
Ricardo ISD Technology Expenditures per Student
1996-1999

Year	Professional Services	Supplies & Materials	Capital Outlay-Expenditures
1996-1997	\$19.65	\$5.51	\$39.27
1997-1998	\$19.97	\$5.26	\$0
1998-1999	\$28.61	\$2.69	\$3.49

Source: TEA, PEIMS 1996-1999.

The current technology budget is presented in **Exhibit 2-45**.

Exhibit 2-45
Ricardo ISD Technology Budget
1999-2000

Object Group	Description	Budget Total
6200	Professional and Contracted Services	\$1,500
6300	Supplies and Materials	\$5,840
6600	Capital Outlay-Equipment	\$10,580

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

In interviews, most staff and faculty said that the technology department helped the curriculum as an instructional tool. Each teacher expressed excitement regarding the installation of additional computers into each classroom.

FINDING

In June 1998, the district, with input from a district technology committee, prepared a detailed technology plan. The plan includes a technology mission statement, district goals, an evaluation and assessment of achievements and needs, action plans to implement each objective and a timeline for accomplishment, and estimated budget requirements for each objective. **Exhibit 2-46** describes the goals of the plan. **Exhibit 2-47** summarizes the technology plan and the status of each activity.

Exhibit 2-46 Goals of Technology Plan 1999-2000

Goal	Description
1	Faculty, students and staff will be computer literate.
2	Ricardo ISD will supply adequate equipment and resources to support the technology plan.
3	Ricardo ISD will provide a physical environment supporting the technology plan.
4	Ricardo ISD policies and procedures will support the technology plan.

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

Exhibit 2-47 Activity Status of Ricardo ISD Technology Plan

Activity	Not Started	In Process	Completed

Hire full time staff member to maintain computers and lab.			X
Hire aides for computer labs.			X
Establish Computer Literacy Committee.			X
Establish minimal levels of teacher competency.		X	
Visit successful technology programs outside district.		X	
Utilize Region II Service Center for training.		X	
Partner with Texas A&M University-Kingsville.	X		
Establish Computer Mentoring program.	X		
Add computer keyboarding to all grade level curriculum.			X
Teach computer skills at all grade levels.			X
Develop a computer "scope and sequence."			X
Maintain the CEI lab.			X
Implement Internet training in targeted middle school classes.	X		
Develop incentive plan to encourage training.	X		
Inventory existing software.			X
Conduct a needs assessment for software.			X
Purchase necessary software/site licenses.			X
Standardize all software currently in use and future purchases.			X
Inventory existing hardware.			X
Purchase new printers.			X
Replace Apple Lab.			X
Upgrade existing computers.			X
Purchase new computers.			X
Purchase laptops for teachers.	X		
Network the computer labs.		X	

Network all classrooms.		X	
Install Internet wiring in classrooms.			X
Install Internet wiring in library computer labs.			X
Purchase a card catalog server for the Learning Resource Center (LRC).	X		
Purchase the card catalog software for the LRC.			X
Purchase and install two new computers in LRC.			X
Apply for grants.		X	
Contact potential corporate sponsors.	X		
Study the need for additional grade level computer labs.			X
Purchase appropriate furniture as needed.			X
Survey teachers regarding needs for training, equipment, etc.		X	
Survey parents regarding computer use at home, needs, etc.		X	
Survey students regarding computer skills, usage and needs.		X	
Utilize ITBS survey results regarding computer questions.	X		
Conduct an open hearing for teacher input.	X		
Review and revise the existing policies.		X	

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

COMMENDATION

The Ricardo ISD technology program is a model of excellent planning, implementation and resourcefulness; all goals have either been met or will be met in 2000.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has successfully prepared grants and received funding for technology projects. From 1998 to 1999, the district has successfully acquired \$112,500 in grants funds (**Exhibit 2-48**).

**Exhibit 2-48
Ricardo ISD Grant Funds for Technology
1998-1999**

Grant Source	Amount	Purpose
TEA's Technology in Education (TIE) Grant	\$12,500	Training
Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF)	\$100,000	Technology infrastructure, servers, LAN, WAN and 26 computers
Total	\$112,500	

Source: Ricardo ISD Technology Coordinator.

During the course of the review, the business director indicated that the district had applied for E-Rate to pay for the T-1 phone lines, services, teleconferencing, computer hardware, wiring, etc. The district anticipates receiving notification as to whether the grant was awarded in 2000. Ricardo ISD is also applying for another TIF grant for \$100,000.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD has actively sought grant assistance for expanding its technology program.

FINDING

The district purchased 160 new computers in March 2000 in its effort to place four computers in each classroom. Three bids were required. The vendor the district selected provided a seven-year parts warranty. To reduce the amount of hardware repair, the district selected computers that have no plastic parts. The technology coordinator also cleans each computer annually as a means of preventive maintenance.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD has a preventive maintenance program in place and makes decisions regarding hardware specifications designed to limit maintenance problems.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD does not have the adequate staff to effectively deal with problems that surface with the installation of new hardware platforms. The technology coordinator is required to support 258 computers, two networks, all software and to troubleshoot any computer problems, train staff and help select instructional software. **Exhibit 2-49** summarizes the staffing indicators for technology requirements.

**Exhibit 2-49
Staffing Indicators for Technology Staff Requirements**

Staffing Indicators	Ricardo ISD Estimate
Number of people to support	74
Number of incidents per day	10
Average time per incident	0.5 hours
Available time	six hours per day
Sickness/Vacation/Training (%)	1-15%
Utilization rate	65%
Number of work hours per day	8 hours
Number of days per month	21 days

Source: Microsoft Techniques and Tools for Support Organization.

The district could improve support response time with additional staffing. However, the possibility of a full-time employee might be cost-prohibitive, and support needs might lessen in the summer.

Recommendation 14:

Establish a part-time position for a technology intern to assist the director of Technology.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Technology develops criteria for hiring an additional technology staff person using the district's written hiring policy manual.	September 2000
2.	The director of Technology works with the Texas A&M University Career Placement Center.	September 2000
3.	Meet with the deans of the Business School and the Computer Science department to discuss the possibilities.	September 2000

4.	The director of Technology interviews candidates and makes selection.	October 2000
----	-----------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------

FISCAL IMPACT

Assuming the district established a half-time intern program at a salary of \$800 per month, the annual costs would be \$9,600 per year. If the intern did not start until October 2000, the cost in the first year would be \$8,800.

Recommendation	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Establish a part-time position for a technology intern to assist the director of Technology.	(\$8,800)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)	(\$9,600)

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- A. Accounting Department
- B. Budget Process
- C. Risk Management
- D. Investments

Successful financial management operations ensure that the district receives all available revenue from the state and federal governments; maintains a track record of sound financial decisions and adequate and equitable budget allocations; issues timely, accurate and informative reports on the district's financial position; maintains adequate internal controls; employs a skilled, well-trained staff; and maintains a consistent record of unqualified opinions by its external auditors.

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

The purchasing function assures that goods and services are acquired at the best price, at the right time and in the right quantity to support the needs of the district and its personnel, while complying with local, state and federal regulations. Opportunities are identified to cooperatively purchase goods with other jurisdictions when it is mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

BACKGROUND

Ricardo ISD receives revenue from local, state and federal sources. On average, Texas school districts receive about 51.2 percent of their revenues from local property taxes, 44.3 percent from the state, and 3.5 percent from federal sources. The amount of state revenue sent to each district is proportional, based upon a district's property values. Districts with greater property wealth per pupil receive less from the state because they can generate more property taxes, while districts with lower property value per pupil receive more from the state.

Ricardo ISD and the selected peer districts receive a greater percentage of their revenues from the state (**Exhibit 3-1**) than districts as a whole. Among its peers, Ricardo ISD receives the second highest percentage of its revenue from state sources.

Exhibit 3-1
Ricardo ISD, State and Peer District Revenue Sources
as a Percentage of Total Revenues
1998-99

District	Local/Other Revenue	State Revenue	Federal Revenue
Agua Dulce	47.8%	50.0%	2.2%
Banquete	35.8%	60.2%	4.0%
Driscoll	54.7%	42.4%	2.8%
Freer	46.1%	51.2%	2.7%
Premont	29.9%	65.3%	4.9%
Ricardo	26.9%	68.4%	4.0%
Riviera	49.2%	48.4%	2.4%
Skidmore-Tynan	23.9%	73.4%	2.7%
Texas	51.2%	44.3%	3.5%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Since 1996-97, Ricardo ISD's general revenue from the state has decreased 7.1 percent, while local revenue has increased by 25.8 percent. The General Revenue Fund covers most of the district's funding needs, other than special funds such as special education and food services. Overall, general revenue from all sources increased by 2.3 percent (**Exhibit 3-2**).

Exhibit 3-2
Ricardo ISD General Revenue Fund Sources
1996-97 through 1998-99

Revenue Source	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percentage Change over Period
Local and Intermediate	\$708,841	\$844,464	\$955,645	34.8%
State	\$2,610,233	\$2,589,600	\$2,425,978	(7.1%)
Other resources	\$147,000	\$169,000	\$164,500	11.9%
Total	\$3,466,074	\$3,603,064	\$3,546,123	2.3%

Source: Ricardo ISD Audit Reports and TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1998-99.

Texas has a court-approved school finance system to equalize property wealth among school districts, which requires wealthy districts to pay into a pool that, together with additional state funds, subsidizes poorer districts. "Wealthy" is defined as a district with property values at or above \$280,000 per pupil in weighted average daily attendance.

Ricardo ISD has a value per pupil of \$101,049, compared to the state average value per pupil of \$190,769 (**Exhibit 3-3**).

**Exhibit 3-3
Property Value per Pupil
1998-99**

Wealthy District	Ricardo ISD	State Average
\$280,000	\$101,049	\$190,769

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Exhibit 3-4 compares Ricardo ISD to its peer districts in terms of property value per pupil. Ricardo ISD is in the bottom half of its peer group. Only two of the peer districts exceed the state average. None of the peer districts are considered to be wealthy districts. Driscoll ISD has the highest property value per pupil based on its oil and gas property.

**Exhibit 3-4
Ricardo ISD and Peer District Property Value per Pupil
1998-99**

District	Property Value per Pupil
Agua Dulce	\$168,791
Banquete	\$136,021
Driscoll	\$278,017
Freer	\$185,319
Premont	\$95,178
Ricardo	\$101,049
Riviera	\$207,483

Skidmore-Tynan	\$97,260
Texas	\$190,769

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

The state distributes payments to all districts based on weighted average daily attendance (WADA) basic allotment. This allotment is adjusted according to the property wealth of the district. For Ricardo ISD, the basic allotment is \$3,190 per student for 1998-99.

Ricardo ISD is largely made up of residential property; residential property makes up 56.6 percent of its total property value compared to 47.2 percent on average for the state. Undeveloped land makes up 20.8 percent of its total property value compared to only 7.3 percent on average for the state. Ricardo ISD has 21.2 percent of its property value in business or commercial property values versus 40.7 percent for the state.

Ricardo does not have a thriving business community to provide tax support. (Exhibit 3-5).

Exhibit 3-5
Ricardo ISD and State Property Value by Category
as a Percentage of Total Property Value
1998-99

Property Category	Ricardo	State
Residential	56.6%	47.2%
Business	21.2%	40.7%
Land	20.8%	7.3%
Other	0.5%	4.2%
Oil and gas	0.9%	0.6%
Total	100%	100%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Compared to its peer districts, Ricardo ISD's property value from residential property, is the highest. (Exhibit 3-6). The percentage of oil and gas property for Ricardo ISD is extremely low. This factor alone drives the district's property value per pupil down when compared to its peer districts. A significant percentage of the peer districts' property value is related to oil and gas.

Exhibit 3-6
Ricardo ISD and Peer Districts State Property Value by Category
as a Percentage of Total Property Value
1998-99

District	Land	Business	Residential	Oil and Gas	Other	Total
Agua Dulce	29.8%	22.5%	16.0%	31.6%	0.2%	100%
Banquete	26.7%	20.7%	30.3%	22.1%	0.2%	100%
Driscoll	13.8%	21.7%	12.1%	52.1%	0.6%	100%
Freer	9.1%	27.1%	11.3%	51.4%	0.6%	100%
Premont	18.6%	27.9%	19.9%	33.0%	0.7%	100%
Ricardo	20.8%	21.2%	56.6%	0.5%	0.9%	100%
Riviera	27.1%	26.3%	19.7%	26.7%	0.3%	100%
Skidmore-Tynan	38.6%	25.3%	16.6%	18.9%	0.5%	100%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Exhibit 3-7 shows that Ricardo ISD's tax rate has increased by 3.5 percent over the past four years. However, the district reduced the tax rate from \$1.41 to \$1.40 in 1999. The board has voted to hold the tax rate steady during the 2000-2001 school year.

Exhibit 3-7
Ricardo ISD Tax Rates and Assessed Property Value
1996-97 through 1999-2000

Category	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change
Maintenance and operations tax rate	\$1.35	\$1.39	\$1.41	\$1.40	3.5%
Interest and sinking fund	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Total tax rate	\$1.35	\$1.39	\$1.41	\$1.40	3.5%
Total tax levy	\$690,041	\$744,464	\$806,053	\$882,320	21.8%

Source: Tax Assessor-Collector, Kleberg County, Tax Records, 1996 - 2000.

Compared to its peer districts, Ricardo ISD has the second lowest property tax rate (**Exhibit 3-8**). The rate is also well below the average tax rate for the state.

Exhibit 3-8
Ricardo ISD Adopted Tax Rate and Taxable Property Value
Compared to Peer Districts
1998-99

District	Taxable Property Value/Pupil	Adopted Tax Rate
Agua Dulce	\$168,791	\$1.945
Banquete	\$136,026	\$1.662
Driscoll	\$278,017	\$1.426
Freer	\$185,319	\$1.490
Premont	\$95,178	\$1.500
Ricardo	\$101,049	\$1.410
Riviera	\$207,483	\$1.440
Skidmore-Tynan	\$97,260	\$1.300
Texas	\$190,769	\$1.540

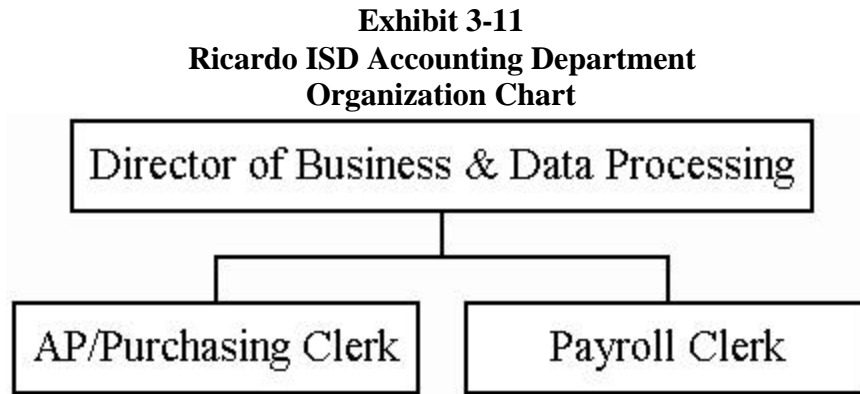
Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT

The Accounting Department at Ricardo ISD is responsible for preparing the district's financial statements, accounts payable, accounts receivable, purchasing and payroll. The organization chart is presented below in **Exhibit 3-11**.



Source: Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has a procedure in place for ordering supplies. The process is initiated by the staff member that needs the supplies. **Exhibit 3-12** summarizes the purchasing process at Ricardo ISD for campus purchases.

Exhibit 3-12
Ricardo ISD Purchasing Process

Process
Staff member completes a paper-based Form 1 (purchase requisition) requesting an item be purchased by the district.
The Form 1 is given to the principal who checks it against the budget to ensure that there is money available. The principal signs the form.
The Form 1 is sent to the administration office where the budget is reviewed.
If the request is within budget, the Form 1 is logged manually and manually entered into EDP. EDP checks it against the remaining budget, and a purchase order is initiated by the system. If budget dollars are not available, the purchase

order must be approved by the superintendent on an individual basis.
Once the purchase order has been entered into EDP, the Form 1 is sent to the business manager for approval to release.
A pink copy of the purchase order is sent to the requestor and a copy remains with the purchasing clerk.
When the item is delivered, it is delivered directly to the requestor who notes receipt upon the pink copy of the purchase order and sends that copy back to the purchasing clerk.
The pink copy of the purchase order is compared to the original purchase order and if the order is complete, the purchase order is closed.
If the order is not complete, the purchase order remains open and a copy of the purchase order with the remaining items is sent back to the requestor. The same process is followed until the order is complete and the purchase order can be closed.

Source: Ricardo ISD.

The process is the same for non-instructional staff with the department head forwarding the Paper requisition to administration instead of the principal.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD closely monitors its purchase requests against the budget.

FINDING

The district is automating its fixed assets record keeping. Records Consolidated Inc. performed the work and has downloaded the information into the EDP fixed asset module of the district's EDP software. The district has a \$5,000 capitalization threshold. The inventory items are listed by room number and tagged. All inventory, including those items valued under \$5,000 are listed and tagged. A physical inventory is taken at year end.

COMMENDATION

The district is automating its fixed assets record keeping to provide better tracking and control.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD does not furnish enough detail when analyzing its financial performance. Historically, accounting practices at Ricardo ISD were undocumented, repetitive and manual. The data entered into PEIMS did not adequately reflect what was occurring at the district. The audited financial statements did not break down revenue and expenses to the program detail. Financial statements were not easily understood and capital expenditures were not tracked effectively to provide the district adequate tools to evaluate its financial performance.

The district hired a new business manager two years ago. This individual has substantially increased the effectiveness of the district's accounting department. The district's accounting files are maintained on a UNIX based EDP system. This system allows for PEIMS data to be tracked and monitored, as required by the state. The district employs two accounting clerks to make journal entries, perform accounts receivable and account payable functions, perform payroll and purchasing functions.

The Texas Education Code (TEC) requires Texas school districts to use a standard fiscal accounting system that meets State Board of Education (SBOE) requirements. When budgets are filed with the state, districts must show financial information sufficient to enable the SBOE to monitor the funding process and to determine categorical costs by school district, campus and program.

Districts report budgets and expenditures using an accounting code structure. The purpose of the structure is to enable a statewide analysis of district expenditures, revenues, staffing and budget information through PEIMS. Although certain codes within the 20-digit code structure may be used at local option, the sequence of the codes within the structure, and the funds and chart of accounts, must be uniformly used by all school districts in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A specified number of spaces, or digits, is set aside for each category (**Exhibit 3-13**).

Exhibit 3-13
TEA's Financial Accounting and Reporting Code Structure

Category	Number of Digits
Fund	3 digits
Function	2 digits
Object	4 digits
Sub-object	2 digits
Organization	3 digits

Program	6 digits
---------	----------

Source: TEA, *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide*.

The first three-digit fund code is used for all financial transactions to identify the fund group and specific fund. For example, the primary fund of a district is the General Revenue Fund from which most salaries and benefits and the majority of operating expenditures come. Special funds are also identified by this code, such as Special Education, Head Start and Food Service.

The next two-digit function code is applied to expenditures/expenses that identify the purpose of the transaction (**Exhibit 3-14**).

Exhibit 3-14
TEA Function Codes

Function Number	Function Description
11	Instruction
12	Instructional Resources and Media Services
13	Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development
21	Instructional Leadership
23	School Leadership
31	Guidance, Counseling and Evaluation Services
32	Social Work Services
33	Health Services
34	Student (Pupil) Transportation
36	Curricular/Extracurricular Activities
41	General Administration
51	Plant Maintenance and Operations
52	Security and Monitoring Services
53	Data Processing Services
61	Community Services
81	Facilities Acquisition and Construction

Source: TEA.

The four-digit object code identifies the nature and object of an account, a transaction, or a source such as salary and benefits, professional services, supplies and capital.

Ricardo ISD uses fund, function codes and object codes to classify revenues and expenses. The district also has the option to use sub-object codes to further differentiate and monitor specific areas of operation. However, the district has not been reporting its revenues and expenses in enough detail to effectively monitor its programs. For instance, there is no mechanism in place to track food service expenses in relation to cost per student.

The business manager provides the board reports before the monthly board meetings. However, these reports do not include any trend analysis or past performance monitors that would enhance the district's understanding of its performance over time. Therefore, it is difficult to identify and set priorities based on actual performance data.

Recommendation 15:

Use sub-accounts to track performance by key areas.

More detailed information would allow the administration to provide more accurate and useful information to the board to assess the district's performance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager review the information available at the sub-account level and determine what type of information might be useful to the board.	September 2000
2.	The business manager runs the data at a more detailed level and compiles reports from this information.	October 2000
3.	The superintendent shares the detailed information with the board.	October 2000
4.	The business manager decides which information should be compiled into standard management reports.	October 2000
5.	The business manager modifies the reports as reporting requirements change.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with the district's existing resources.

FINDING

The district is having difficulty with the interface link between its EDP Enterprises' software and its PC based applications; the interface program is called Relativity. This linkage will allow Ricardo ISD to download data residing in the administration's computer system into EXCEL spreadsheets enabling managers to manipulate the data and enhance their ability to make meaningful decisions. EDP is working to fix this problem but the problem has not been resolved. As a result, the business manager is unable to easily forecast cash management needs for the district. It is also difficult to download PEIMS data for analysis.

Recommendation 16:

Resolve the computer interface problem to improve financial management activities.

Immediately establish a timeline for EDP to resolve the interface problem, and work with the vendor to ensure completion in a short period of time.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The technology manager provides EDP Enterprises an assessment of needs, including desired software applications interface.	September 2000
2.	The technology manager requests weekly status report from EDP.	September 2000 and Ongoing
3.	The technology manager sets a deadline for the problem to be resolved.	September 2000
4.	The technology manager continually monitors EDP Enterprises' progress.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with the district's existing resources.

FINDING

During the interview process, many individuals complained about the paper requisitions used for purchasing. The purchasing clerk enters the

same information from the paper requisition into the EDP software when the purchase order is originated. This is a duplication of effort that could be eliminated through automation.

Recommendation 17:

Eliminate the manual purchasing request form by automating the purchase order process.

Principals and department heads can enter the request directly into EDP after verifying that budget funds are available.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager trains department heads to originate purchase orders in EDP software.	September 2000
2.	The business manager trains department heads to order on-line.	October 2000
3.	The business manager tests the interface to download order directly into EDP software.	December 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

Training the department heads can be accomplished with the district's existing resources. The EDP interface should be activated once the existing problem with Relationship module in EDP has been resolved. There should be no additional cost to download the data into EDP.

FINDING

The district averages approximately 114 purchase orders per month and has not implemented an efficient method to reduce the number of purchase orders. **Exhibit 3-15** provides a breakdown of annual estimated usage of purchase orders per department.

**Exhibit 3-15
Ricardo ISD Estimated Annual Use of Purchase Orders**

Department	Number of Purchase Orders
Maintenance	195
Cafeteria	174

Transportation	126
Elementary School (including nurse)	205
Middle School (including library and athletics)	335
Administration (including technology)	235
Total - All Departments	1,375

Source: Ricardo ISD.

The transportation, food services and maintenance departments make a number of small purchases throughout the month. The current purchasing process is time consuming and tedious for these small purchases. Many of these purchases come from the same vendor. The business manager has tried to reduce the problem by having each of these department heads estimate monthly purchases at the beginning of the month and reviewing the budget only once. However, the paper requisition is filled out each time a purchase is made.

One way to simplify purchasing is to use procurement cards. Procurement cards are credit cards issued by the district to employees. Districts can set spending limits for each card on the types of purchases. Procurement card expenditures are paid monthly to the issuing bank in one lump-sum payment. Cardholder payments can be reviewed daily, weekly or monthly by both the cardholder and Accounts Payable staff.

Using procurement cards can significantly reduce the number of purchase orders and payments processed annually. Texas A&M University, the University of Oklahoma, and Pasadena ISD use procurement cards. These cards have produced savings by reducing the number of purchase orders and payments, and by obtaining lower prices from their suppliers because they are paid quicker.

Recommendation 18:

Implement procurement cards for purchases from selected local vendors.

To implement a procurement card program, Ricardo ISD should contract with a procurement card company. A procurement card program is included as part of the state's General Services Commission contract. Bank of America provides the service through the contract. Working with Bank of America or other procurement card programs, billing is consolidated through one bill to accounts payable. There is also the potential of receiving a rebate if bills are paid within an identified time frame. All levels of government throughout the state are eligible to use the program.

By limiting the vendors that would be allowed to participate, to those where high volume purchases are made, the district will be able to maintain tighter controls while achieving the greatest benefit for reductions in paperwork.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager investigates the possibility of a procurement card program for the district.	October 2000
2.	The business manager reviews card capabilities with major providers, proposed users of the cards and the vendors to which they would apply and makes a recommendation to the superintendent.	November 2000
3.	The superintendent proposes using procurement cards to the board.	December 2000
4.	The board adopts the procurement card proposal.	December 2000
5.	The business manager develops procedures for using the procurement card and develops training for users if necessary.	January 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

The use of procurement cards should result in slight savings to the district.

FINDING

The payroll process does not require the review of senior management before release of payroll checks. **Exhibit 3-16** explains the payroll process in place at Ricardo ISD. One person is handling the entire process with no checks and balances.

**Exhibit 3-16
Ricardo ISD Payroll Process**

Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisors total time cards for hourly employees and submit to the payroll clerk.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The payroll clerk spot checks the time cards but does not review each one.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The payroll clerk determines if the employee had leave time during the

<p>pay period. A second clerk keeps a manual paper file containing absences from duty forms. EDP also tracks leave time.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an employee took leave during the pay period, both clerks determine if the employee had accrued leave. If so, the leave is booked against the accrued account. If not, the clerk verifies with the employee's supervisor whether the absence was approved. If it was not approved and the employee had no leave time accrued, the time is docked from the pay period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The payroll is then run on EDP software and the payroll checks are printed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each check is run through a stamper for signature.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The checks are segregated and given to the supervisors for distribution.

Source: Ricardo ISD.

While the district's method of requiring all overtime and compensatory time to be pre-approved by the superintendent and an employee's supervisor is an appropriate safeguard, the system does not allow for one last review before payroll checks are distributed.

Recommendation 19:

Establish procedures requiring senior management to review payroll reports before checks are released.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	After payroll has been entered in EDP software, the payroll clerk generates a summary report and distributes it to the business manager for review before checks are issued.	September 2000
----	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with the district's existing resources.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD does not have enough controls in place for all the district's cash deposits. Cash deposits include receipts from the cafeteria from normal food services, vending machine receipts from the cafeteria and the teacher's lounge and from special programs such as ice cream sales.

The cash receipts from food services are counted by the food services staff who also prepare a deposit slip. An administrative clerk reconciles this cash against the deposit slip. The vending machine money is not counted before being brought to administration. An administrative clerk counts this cash and prepares the deposit slip. The food service staff counts the ice cream money and prepares the deposit slips. Cash deposits are made twice weekly. All cash is kept in a large safe until it is deposited. The faculty staff sponsor brings cash receipts from student fundraisers directly to administration. Both the sponsor and an administrative clerk count the money and verify it against a tabulation sheet. **Exhibit 3-17** illustrates the lack of cash control at Ricardo ISD.

**Exhibit 3-17
Ricardo ISD Cash Control**

Type of Receipt	Cash Counted by Two People	Cash Counted at Source	Total Times Counted	Reconciled by Administration	Supporting Documentation
Food Services (Breakfast & Lunch)	No	Yes	Twice	Yes - Against deposit slip	Daily Registers
Vending Machines	No	No	Once	No - Admin prepares deposit slip	None
Ice Cream Sales	Yes	Yes	Twice	No	None
Fund Raisers	Yes	Yes	Twice	Yes	Tabulation Sheet

Source: Ricardo ISD.

Recommendation 20:

Develop tabulation sheets for all sources of cash on each campus and use two people to retrieve and count cash.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	Using the existing tabulation sheets for campus fundraisers as a guide, the business managers develop a tabulation sheet for each cash source.	September 2000
2.	The business manager reconciles cash count against the tabulation sheet.	September 2000
3.	The business manager files a tabulation sheet with copy of deposit slip and reconciles against the bank statements each month.	September 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with the district's existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

B. BUDGET PROCESS

In recent years, the staff, faculty and board members had not been actively involved in the development of the district's budget. Insufficient monitoring occurred during the year to evaluate where the district stood in terms of meeting its annual budget.

In the past year, the budgeting process at Ricardo ISD has changed and is now comprised of three major phases:

- Planning: define the goals and objectives of each campus and of the school district as a whole.
- Preparation: establish budgetary resource allocations.
- Evaluation: determine the effectiveness of the budget in meeting the goals set out in the planning phase.

Timeline and events for the 2000-2001 budgetary cycle are illustrated in **Exhibit 3-18**.

Exhibit 3-18
Ricardo ISD Budgetary Cycle
2000 - 2001

Fall 1999	Spring/Summer 2000	Fall 2000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program planning • Develop District Mission, Goals and Objectives • Develop District/Campus Plans • Develop Budget Parameters and Calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Budgetary Allocations • Implement Budget Calendar Activities and Preliminary Budget Development • Present to Board • Refine as Necessary • Adopt Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Programs • Begin Fall Cycle of Planning

Source: Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has taken measures to include staff and faculty in the budget process. The superintendent recommended that the board adopt the same budget as last year, with the same spending for each expenditure category. However, the district has given the department heads control over how their budgets are spent. The superintendent solicited support from the board, the campus administration and department heads. A detailed calendar for developing the next budget was prepared by the superintendent and distributed districtwide.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD involves the all levels of administration and the board in budget development.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

C. RISK MANAGEMENT

The primary objective of risk management is to establish a cost-effective insurance and loss-control programs that minimize financial liability for the district and its employees.

The business manager is responsible for ensuring that insurance coverage is adequate to protect the district's property and casualty insurance, directors' and officers' liability insurance, workers' compensation and employee health insurance. The district uses the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Risk Management fund to cover all policies except workers' compensation and employee health.

Exhibit 3-19 details the insurance coverage for the district, other than employee health insurance, and the corresponding cost of each policy.

Exhibit 3-19
Ricardo ISD Insurance Coverage
1999-2000

Details of Coverage	Liability Limits	Deductible	1999 Premium
Equipment Breakdown	\$100,000	\$1,000 per occurrence	\$500
General Liability	\$1,000,000 each occurrence	\$1,000	\$500
School Professional Legal Liability	\$1,000,000 each occurrence \$1,000,000 annual aggregate	\$1,000	\$2,200
Fleet Liability	\$100,000 per person \$300,000 per occurrence	\$250	\$1,674
Mobile Equipment	\$100,000 per person \$300,000 per occurrence	\$250	\$323
All Other Vehicles	\$100,000 per person	\$250	\$734

	\$300,000 per occurrence		
Workers' Compensation	N/A		\$12,400

Source: Ricardo ISD Business Manager

FINDING

The district's workers' compensation insurance is scheduled for bid this year. The business manager has hired an insurance broker to bid out the insurance and find the lowest premium available. Coverage under workers' compensation is state mandated, and the only issue to consider is price.

The district has not had a high number of claims under its workers' compensation coverage. The business manager carefully monitors the claims and follows up on the status of each injury.

COMMENDATION

The business manager carefully monitors workers' compensation claims to ensure fraud does not exist.

FINDING

The district's employee health insurance carrier is Humana. Ricardo ISD pays the employee's premium for the basic plan. However, the basic plan provides carries an extremely high deductible. The district provides its employees the option to "buy up" to a more comprehensive plan. The premiums for this "buy up" plan are not paid by the district. The district also provides its employees an option to purchase dental insurance. The employees pay the premiums for this coverage. Finally, the district provides its employees an option to purchase life insurance through Humana.

All employees are covered under the Basic Health Insurance Plan. The business manager estimates that approximately 50 percent of the employees choose to buy up. No details were given with respect to the level of participation in the dental and life insurance options.

Exhibit 3-20 summarizes the employee insurance options at Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 3-20
Ricardo ISD Employee Insurance Options
1998-99

Plan Description	Coverage Provided	Employee Cost Per Month
Basic Health	Humana PPO5 Enhanced: Deductible: \$2,500 \$30 office visit, 80% in network, 60% outside of network, RX: \$10 generic, \$25 formulary and \$40 non-formulary, \$4,500 maximum out of pocket annually	Single: \$0 Employee + Child(ren): \$117.24 Employee + Spouse: \$147.24 Family: \$202.82
Buy Up Plan	Humana PPO5 Enhanced: Deductible: \$500 \$20 office visit, 90% in network, 60% outside of network RX: \$10 generic, \$25 formulary and \$40 non-formulary, \$1,500 maximum out of pocket annually	Single: \$44.82 Employee + Child(ren): \$206.89 Employee + Spouse: \$249.02 Family: \$325.19
Dental Option	Humana 185 Voluntary Dental Plan: Deductible: \$50 per individual 100% preventative, 80% basic, 50% major services \$1,000 maximum benefit annually	Single: \$20.30 Employee + Child(ren): \$38.99 Employee + Spouse: \$46.30 Family: \$65.80

Source: Ricardo ISD Business Manager.

The health insurance coverage provided to Ricardo ISD employees is less than optimal. The district's workforce is predominantly women, and health insurance premiums for women can be as much as 65 percent higher than for a man in the same age bracket.

Some carriers do not differentiate between genders when they quote their premiums. The deductible for the basic plan is prohibitively high. In focus groups, teachers said that a many use their spouse's insurance as their primary coverage.

Recommendation 21:

Poll employees to determine if they are willing to share the cost of higher premiums if the district chose to select a health insurance carrier that provides a plan with better coverage.

Many employees already opt to "buy up" on insurance coverage, so the district should explore other options for health insurance. The first step would be to receive formal feedback from all employees on health insurance needs and desires. If the employees are willing to share the costs of higher premiums, the district could begin to explore other options. For example, the district might examine carriers that would allow the district to reduce the employee's deductible to at least \$1,000 for the basic plan. The survey may indicate that the majority of employees are not willing to pay higher premiums no matter what the benefit, especially if they have other health insurance options (for example, spouse's policy). In any case, the district will have given the employees greater input in decisions on the health insurance needs in the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager develops and distributes a survey to employees to determine if the employees are willing to share the costs of higher premiums for better insurance coverage.	September 2000
2.	The business manager tabulates the survey.	October 2000
3.	The business manager presents the results to the superintendent.	October 2000
4.	The business manager and superintendent determine whether to pursue other health insurance options.	November 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources. If the employees opted to help defray the cost of higher premiums, the district would need to conduct more analysis on health insurance options.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

D. INVESTMENTS

Effective cash and investment management involves establishing sound banking relationships, developing accurate cash projections, managing cash receipts, controlling cash disbursements and investing funds in safe investment vehicles. The business manager has the overall responsibility for the cash and investment management functions at Ricardo ISD.

Kleberg Bank in Kingsville, Texas is the financial institution used by Ricardo ISD. The district has a strong and long term relationship with the bank.

FINDING

The district is not earning a market rate of interest on excess cash. Currently, funds are held in demand deposit accounts, yielding 2 percent interest annually.

Exhibit 3-21 provides the average account balances from August 1999 through April 2000. Not all months were available.

Exhibit 3-21
Ricardo ISD Demand Deposit Account Balances
Selected Months between August 1999 - 2000

Month	Account Balance
August 1999	\$448,949.43
October 1999	\$740,405.30
November 1999	\$827,711.89
January 2000	\$1,200,777.99
February 2000	\$1,202,992.66
March 2000	\$880,799.44
April 2000	\$446,711.86

Source: Ricardo ISD Business Manager.

TexPool, an investment pool administered by the Texas State Comptroller, has an average yield of about 5 percent.

The primary goal of any district's investment strategy is to protect assets and obtain a reasonable market rate of interest on all excess cash, without putting the districts assets at risk. Accomplishing this goal often requires more expertise and time than a small district can afford to dedicate to the task.

Recommendation 22:

Restructure all of the district bank accounts to achieve a market rate of return on excess cash.

The district could restructure the accounts as follows:

- Open a general operating account that will be swept nightly into TexPool. Each night all remaining balances are swept into TexPool and interest is earned on the entire cash balance.
- Open a zero based payroll account and a controlled disbursement account that feed from the general operating account. A zero based payroll account eliminates the possibility of funds being held in the payroll account without earning interest. Adequate cash is transferred to the payroll account during each night's settlement to pay any checks presented that day.
- Set up automatic transfer of state funds to TexPool. The district would set up an automatic transfer process with their financial institution and the State of Texas so that all state funds are remitted directly into the higher interest bearing account.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager meets with Kleberg Bank and opens the new accounts.	September 2000
----	--------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

FISCAL IMPACT

The average balance for the seven months provided by Ricardo ISD was \$821,193. At 2 percent interest, the yield is \$16,424. At 5 percent, the yield would be \$41,060. The average annual interest lost by leaving cash balances in a 2-percent interest vehicle and earning 5 percent in TexPool is \$24,636.

Recommendation	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Restructure all of the district bank accounts to achieve a	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636	\$24,636

market rate of return on excess cash.					
---------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

This chapter reviews the operations of the Ricardo Independent School District (ISD), including:

- A. Facilities Use and Management
- B. Energy Management
- C. Maintenance
- D. Food Services
- E. Transportation
- F. Safety and Security
- G. Discipline Management

A. FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

A comprehensive facilities, maintenance, custodial and energy management program should coordinate all of the district's physical resources. The program must integrate facilities planning with all other aspects of school planning, including the district's strategic plan. Facilities management personnel should be involved in planning, design and construction activities, and be knowledgeable about operations and maintenance. To be effective, clearly defined policies, procedures, and activities should accommodate changes in the district's resources and needs.

A comprehensive facilities management program supports each campus and department by performing the following tasks:

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

BACKGROUND

Ricardo ISD has one continuous school facility located on about 20 acres of land, 5 miles from Kingsville, Texas. The facility houses an elementary campus, a middle school campus, a band hall, a library, playground area and an administration office. The total square footage for the district is 81,722 square feet. The district does not have any debt associated with its existing facilities.

Exhibit 4-1 illustrates the facilities evolution at Ricardo ISD.

**Exhibit 4-1
Ricardo ISD Facilities Evolution**

Date	Event
1917	Started as a common school district
1919	Became an independent school district
1955	Constructed cafeteria; Added classrooms
1966	Added classrooms
1986	Added gymnasium
1988	Added classrooms
1990	Added administrative offices
1993	Added cafeteria and band hall
1994	Modified old cafeteria into library
1995	Added classrooms
Present	Square footage is 81,722.

Source: Ricardo ISD.

In Ricardo ISD, 56.8 percent of the total square footage is used as classrooms, 31.8 percent is made up of common areas and 11.4 percent is office space (**Exhibit 4-2**).

**Exhibit 4-2
Square Footage Analysis**

Facility	Square Footage	Percent of Total Square Footage
Classrooms	46,464	56.9%
Common Areas (band hall, cafeteria)	25,968	31.8%

gymnasium, labs, study areas and lockers)		
Offices	9,240	11.3%
Total	81,772	100%

Source: Ricardo ISD.

Enrollment at Ricardo ISD has decreased by 9.3 percent from 1996 to 1999 (**Exhibit 4-3**).

**Exhibit 4-3
Student Enrollment by Campus
1996 -1999**

Campus	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	Percent Change over Period
Elementary School	425	386	383	363	(12.5%)
Middle School	211	234	219	213	0.5%
Total	636	620	602	577	(9.3%)

Source: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 1996-97 through 1998-99 and Ricardo ISD statistics for 1999-2000.

Ricardo ISD has proposed several capital improvements projects (**Exhibit 4-4**). It is school board policy to initiate these capital improvements without incurring debt.

**Exhibit 4-4
Ricardo ISD Proposed Capital Projects**

SchoolYear	Capital Improvement Project	Estimated Cost	Board Approval	Work Started
1999-2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade roofs • Covered walkways • Middle school science lab (seventh and eighth grade) • Football field 	\$715,125	Yes	May 2000

	bleachers			
2000-2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade gymnasium • Replace light fixtures in 600 classroom building • Convert classroom 700 to elementary science lab • Convert existing classroom into sixth grade science lab 	\$177,000	Yes	No
2001-2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fencing around school perimeter • Fine arts center 	\$418,000	Yes	No
2002-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade roofs • Raise fence at play area • Resurface play area • Purchase play area equipment • Cover play area 	\$146,850	Yes	No
2003-2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build multi-purpose room 	\$216,000	Yes	No

Source: Ricardo ISD Capital Improvement Project Plan.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD has adopted a bid process that has resulted in savings in recent capital projects. In September 1999, the district began the practice of working with an architect to prepare precise bid specifications to ensure that all bidders bid on an equal basis. The budget is not revealed to bidders, and all bids came in under budget. **Exhibit 4-5** summarizes the savings from this strategy for 1999-2000 capital improvement projects.

Exhibit 4-5 1999-2000 Capital Improvement Projects-Bid Results

Bid Date	Project	Internal Budget	Actual Bid	Savings
2/10/2000	Upgrade roofs	\$206,900	\$153,733	\$53,167
2/10/2000	Covered walkway	\$142,225	\$116,000	\$25,225

Source: Ricardo ISD.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD adopted a precise bid specification process that has resulted in savings over budgeted bid estimates.

FINDING

Before 1989, Ricardo ISD used septic pumps and a drainage field. In 1989, the Ricardo Municipal Utility District (MUD) hooked Ricardo ISD into the Ricardo sewage system. The old septic system is producing an unpleasant smell throughout the campus. There are enzymes added into the septic system that are intended to reduce the smell and break down sewage. However, the custodial staff cleans sinks and commodes using cleaning chemicals that can end up in the old septic system and kill the enzymes. The result is a bad smell that permeates through the district, especially in the library and cafeteria.

Recommendation 23:

Purchase cleaning chemicals that will not kill the septic system enzymes and/or determine if there is a leak in the pipes.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The manager of Maintenance contacts the Department of Health for cleaning chemical alternatives.	September 2000
2.	The manager of Maintenance develops a list of approved cleaning chemicals.	September 2000
3.	The manager of Maintenance purchases only chemicals on the approved list.	September 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with the district's existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

B. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Energy management is the efficient and effective use of energy. By reducing unnecessary energy use, a school district can reduce their energy use and cost by as much as 25 percent. A successful energy management program requires a commitment from the board, the superintendent and the district staff. The energy management program is visible, relevant and responsive. Behavior and hardware are complementary, integrated components of a successful energy management program. Districts should understand the importance of installing and maintaining energy-efficient equipment such as high efficiency lamps and ballasts, energy-efficient heating and air conditioning equipment and energy management control devices. Even more important is changing the behavior of those who both use energy and control its usage.

With the onset of deregulation, energy management programs become useful tools for districts preparing for utility deregulation. Districts who regularly check their rate schedules and are controlling the operating hours of their facilities will be in a better position to bargain with utility companies for better rates. The utilities are not the adversaries, and getting to know the utility company's representative may be one of the most cost effective actions a district can take. It is the district's responsibility to select the rate structure from the range available. Changes in building equipment operating hours, scheduling of equipment use and building function and use all help determine the most cost effective rate structure for a given facility.

BACKGROUND

Ricardo ISD has one central campus which serves kindergarten through 8th grade. The campus is located 5 miles south of Kingsville, Texas and serves the surrounding community. The total square footage is approximately 83,000 square feet. (source of square footage: Estes, McClure & Associates)

Ricardo ISD has a board approved 5 year capital improvements plan, this year the district will be replacing the roof, installing a covered walkway for the children's safety, adding a science lab in the junior high, and replacing 6 of the oldest HVAC units with high efficiency units.

In 1999 the district received a walkthrough energy evaluation of their facility by Estes, McClure & Associates, a professional engineering firm

under contract with the State Energy Conservation Office to provide these services to public schools and local governments. The district is already implementing several of the recommendations noted in the report.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD spent more than \$92,000 on utility bills during the 1998-1999 school year to maintain the elementary/middle school's energy resources.

Exhibit 4-6
Ricardo's Elementary/Middle School Base Year Energy Consumption History
1998-1999

Month	Year	Kilo Watt per Hour (KWH)	Total Electrical Costs
January	1999	66,898	\$5,956
February	1999	61,149	\$5,426
March	1999	67,628	\$5,872
April	1999	65,789	\$5,706
May	1999	88,943	\$9,188
June	1999	89,527	\$8,905
July	1999	79,935	\$7,206,00
August	1999	87,892	\$8,532
September	1999	121,987	\$11,032
October	1998	114,814	\$10,930
November	1998	98,535	\$7,115
December	1998	79,171	\$6,733
TOTAL		1,022,268	\$92,601

Source: Ricardo ISD Central Office 1999-2000.

The State Power Program, an energy program offered by the General Land Office (GLO) beginning September 1, 1999, can save participating districts four to five percent on their utility bills if their current utility provider is also a participant in the state program.

During the 1999 Legislature, Senate Bill 7 authorized the Commissioner of the GLO, under Chapter 35 of the Texas Utilities Code, to negotiate and

execute contracts for the conversion of royalties taken in kind to other forms of energy including electricity for sale to public retail customers, which include public school districts, state institutions of higher education, agencies of the state and political subdivisions of the state.

Districts would not be charged to participate in the program. They will be able to keep their present provider and keep the same services they currently use.

Recommendation 24:

Participate in the State Power Program to receive a discount in the district's utility bills.

Districts must contact the GLO at (512) 936-1941 to receive an application and more information on the program. They can also be accessed through their website at <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/spp>.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts the General Land Office to discuss options for purchasing electricity through the state power program.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent reports findings to the board for approval.	September 2000
3.	The board approves the district's application for the program.	October 2000
4.	The superintendent applies for the program.	October 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

Using the 1998-1999 utility bills for Ricardo ISD's elementary and middle school, the district could save about 4 percent on their utility costs if they contract with the GLO's energy program.

Ricardo ISD's elementary and middle school's utility bills, \$92,000 X 4 percent = \$3,680 in energy savings.

Recommendation	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Participate in the State Power Program to receive a discount in the	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680

district's utility bills.					
---------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

C. MAINTENANCE

A school district's maintenance program should provide a clean and safe environment for the educational process to take place. Building facilities are kept clean. Repairs are made in a timely manner to reduce facility deterioration and increase safety.

BACKGROUND

The Ricardo ISD maintenance department has six people in the following positions: one maintenance supervisor, two maintenance personnel and four custodians. The maintenance supervisor is responsible for building maintenance and supervision of the department. The maintenance personnel are responsible for completing any repair work-orders and grounds keeping for the district. The four custodians are responsible for assuring all main Ricardo ISD facilities are clean.

Exhibit 4-7 details the Maintenance Department expenditures by major category in 1998-99.

Exhibit 4-7
Ricardo ISD Maintenance Expenditures by Major Category
1998-99

Category	Expenditures
Labor	\$120,115
Utilities	\$122,500
Supplies	\$40,500
Contract repairs	\$2,000
Insurance	\$15,000
Equipment	\$5,800
Other	\$1,600
Total	\$307,515

Source: Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 4-8 presents the Ricardo ISD Maintenance Department expenditures as compared to its peers.

**Exhibit 4-8
Ricardo ISD and Peer Districts Maintenance Department
Expenditures
1998-99**

District	Number of Students	Maintenance Department Budget	Percent of Total Budget	Cost Per Student
Agua Dulce	393	\$261,419	10.4%	\$665.19
Banquete	850	\$679,510	11.7%	\$799.42
Driscoll	269	\$136,061	0.3%	\$505.80
Freer	1,074	\$817,983	12.6%	\$761.62
Premont	981	\$676,849	11.8%	\$689.96
Ricardo	602	\$301,715	9.9%	\$501.19
Riviera	567	\$412,699	9.7%	\$727.86
Skidmore-Tynan	718	\$360,950	9.2%	502.72

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1998-99.

Ricardo ISD has the lowest cost per student of its peer group and is in the lower half of the percentage of the total budget dedicated to maintenance expenditures.

Exhibit 4-9 illustrates the maintenance cost per student and cost per square foot. Peer square footage data was unavailable at the time of the review.

**Exhibit 4-9
Ricardo ISD Maintenance Cost per Pupil
and per Square Foot of Facility
1998-99**

Cost per Student	Cost Per Square Foot
\$501.19	\$3.69

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99 and Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 4-10 summarizes the job responsibilities of the maintenance department at Ricardo ISD.

**Exhibit 4-10
Custodial/Maintenance Coverage**

Job	Responsibility	Work Hours	Lunch
Maintenance	Flags and doors, Maintenance as required Yard work Plumbing	7:30-4:30	12:00-12:30
Maintenance	Sweep sidewalks Pickup trash in yard Cafeteria duty Maintenance Grounds keeping	8:00-4:30	12:30-1:00
Custodian	Clean two classrooms, administration offices, teacher's lounge, cafeteria and bathroom, learning resource center, principals' offices	10:00-6:30	
Custodian	Clean 12 classrooms, band hall, snack area bathroom, locker rooms and gym floor	2:00-10:30	
Custodian	Clean 15 classrooms, and boys and girls bathrooms	2:00-10:30	
Custodian	18 classrooms	2:00-10:30	

Source: Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

National benchmarks for custodial staffing indicate that custodians should cover no less than 19,000 square feet per custodian. By using a night shift when students are not in the building, Ricardo ISD's custodians are able to cover a slightly higher square footage than this amount.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD manages its custodial workload effectively.

FINDING

In the past, the district did not maintain any standards for stocking parts. By not having adequate parts on hand, some maintenance problems had to wait until the proper part could be purchased. Additionally, by not stocking parts, the district could not take advantage of cost savings from bulk purchases.

The district has begun to stock parts that are used frequently. Examples of this include plumbing fixtures, air conditioner and heating filters. These items are purchased from local vendors. When an older item needs to be replaced, it is replaced with a standardized part. Examples of this include standardized plumbing fixtures and door knobs.

COMMENDATION

The district has been able to reduce downtime by having items that are used frequently in stock and reduce time on common tasks.

FINDING

The maintenance department performs routine preventive maintenance on its air conditioning and heating system. During 1999-2000, the local Cotton Gin adjacent to Ricardo ISD causes an increase in dust in the air. Filters are replaced on a regular schedule to decrease the likelihood of damage to the system.

COMMENDATION

The maintenance department performs preventive maintenance on expensive district equipment.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD does not record parts used nor the amount of time spent on its work orders. Tracking parts is necessary to ensure that adequate inventory is on hand. It also assists in budget control. **Exhibit 4-11** lists the types of work-orders that were completed during the 1999-2000 school year.

**Exhibit 4-11
Types of Work -Orders
1999-2000**

Request	Number of Times Requested
----------------	------------------------------------------

Replace light bulbs	41
Move furniture	24
Plumbing	18
Fix doors	16
Replace/build wooden fixtures	14
Repair Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning	16
Hang boards, etc.	9
Fix pencil sharpeners	8
Electrical problems	7
Clean and mop floors	6
Total work orders	159

Source: Ricardo ISD

In addition, the maintenance staff reported approximately five or six emergency work orders per week. These work-orders are not written up. The emergency work-orders include blood spills, illness (vomiting), plumbing problems and broken windows and doors.

Recommendation 25:

Revise the work order completion procedures to include recording time taken and parts used for all work orders including emergencies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent establishes policy requiring that work orders be prepared for all incidents.	September 2000
2.	The business manager adds a section to work order form to record time and parts used.	September 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with the district's existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

D. FOOD SERVICE

The mission of a school food service program is to provide an appealing and nutritionally-sound breakfast and lunch to students and to operate on a cost-recovery basis. Several success factors can be used to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of a school food service operation. These include a high ratio of meals per labor hour (MPLH), minimization of food cost and waste, maximum participation in breakfast and lunch programs, high nutritional value and variety of meals, minimal wait times for student service and financial self-sufficiency.

BACKGROUND

The National School Lunch Program was authorized in 1946 by the U.S. Congress to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's school children and to encourage the domestic consumption of agricultural products. The food service program is funded through a combination of federal subsidies for students from low-income families and the personal contribution of students who are able to pay. The federal government also provides schools with surplus food products through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Ricardo ISD employs eight people in the Food Service Department, one in each of the following positions: manager, clerk, main cook, vegetable cook, salad maker and baker, two servers and one dishwasher. Most staff members handle functions in addition to their main job. Ricardo ISD food service employees cook, heat, chill and serve pre-prepared and made-from-scratch foods. These employees also perform stocking, dishwashing, cashiering and kitchen clean-up functions at various times during the day.

Exhibit 4-12 summarizes the reimbursement rates the Ricardo ISD receives.

Exhibit 4-12 Reimbursement Rates 1999-98

Reimbursement Rate
Reimbursable Lunches:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Price: \$0.1800

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced Price: \$1.5425 • Free: \$1.9425
Reimbursable Breakfasts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Price: \$0.2000 • Reduced-Price: \$0.7725 • Free: \$1.0725
Breakfast - Severe Need Schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced price: \$0.2000 • Free: \$0.2000
Commodity Assistance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch: \$0.1475 • Breakfast: \$0.0000
Reduced Price Meals (Maximum Allowable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch: \$0.40 • Breakfast \$0.30

Source: TEA.

Ricardo ISD receives an additional 2 cents per student on the reimbursement for lunches because more than 60 percent of its student population is eligible for the free and reduced program. In the 1998-99 school year 66.6 percent of the student population was eligible for the program. There was a slight reduction in the 1999-2000 school year, with 62.9 percent eligible.

Exhibit 4-13 presents the serving times for each meal at Ricardo ISD.

**Exhibit 4-13
Serving Times**

Meal	Start Time	Stop Time
Breakfast	07:15 a.m.	07:50 a.m.
Lunch	10:35 a.m.	12:50 a.m.

Source: Ricardo ISD Food Service Manager.

FINDING

The Ricardo ISD Food Service program is operating at a serious deficit (**Exhibit 4-14**). Local funds must be used to support the Food Service operation.

**Exhibit 4-14
Budgeted Food Service Revenue and Expenditures
1999-2000**

Revenues		
Category	Actual	Percent
Local Revenue	\$72,000	29.4%
State Matching	\$7,430	3.0%
Federal Revenue	\$166,000	67.6%
Total	\$245,430	100.0%
Expenditures		
Payroll	\$82,149	31.6%
Purchased and Contracted Services	\$27,517	10.6%
Supplies and Materials	\$145,954	56.2%
Other Operating Expenses	\$3,979	1.5%
Capital Outlay	\$0	0%
Total	\$259,599	100.0%
Difference	(\$14,169)	

Source: PEIMS and Ricardo ISD Budget.

The staffing patterns for the Food Service Department are summarized in **Exhibit 4-15**. The figures reflect actual hours on the job, although several employees are allowed a half-hour lunch break. The Food Service Department works a total of 44.0 hours per day.

**Exhibit 4-15
Ricardo ISD Staffing Patterns**

Position	Hours
-----------------	--------------

	Worked per Day
Supervisor	8.0
Clerk	8.0
Cook	6.5
Fruits & Vegetable Cook	6.0
Salad & Baker	6.0
Server/Cleaner	3.5
Server/Cleaner	3.5
Dishwasher*	2.5
Total hours	44.0

Source: Ricardo ISD Staffing Patterns for Cafeteria, 2/25/00

**Ricardo ISD uses disposable plastic utensils.*

The average daily meal equivalents served by the Ricardo ISD Food Service Department is 575 as shown in **Exhibit 4-16**.

Exhibit 4-16
Average Meal Equivalents
1999 - 2000

Meal Equivalents (Breakfast)	Meal Equivalents (Ala Carte)	Meal Equivalents (Lunch)	Average Daily Meal Equivalents
57	7	511	575

Source: Ricardo ISD Mealtime Operations Summary Reports and Meal Participation Report.

Ricardo ISD employees prepare food from raw ingredients on the premises and wash dishes, a conventional system. According to Dorothy Pannell in the text, *School Food Service Management*, Ricardo ISD's Food Service Department is staffed to serve 701-800 meal equivalents rather than the 575 it averages per day (**Exhibit 4-16**). Based upon 44.0 hours worked per day, Ricardo ISD should be preparing 15 meals per labor hour.

Recommendation 26:

Establish a meals per labor hour standard and staff accordingly.

At 15 MPLH, Ricardo ISD should be able to prepare 575 meals with 38.3 labor hours, a reduction of 5.7 hours. Over the years, meals served may increase or decrease. As this occurs staffing should be adjusted according to the established standard.

FISCAL IMPACT

By eliminating 5.7 hours per day, the district would realize a reduction in labor costs of \$6,782 per year ($\$6.61 \times 5.7 \times 180$ days) \$33,909 in salary from 2000-01 to 2004-05.

Recommendation	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Establish a meals per labor hour standard and staff accordingly.	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$6,782	\$6,782

FINDING

The Food Service Department has had problems encouraging student participation in meals provided by the district. Several issues must be addressed. These issues include:

- Students are not participating in the breakfast and lunch programs;
- Food quality issues were raised to the review team by parents, teachers, administrators and board members;
- Participation counts are lower than would be expected given the fact that both campuses are closed;
- Lots of pre-prepared items are being served instead of meals prepared from scratch and fresh every day;
- 90 percent of staff interviewed complained about the food quality; and
- Ricardo ISD is not conducting surveys to evaluate the school cafeteria atmosphere and the food being served.

Exhibit 4-17 describes the lunch participation analysis results.

**Exhibit 4-17
Average Lunch Participation Analysis
1999 - 2000**

Paid Lunch Participation Rate	Free Lunch Participation Rate	Reduced Lunch Participation Rate
------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------

79.7%	81.0%	81.1%
-------	-------	-------

Source: Ricardo ISD Mealtime Meal Participation Report.

Given the fact that both the elementary and the middle schools are closed campuses, a participation rate of around 90 percent would be reasonable.

Exhibit 4-18 describes the breakfast lunch participation analysis results.

**Exhibit 4-18
Average Breakfast Participation Analysis
1999 - 2000**

Paid Breakfast Participation Rate	Free Breakfast Participation Rate	Reduced Breakfast Participation Rate
25.8%	28.2%	27.1%

Source: Ricardo ISD Mealtime Meal Participation Report.

Buses arrive at the campuses in time for the students to have breakfast. The low participation rates are a key indicator that there is a problem with the quality of food being served by the district.

Recommendation 27:

Enlist the support of students, staff and parents to develop strategies for increasing participation in breakfast and lunch on campus.

The district could establish a working group of students, staff and parents to review food service internally, participate in administering a survey on food services and developing recommendations to the administration on improving the participation of meals on campus.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent organizes a working group of students, staff and parents to analyze foods services, develop a survey and present recommendations to the superintendent.	October 2000
2.	The superintendent and the Food Service manager design a survey based on issues raised by the working group, including questions regarding nutrition, food selection, food quality and recommendations for improvement.	November 2000
3.	The working group presents findings and recommendations to	December

	the superintendent.	2000
4.	The superintendent reports the findings to the board.	December 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD's food handling techniques are inadequate and could lead to spoilage and food poisoning. This is especially true with respect to food temperatures and commodity inventory. An important step in preventing bacterial growth is to keep food hot or cold. Food should not be left at room temperature for long. The review team witnessed trays of chilled food sitting on the floor next to the serving tables for hours.

Food received into inventory is not date stamped. Consequently, staff are not ensuring that the oldest items are being used first. Finally, there is no means to determine when items have expired or ensure that expired items are not used.

Recommendation 28:

Develop daily procedures to address food temperatures and inventory of perishable foods.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Food Services manager develops recommended procedures for ensuring that food is kept at correct temperatures and that perishable items are date stamped and gives these recommended procedures to the superintendent for approval.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent approves the new procedures.	November 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

There are a number of vending machines in the cafeteria that are in operation when they should not be. There is a door between the eating area

and the area where these machines are located, and the review team watched students purchase items from the machines during the lunch hour contrary to TEA's *Administrator's Reference Manual*, Section 16.1 and district policy. The vending machines containing candy, chips and other snacks are operated during serving times. The TEA *Administrator's Reference Manual*, Section 16.1 states,

"School districts must establish rules or regulations as necessary to control the sale of foods in competition with meals served under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Such rules and regulations shall prohibit the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value in the food service area during the breakfast and lunch periods. The restricted foods may be sold, at the discretion of local school officials, in other areas of the school campus throughout the school day."

The Competitive Food Regulation restricts five categories of food items including:

- Soda water-any carbonated beverage. No products shall be excluded from this definition because it contains discrete nutrients added to the food such as vitamins, minerals and protein.
- Water Ices-any frozen, sweetened water such as Popsicles and flavored ice with the exception of products that contain fruit or fruit juices.
- Jellies and Gums-a mixture of carbohydrates made predominately from natural or synthetic gums and other ingredients that form an insoluble mass for chewing.
- Certain candies-any processed foods made predominately from sweeteners or artificial sweeteners with a variety of minor ingredients that characterize the following types: hard candy, jellies and gums, marshmallow candies, fondant, licorice, spun candy and coated popcorn.

Carbonated beverages are available inside cafeterias during lunch periods. The availability of vending machine products reduces food service revenue. It also makes less nutritional food readily available to students. The American School Food Service Association recognizes the impact vending machines have on student nutrition and supports the intent of *Better Nutrition for School Children Act of 1999*. Additionally, AFSSA strongly urges an amendment to the proposed legislation that would completely eliminate soft drinks and foods of minimal nutritional value throughout the entire school campus until the end of the last lunch period of the day. The ASFSA states in *Better Nutrition for School Children Act of 1999 Official Statement*, that dramatic increases in direct competition

during meal periods from soft drink and candy vending machines have resulted in some school cafeterias offering soft drinks and foods of minimal nutritional value as choices in addition to offering nutritious meals. The diversion of revenue reduces the funds available for equipment replacement, salary adjustments and substitute workers.

Recommendation 29:

Establish a district policy to control the sale of foods in competition with meals served under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Food Service manager and business manager review TEA regulations and Child Nutrition Program guidelines regarding sales of competitive foods.	September 2000
2.	The Food Service manager and business manager develop new policies regarding the location and hours of access of vending machines.	September 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

E. TRANSPORTATION

The Texas Education Code (TEC) authorizes but does not require each Texas school district to provide transportation for students between home and school, from school to career and technology training locations, for co-curricular activities, and for extracurricular activities. The IDEA requires a school district to provide transportation for students with disabilities if the district provides transportation for the general student population or if disabled students require transportation to receive special education.

The TEC states that a school district is eligible to receive state funding for transporting regular and special program students between home and school, and career and technology students to and from vocational training locations. The funding rules are set by the TEA. Local funds must pay for transportation costs that the state does not cover.

For the regular program, TEA reimburses a local district for qualifying transportation expenses according to a prescribed formula. This funding formula is based on linear density, which is the ratio of the average number of regular program students transported daily to the number of miles operated daily for those students. TEA uses this ratio to assign each school district to one of seven groups, with each group receiving a different per-mile reimbursement. TEA re-evaluates group assignments every year. To assign groups and funding for the next biennium, TEA calculates linear density using operations data from the first school year of the previous biennium.

During 1999-2000, Ricardo ISD was classified in linear density group 1.15-1.65 and received a reimbursement of \$1.11 a mile for regular program transportation. State funding was granted to Ricardo ISD for all students, regardless of whether they live two or more miles from the school they attend. The state has determined that Ricardo ISD students face hazardous walking conditions on the way to school. There is an uncontrolled railroad crossing that must be crossed in order to reach the campus.

All transportation to and from school for special programs except certain field trips, is eligible for state reimbursement. The Texas Legislature set a maximum rate of \$1.08 a mile for reimbursement for special program transportation. This reimbursement rate is lower than Ricardo ISD's actual cost of \$1.976 a mile for special program transportation in 1998-99.

Co-curricular trips take students to activities that are considered part of the student's required curriculum and usually take place during school hours. Extracurricular transportation takes students to events during and after school and on weekends. Extracurricular transportation consists largely of transportation to and from athletic events. No state funding is provided for extracurricular transportation.

Each school district is responsible for the capital cost of purchasing school buses. Districts may purchase school buses through the Texas General Services Commission under a state contract. Districts may also choose a lease-purchase method to obtain buses.

The TEA School Transportation Operations Reports for 1995-96 through 1998-99 provide a four-year history of the transportation service's cost and mileage. These reports are intended to track all costs and mileage related to transportation, including services not funded by the state. **Exhibit 4-19** compares transportation operations costs from 1995-96 through 1998-99.

Exhibit 4-19
Ricardo ISD Regular and Special Program Transportation Operation
Costs
1995-96 through 1998-99

Item	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
Total Operating and Capital Costs					
Regular Program	\$176,716	\$193,607	\$177,477	\$190,062	7.6%
Special Program	\$2,239	\$5,016	\$28,330	\$21,945	47.3%
Total	\$178,955	\$198,623	\$205,807	\$212,007	18.5%
Annual Miles					
Regular Program	69,970	110,933	139,907	114,558	79.6%
Special Program	9,030	8,240	15,211	11,107	23.1%
Total	79,000	119,173	155,118	125,665	59.1%

Sources: Costs and miles from TEA School Transportation Operation Report, 1995-99.

As the above chart shows, total costs increased by 18.5 percent between the 1995-96 and 1998-99 school years and total miles increased by 59.1

percent. For the regular program, costs increased 7.6 percent and miles increased by 79.6 percent. For the special program, costs increased by 47.3 percent and miles increased by 23.1 percent.

The Academic Excellence Indicator System reports that Ricardo ISD has 10.8 percent special needs children compared to 12.1 percent statewide.

Exhibit 4-20 shows the performance change over the past four years. Cost per mile for the regular program has decreased by 34.2 percent. The most significant change was in the special program, with an increase of nearly 700 percent.

**Exhibit 4-20
Cost Per Mile Measures
1995-96 through 1998-99**

Item	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
Regular Program	\$2.526	\$1.745	\$1.269	\$1.659	(34.2%)
Special Program	\$0.248	\$0.609	\$1.862	\$1.976	696.8%
Total	\$2.774	\$2.354	\$3.131	\$3.635	31.0%

Source: TEA transportation data.

Exhibit 4-21 details Ricardo ISD's transportation costs over four years by object of expenditure. Total costs increased during this four-year period by \$17,452, or 10.1 percent. The most significant increase in dollar amounts was in salaries and benefits. This area increased by more than 83 percent during the period.

**Exhibit 4-21
Ricardo ISD Transportation Costs by Type of Expenditure
1995-96 through 1998-99**

Object	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
Salaries and Benefits	\$67,512	\$110,776	\$98,378	\$123,617	83.1%
Purchased and Contracted Services	\$36,294	\$9,469	\$9,547	\$6,303	(82.6%)
Supplies and Materials	\$20,275	\$27,089	\$28,484	\$25,557	26.0%
Other Operating Expenses	\$400	\$4,005	\$6,133	\$2,780	595.0%
Total Operating Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%

Capital Outlay	\$48,129	\$0	\$34,935	\$31,805	(33.9%)
Total Operating and Capital Costs	\$172,610	\$151,339	\$177,477	\$190,062	10.1%

Source: TEA School Transportation Operation Reports, 1993-97.

Ricardo ISD provides regular and special transportation service to all students within the district. Transportation service includes home to school service, as well as extracurricular transportation for athletic events and field trips. There are 15 staff members in the transportation department.

Exhibit 4-22 summarizes these positions and the associated job responsibilities.

**Exhibit 4-22
Transportation Staff**

Position	Number of Employees	Roles and Responsibilities
Director	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out policies • Maintain cost controls • Supervise and train drivers • Recommend type of equipment
Mechanic	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain buses
Bus Drivers	6 primary 3 secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safely transport students from home to school and back.
Substitute Drivers	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover for normal bus drivers as necessary
Transportation Aide	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ride on the bus with the special education students
Total	15	

Source: Ricardo ISD.

Exhibit 4-23 compares Ricardo ISD against its peer group with respect to cost per mile and cost per rider. In terms of cost per mile, Ricardo ISD is

in the middle of the pack but well below the state average. However, the district has one of the highest costs per rider of its peer districts. State ridership numbers were not available at the time of the review.

Exhibit 4-23
Ricardo ISD v Peer Groups -Cost per Mile and Cost per Rider
1998-99

District	Cost per Mile	Cost per Rider
Riviera	\$4.259	\$0.213
Premont	\$3.130	\$0.363
Freer	\$3.043	\$0.304
Texas	\$1.956	N/A
Ricardo	\$1.659	\$0.583
Agua-Dulce	\$1.619	\$0.185
Skidmore-Tynan	\$1.473	\$0.521
Driscoll	\$0.841	\$0.764

Source: TEA School Transportation Operation Report.

During 1998-99, Ricardo ISD's total mileage was 125,665 of which 114,558 was for regular education routes and 11,107 was for special education routes (**Exhibit 4-24**). About 6.6 percent of the Ricardo ISD regular school bus program mileage was for extra or co-curricular travel and therefore was not reimbursed by the state.

Exhibit 4-24
Ricardo ISD Mileage Summary
1998-99

Mileage Type	Regular Program Mileage	Special Education Mileage	Total Mileage	Percent of Total
Route	106,614	11,090	117,704	93.7%
Extra/co-curricular	7,759	0	7,759	6.2%
Other	185	17	202	0.1%
Total	114,558	11,107	125,665	100.0%

Source: TEA School Transportation Operation Report.

Ricardo ISD has 13 buses in service, 12 are sent on routes each day, and one is kept in reserve as a spare. **Exhibit 4-25** provides the details of the district's fleet of buses.

**Exhibit 4-25
Ricardo ISD Mileage Summary
1998-99**

Bus Number	Number of Passengers	Model Year	Purchase Price	Age of Vehicle	Mileage	1999 Maintenance Costs
#9	47	1983	27,110	17	147,972	\$1,030.00
#11	47	1985	27,660	15	166,804	\$489.10
#12	47	1986	30,791	14	145,076	\$471.87
#13	47	1988	30,138	12	134,005	\$3,073.91
#14	35	1990	31,597	10	86,810	\$404.70
#15	47	1991	34,144	9	80,829	\$512.85
#16	47	1993	34,445	7	65,416	\$216.83
#17	47	1994	37,363	6	67,094	\$164.12
#18	51	1996	40,225	4	29,696	\$149.02
#19	47	1996	40,112	4	30,868	\$187.74
#20	47	1997	39,939	3	16,800	\$87.45
#21	19	1993	15,000	7	57,956	\$452.81
#22	12	1999	48,428	1	6,204	\$81.38

Source: Transportation manager, Ricardo ISD.

FINDING

The average age of the fleet of regular buses is nine years, while the special education bus (#22) is only a year old. The standard life expectancy of a school bus is from 10-15 years.

Five Ricardo ISD buses are more than 10 years old, and four have more than 100,000 miles on their odometers. In particular, two buses (#9 and #13) required maintenance costing \$1,030 and \$3,074, respectively. However, total district maintenance costs in 19989-99 was only \$7,312.78.

The review team found that there were few problems with bus breakdowns. The district attributes the lack of breakdowns to preventive maintenance. Ricardo ISD performs preventive maintenance on each bus every three months or 3,000 miles, whichever comes first. The preventive maintenance plan includes the following:

- Changing all of the fluids, such as oil and transmission fluid;
- Lubrication;
- Checking tire pressure in each tire;
- Conducting a visual inspection of the vehicle; and
- Test driving the bus to ensure everything is working properly.

As a result of this preventive maintenance program, Ricardo ISD buses generally run on time, with few mechanical incidents.

COMMENDATION

The mechanic keeps the Ricardo ISD school buses running efficiently through an effective preventive maintenance program.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD does not have a high school within the district. High school students residing in Ricardo ISD must be bused to other area high schools. The transportation department is responsible for delivering these students to one of five high school campuses:

- King High School in Kingsville ISD;
- Academy High School in Santa Gertrudis ISD;
- Riviera High School in Riviera ISD;
- A special education high school; or
- A vocational high school.

The Ricardo ISD buses drop off students at the loading zone located behind the cafeteria between 7:20 and 7:25 each school day morning. At 7:25 the buses are loaded with high school students and the buses leave by 7:30 to take the students to their particular high school. The review team found the process to be well organized and smoothly run.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD buses run on time and deliver the students to school and take them home safely.

FINDING

During on-site interviews with bus drivers, the review team found a group of dedicated individuals who take the time to get to know their students. Discipline problems are not significant because the drivers have taken the time to develop strong relationships with the students riding their bus. If a discipline issue does arise, the bus driver will meet with the appropriate principal who will then take action. Usually the student is talked to and the problem is resolved. Sometimes the parent must be called, but this seems to be a rare occasion.

From 1997-98 to 1999-2000, there were no accidents involving an Ricardo ISD bus. The transportation director has instituted a drop-off zone that is six feet from the curb to ensure that students getting on and off the buses remain safely outside the danger zone.

COMMENDATION

There have been no accidents from 1997-98 to 1999-2000 years.

FINDING

The improvement in TAAS scores is something that everyone interviewed at Ricardo ISD was proud of. The transportation department was a key contributor to the district's success. In order to help students prepare for their TAAS tests after normal school hours, late buses were run each evening to take the students staying to study home safely. Parents did not have to make special arrangements to pick up their children and were comfortable that they would be safe.

COMMENDATION

The Ricardo ISD transportation department is an integral part of delivering quality education to its students.

FINDING

The transportation department has not automated its work orders by bus. A folder is kept for each bus and any time that work is done or parts are required a sheet of paper is added to each file. As a result, it is difficult to track individual activity on each bus to ensure costs are contained. The technology coordinator developed a work order computer application that could be modified for use by the transportation department.

Recommendation 30:

Modify the work order system used by the transportation department and track repairs by bus.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The technology coordinator and director of Transportation meet and perform a needs assessment.	September 2000
2.	The technology coordinator modifies the existing application as required.	September 2000
3.	The technology director trains the director of Transportation to use application.	September 2000
4.	The transportation office uses the system to track repairs by bus.	October 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

F. SAFETY AND SECURITY

The safety and security of students and teachers has become a critical issue on a national level. For many districts, safety and security is one of the fastest growing items in the budget. In 1996-97 the state started tracking expenditures for security and monitoring services as a separate expenditure item. Ricardo ISD did not have any expenditure in the area of safety and security for 1998-99 (**Exhibit 4-26**).

Exhibit 4-26
Ricardo ISD and State Safety and Security Expenditures
As a Percentage of Total 1998-99 Expenditures

Expenditure Category	Ricardo	State
Security and monitoring	0.0%	0.6%

Source: Texas Education Agency, AEIS 1996-97.

FINDING

TSPR surveyed parents of students on the safety of their children while at school. Almost 80 percent of parents noted that students feel safe and secure at school (**Appendix B**).

Due to the geographic location of Ricardo ISD, the heavy involvement of the community in the district, the close proximity of all district facilities to each other and the size of the student population, the need for security has not yet become a major issue.

The most significant security issue the district has faced occurred in the 1998-99 school year. Seven students were involved in making bomb threats just before the end of the school year. These students were placed in the Alternative Education Program for the last seven days of school. There were no major problems during the 1999-2000 school year.

Although the district has a discipline management plan and a student code of conduct, due to the relatively mild and infrequent criminal offenses the district has not developed a formal safety and security plan. Ricardo ISD does have standard fire and evacuation drills that are called periodically. The district also has a written emergency response guideline that is provided to each staff member.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD manages security issues promptly and effectively.

FINDING

The major safety issue at Ricardo ISD involves the railroad track crossings located about one mile from the school. The superintendent pointed out to the review team that train tracks must be crossed each time a student arrives at school and when he/she leaves school. There is no warning arm at either of the crossings. A local man was recently injured at this uncontrolled crossing. This situation must be dealt with immediately.

Exhibit 4-27 highlights the steps Ricardo ISD has taken to attempt getting warning arms installed by the state.

Exhibit 4-27 Railroad Crossing Timeline

Date	Event	Result/Response
1/23/96	Wrote letter to Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT)	No response
2/7/97	Wrote another letter to TXDOT	Received response on 3/19/97 indicating a request had been submitted to install an active warning device at crossing.
9/1/99	Wrote Union Pacific Railroad	No response
10/18/99	Wrote Governor George W. Bush	Received response 11/15/99 deferring the TXDOT Executive Director
11/17/99	Joined Rail Watch and adopted resolution.	Membership
12/8/99	Received TXDOT letter	Funding had been approved and the anticipated start date given as 1/2000.
3/7/00	Modified bus driver procedures	Drivers instituted new procedures
4/7/00	Wrote Congressman	No response
4/12/00	Wrote Congressman	No response
5/18/00		No warning devices have been installed.

Source: Ricardo ISD.

COMMENDATION

The central administration of Ricardo ISD is seeking to resolve the track crossing safety issue before an accident occurs.

FINDING

There are two potential safety hazards on or near the Ricardo ISD campus:

- An old drainage septic system is located on the back of the property. The gate surrounding it is broken and there are a number of deep holes that could seriously injure a child if the child fell in. This type of hazard attracts curious children and leaves the district open to potential liability and the critical injury of a Ricardo ISD student; and
- Across the street from the campus is a small park that is owned by the county. The playground equipment is old and deteriorating.

Recommendation 31:

Assess critical safety maintenance needs and plan to address these issues each summer before the start of school.

Even after the school year has already started, the district could make still arrangements to fill in the holes around the septic tank, fix the gate surrounding it and contact the county to determine if funding is available to repair or remove dangerous playground equipment adjacent to the Ricardo ISD campus. If the budget did not permit the district to address these maintenance needs immediately, the district could enlist the support of the community in making these repairs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager prepares a work order for maintenance staff to fill in holes and repair the gate.	September 2000
2.	The business manager meets with county officials about park.	October 2000
3.	The business manager determines if there is any county funding available to replace playground equipment	October 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

G. DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT

Each school has a student handbook that includes a code of conduct for all the students at the elementary and middle school level. The code of conduct includes key points of the discipline management plan, and the code of conduct has been updated at all levels. The handbook requires that the student, parent and teacher sign and acknowledge the discipline requirements.

Ricardo ISD maintains a three-tiered approach to discipline management. A student who violates the code of conduct receives an in-school suspension (ISS) for each of the first three offenses. This detention is served in the afternoon after school has been completed.

The next level of discipline is off-campus suspension. This is given to students that persistently misbehave.

The final level of discipline is the alternative education program (AEP) placement. During the 1998-99 school year only seven students were assigned to this program in response to the bomb scare. There were no students in the program during the 1999-2000 school year.

COMMENDATION

Ricardo ISD manages discipline problems effectively and responds quickly to emergencies.

FINDING

Ricardo ISD does not separate elementary and middle school in-school suspension students. There is no separation between elementary and middle school students in ISS. The district has been very careful to keep these populations separate on the main campuses. For example, middle school students eat lunch at different times. However, in ISS, the district is grouping students with discipline problems together. According to the district, the district would have to hire another individual if it were to physically separate elementary and middle school ISS students.

Recommendation 32:

Explore strategies to physically separate elementary and middle school in school suspension programs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent discusses strategies for staffing a separate ISS classroom as needed with the two principals.	September 2000
2.	The superintendent determines if any of these strategies would allow the district to staff a separate room for ISS with existing staff.	November 2000
3.	If current resources do not allow staffing of an additional ISS classroom, superintendent prepares a budget request for 2001-2002 for an additional staff person to handle ISS duties.	December 2000

FISCAL IMPACT

Using an extra classroom would not increase the already approved budget cost.

Appendix A

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

This appendix summarizes comments received from several group meetings which included the initial public forum held at the Ricardo ISD cafeteria on May 16, 2000 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and several focus group meetings. The focus group meetings were with community, civic and business leaders and parents. These comments are presented verbatim, to illustrate community perception of the Ricardo Independent School District (Ricardo ISD) and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the review team or the Comptroller.

METHODOLOGY

The community forum was an open meeting in which all members of the Ricardo ISD community, including teachers, parents, students and all other members of the community were encouraged to attend. Cards were placed all around the cafeteria, with each card representing a chapter of this report. People were asked to write any and all comments about Ricardo ISD on the cards.

Focus groups were assembled that included community leaders and parents. These groups were assembled with the assistance of the Ricardo ISD staff and management. Members of the focus groups were also asked to comment on each function area represented in this report.

Several other interviews were held with other community and civic leaders, former school board members, former school teachers and administrators.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Important findings from these meetings include:

The following sections are the actual comments made by participants by subject area.

District Organization and Management

- The superintendent is very organized in dealing with issues that face Ricardo ISD! The site-based-decision-making committee seems to have the students best interest at heart.
- Changes have been made since the new superintendent was hired. Goals and plans for improving the system have been put in place.

- This has been the best year in a long time at Ricardo ISD. Yes, there are little things like any school district, but our administration in over-all is the best. They are organized and out for the students!
- Our new superintendent and principal have made a big difference in the morale of the school. Everyone is happy and working together. Teachers concerns are heard with a positive open mind. The site-based committee is active and their recommendations are incorporated. The school board members work well together and in a professional manner, with the children at the heart of their decisions.
- The district is one, big happy family; the district has no problems attracting staff or students.
- The district has a good superintendent. This wasn't always so as the past 10 years have been marked by constant changes in the administration (5 superintendents and 6 principals in 10 years). Some of the changes were based on board decisions, and some were the result of administrators taking more lucrative assignments. However, the teachers feel comfortable with the current superintendent and his commitment to bring stability to the district.

Education Service Delivery

- Student performance has improved on TAAS!! Very pleased with TAAS results.
- The school spent a lot of time and money on developing curriculum and aligning it to the different grades. They added Sharon Wells Math and Accelerated Reader, and those have helped kids reading and math levels improve tremendously.
- The Special Education Coop does not provide adequate Occupational Therapy and is behind the times on assisted technology. Our TAAS scores went through the roof this year.
- Our TAAS scores were superb this year due to a lot of hard dedicated work from teachers and staff.
- Since all classes are small (only a couple of classes per grade level) the Gifted/Talented program is handled as a "pull-out" program.
- Teachers feel that TAAS may not be developmentally appropriate for 3rd graders; it would be better if the state required testing beginning in the fourth grade.
- Vertical teaming is a hit and miss effort. It would be more helpful if teachers could have consistency in this area.
- Teachers would like to maintain the student to teacher ratio that Ricardo ISD currently has.
- The school has done a tremendous job at aligning curriculum and our student performance has improved greatly. Our TAAS scores have just rocketed up the last two years due to what I believe is

great planning and better strategies and programs brought to the school.

- Staff uses Region 2 Service Center to access training and are informed of upcoming workshops through catalogues and administrators.
- Teachers need assistance in copying materials. There are not enough copiers for forty teachers to access. Only two working copiers are available and one is not a high volume machine. Too many people are allowed to use the copiers and they remain broken for long periods of time.
- Teachers are provided with a team planning time so that all teachers in the same grade area can plan together and address any issues they may have regarding the same students that they teach in the different subject areas.

Community Involvement

- Business School Partnership--We participated in Groundhog (middle school) job shadow day, where our students (selected by each team) went out to shadow a person in their career interest. We had students at Celanese, Veterinary office or clinic, NAS-Kingsville and Texas A&M University - Kingsville campus. This is something that we will most definitely participate in next year.
- Parental and External Communications--We have put out a District Newsletter each grade reporting period to communicate what's going on and what's coming up. This has been a great success.
- Many of our parents volunteer for events at our school. Parents, however, do not attend board meetings unless there is a hot issue--which is rare. Our community has only 3 or 4 businesses, so we have to try to partner with Kingsville. The new superintendent has done a great job communicating and has started a Ricardo Newsletter--GREAT!
- We do have a pretty good parent volunteer ratio. Sometimes the parents only become involved when something goes wrong. But we have a great rapport with most of the people in our district. We have a site-based decision making committee that brings teachers/administrators and community together to make a choice.
- There is a lot of parental support on campus. The familial atmosphere of the school puts parents at ease and is a factor in their volunteering.

Personnel Management

- We have made significant changes for the better in Ricardo ISD. We are working in retaining and hiring the best qualified persons, for the education of the students.

- The school board has had training and help developing a new more equitable salary schedule for teachers, it should help a lot. The superintendent is developing a hiring practices administrative procedure so that it will be fair and free of pitfalls, by training principles and interview committees on proper procedures.
- We recently underwent surveys on job descriptions and are awaiting to hear what, if any, salaries will be for next year. There are a lot of us that do a combination of jobs, unlike other districts that are higher paid.
- Here in Ricardo, the school district has made many improvements. We are always provided with great staff development. I believe the hiring practices are done fairly and they are doing a terrific job in recruiting staff. I believe that we are definitely underpaid as compared to other districts and the teachers who have made great strides in changing this district for the better should be compensated for it.
- The district has a good working relationship with the education department of Texas A&M - Kingsville in recruiting student/teachers. However, job openings are quickly filled, and the district is able to hire experienced teachers when vacancies arise.

Financial Management

- Health Insurance--The school district at this time pays up to \$100 towards health insurance per employee. We have always been offered a cafeteria plan if we were not interested in the health insurance due to our spouse had a good plan. We had to sign off to give up our \$100 contribution and this lowered the premiums to those that took the plan. My spouse's insurance was better than that being offered. (Ex.-doctor visit \$10 co-pay vs. \$40 co-pay). There should be something for everyone!
- The financial management has been focused on and is improving.
- Teachers believe that the district doesn't receive enough financial support from the state.
- The financial management has improved greatly with the changing of our new administration. Budgeting is done very fair and I believe that money is spent mostly on the kids. I believe that we need to improve some facilities which means higher taxes are something that we must look at. We have not raised the school tax base in years because people do not want their taxes raised. Sometimes taxes must be raised to make improvement for the entire district.

Facilities Use and Management

- Our school grounds are kept neat and clean. When things break or need attention, ...someone gets on it right away. The school adopted the Comptrollers energy use plan to save money. The gym ventilation system isn't working and it is too hot in there for kids to be doing PE and sports. The new science labs will be great--I'm glad they're building them.
- The maintenance director is always in the hall and is a dedicated individual to the district. His attention to all concerns is always a priority.
- Facilities could be improved, but on the whole they are adequate.
- The maintenance director does a tremendous job in keeping the district working. Sometimes they are a little slow, but I believe it is due to under staffing.

Purchasing Services

- The way we purchase is done by the book. The school district is always taking bids and doing everything legal and by the book. We do have some textbooks that need replacing.

Computer Technology

- Ricardo has come up in the field of technology. We are fortunate to have a Technology division and she burns the midnight oil.
- Teachers use the computers to record and submit grades.
- The district hired a technology coordinator and is able to access more grants through the efforts of this individual. The district has received a TIF grant as well as an E-rate grant.
- One of the major applications for the computers is for instructing students in reading.
- The district has a strong commitment to technology. There are two computers in every classroom, with plans for four computers per classroom by next year. Ricardo ISD has five labs with approximately 20 to 25 computers in each. Site-based decision management was a major impetus for the commitment to technology.
- In-service training for teachers is good and so is system support. Some teachers are not as technologically proficient as others, but they have made a commitment to learn.
- We have just been networked districtwide. We are providing four computers in each classroom that will be networked. Our software is networked, so no matter where a student is they have access to their files.
- We are considered being on top of technology.
- They hired a new computer specialist and have increased the number of computers in the classroom. Next they will have every

room online. We're a little behind the times, but the plans are going quickly and well with our new superintendent and principal.

- Technology has improved greatly in Ricardo ISD. We have plans on having three computers online in every classroom.

Food Service

- Quality of food service needs improvement!
- I second this. (My child elects to eat from snack machine due to the food in the cafeteria.)
- My children dislike the food. They don't offer enough choices, and serve the same thing every week. The food doesn't taste good. My children do not like Mexican food and it is served 2-3 times a week.
- The food service does a decent job, but I believe the food itself should be improved. Children eat the same thing all the time and the food is very high in fat content and not very nutritious.
- Food portions are too small especially for some of the larger eighth grade boys. However, the food gets mixed reviews. Some say it tastes good while others say it's awful.

Transportation

- The buses have to run their routes 1-1/2 hours before school starts so that breakfast can be served. Students not participating in breakfast have to wait 30 minutes for school to start.
- I have a handicapped child, and they have been very good at accommodating her wheelchair needs on regular routes and field trips.
- Transportation in general is well organized and dependable.
- The district needs more buses. Our High School bus route takes up the use of buses that we need.
- Field trips are on a schedule that doesn't allow for distant trips since buses need to be back by 2:30 p.m. for the after school routes.
- Teachers are being charged twice for a field trip because the bus driver drops you off and returns to the district. When it's time to be picked up, they will come for us but they consider this to be two trips and thus charge our budgets twice. If teachers want to take field trips, administration recommended that teachers hold fundraisers to raise money to offset the costs.
- There are no mechanics on campus, all maintenance is contracted out.
- Does our small school need a transportation director without other job duties?

- I feel that the transportation supervisor should also be a mechanic to justify his salary, or other duties.
- I believe that that transportation supervisor is not needed in such a small district. I believe the job could be done within the maintenance department and that the money should be used to hire teachers. To make it a smaller teacher to student ratio. We are in need of at least two more teachers at the middle school.

Safety and Security

- We have a program with the County Sheriff's department. A deputy is on campus everyday helping out in any aspect, but mainly ensuring school safety for all students. The deputy also calls students that are absent for a reason. They also will go on home visits with administrators or teacher. This is a great support to have at our school.
- The districts two-way communication system has been broken for a least a year. If a major emergency occurs such as a health or violence related incident, teachers in a separate building away from the office are unable to get help immediately. This could pose as a liability for the district if some is hurt or unattended.
- District maintains a code of conduct which includes a dress code. However, discipline policies are not consistent. Elementary students are sent to ISS for not having their homework while middle school teachers send students there due to discipline problems.
- Ricardo ISD may not be in compliance with the state regarding its alternative education program (AEP). It does not provide a separate room for its AEP. Presently the alternative program is held in the same room as the In-School-Suspension program and only has one instructor for both programs.
- Student discipline is easy to enforce in Ricardo. Administrators and teachers seem very consistent in applying discipline techniques. Would like for dress code to be readdressed!
- There are no real discipline problems in the district. Everyone works well together, and parents are alerted promptly if a problem arises. Even with no serious discipline problems, the district provides good training for discipline management.
- Students at Ricardo are relatively well behaved. We have good school policies that are fair and administered evenly. The local law enforcement is visible on campus. Our AEP program seems weak.
- We are lucky that being from such a small district we rarely have any real bad discipline problems. We have one to three officers on campus daily and the sheriff department works well with the school. Our alternative education program needs improvement.

When a student is placed in AEP we have no certified teacher in place to run the program.

Appendix B

SURVEY RESULTS

- A. Overview
- B. Teachers
- C. Administrators and Support Staff
- D. Parents

This appendix provides a summary of the surveys conducted during the review. The survey results presented here represent the perception of the respondents, and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the review team or the Comptroller.

METHODOLOGY

During the week beginning April 17th all survey instruments were provided to all members of the survey groups either by personally handing them out, placing them in the internal Ricardo ISD mail, or having students take them to their parents. The survey groups included:

- Teachers
- Administrators and Support Staff
- Parents

Each of the tests were self administered and all those surveyed were asked to return their surveys by May 5th. All survey respondents were provided with a postage-paid reply envelope to provide maximum security and allow for candid, confidential responses.

Information requested from those surveyed included rankings of the various areas covered by the chapters included in this report. Additional space was provided for any other comments that the respondent cared to make. The data included in this appendix includes a portion of the comments and responses to the open ended questions.

The total amount of responses received in each of the categories surveyed is shown in **Exhibit B-1**.

Exhibit B-1
Number of Respondents by Group

Survey Group	Number of Respondents
Administrators and Support Staff	14

Teachers	12
Parents	43

Summary of Opinions

The overall opinions of parents, teachers and staff/administrators were quite positive. Although each survey group had specific statements in which more people disagreed than agreed with the statement, most respondents responded positively to most questions.

Ricardo parents expressed high satisfaction with most academic programs, but they identified vocational education programs, student mentoring programs, alternative education programs, and college counseling as problems.

Ricardo teachers expressed consistently positive views regarding the practices of the school board, and also expressed strongly positive views of the reading, writing, mathematics, science, English, computer instruction, social studies and physical education programs. Ricardo teachers as a group expressed concern about business education, dyslexia, literacy, dropout prevention, career counseling and college counseling programs. Ricardo teachers did not agree with the statement that the district rewards competence and experience, and don't believe that the district's health care program meets their needs, and do not believe that salaries are competitive. Teachers were also not satisfied with the amount of press coverage of school news Ricardo support staff and administrators Support staff and administrators also were not satisfied with the amount of press coverage for district news, and saw a problem with internet access for students and teachers

Ricardo administrative and support staff were especially pleased with the effectiveness of the reading, writing, mathematics, science, English, social studies, and fine arts programs. Ricardo administrative and support staff perceived there to be problems with vocational education, teachers being rewarded for superior performance, and the district rewarding competence, and the competitiveness of district salaries.

Appendix B

SURVEY RESULTS

B. Teachers

Exhibit B-3
Management Review of the Ricardo Independent School District
Teacher Survey Results
(n=12)
Demographic Data

STATEMENT	CATEGORY		
	No Response	Male	Female
Gender (Optional)	15.4%	7.7%	76.9%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY					
	No Response	Anglo	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Ethnicity (Optional)	23.1%	30.8%	0.0%	46.2%	0.0%	0.0%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY					
	No Response	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
How long have you been employed by Ricardo ISD?	7.7%	53.8%	23.1%	7.7%	0.0%	7.7%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY						
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5
What grade(s) do you teach this year?	7.7%	15.4%	7.7%	7.7%	15.4%	15.4%	23.1%
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	15.4%	30.8%	30.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

A. District Organization & Management

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	7.7%	46.2%	38.5%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	7.7	30.8	38.5	23.1	0.0	0.0
3.	School board members work well with the superintendent.	7.7	15.4	46.2	30.8	0.0	0.0
4.	The school board has a good image in the community.	7.7	15.4	53.8	15.4	7.7	0.0
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	7.7	53.8	30.8	7.7	0.0	0.0
6.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	7.7	46.2	38.5	7.7	0.0	0.0
7.	Central administration is efficient.	7.7	23.1	53.8	7.7	7.7	0.0
8.	Central administration supports the educational process.	15.4	46.2	38.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

9.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	7.7	30.8	46.2	7.7	7.7	0.0
----	-----------------------------------------------------	-----	------	------	-----	-----	-----

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
11.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	7.7	53.8	23.1	7.7	7.7	0.0
12.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	7.7	30.8	53.8	7.7	0.0	0.0
13.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	7.7	30.8	46.2	7.7	7.7	0.0
14.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	7.7	38.5	30.8	0.0	23.1	0.0
15.	The curriculum guides are appropriately	7.7	23.1	38.5	0.0	30.8	0.0

	aligned and coordinated.						
16.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	7.7	23.1	38.5	0.0	30.8	0.0
17.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	7.7	53.8	30.8	0.0	7.7	0.0
	b) Writing	7.7	53.8	30.8	0.0	7.7	0.0
	c) Mathematics	7.7	61.5	30.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
	d) Science	7.7	23.1	61.5	0.0	7.7	0.0
	e) English or Language Arts	7.7	46.2	38.5	7.7	0.0	0.0
	f) Computer Instruction	7.7	23.1	53.8	7.7	7.7	0.0
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	7.7	15.4	69.2	0.0	7.7	0.0
	h) Fine Arts	7.7	7.7	53.8	7.7	23.1	0.0
	i) Physical Education	7.7	7.7	76.9	7.7	0.0	0.0
	j) Business Education	7.7	7.7	7.7	53.8	23.1	0.0
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	7.7	7.7	23.1	38.5	15.4	0.0
	l) Foreign Language	7.7	15.4	46.2	23.1	7.7	0.0
18.	The district						

	has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	7.7	23.1	53.8	0.0	15.4	0.0
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	7.7	15.4	53.8	7.7	15.4	0.0
	c) Special Education	7.7	23.1	53.8	0.0	15.4	0.0
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	7.7	23.1	15.4	53.8	0.0	0.0
	e) Dyslexia program	15.4	0.0	23.1	30.8	23.1	7.7
	f) Student mentoring program	7.7	7.7	23.1	30.8	23.1	7.7
	g) Advanced placement program	15.4	7.7	23.1	23.1	23.1	7.7
	h) Literacy program	7.7	7.7	15.4	38.5	23.1	7.7
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	15.4	0.0	15.4	38.5	23.1	7.7
	j) Summer school programs	7.7	23.1	69.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
	k) Alternative education programs	15.4	0.0	30.8	23.1	23.1	7.7
	l) "English as a second language" program	7.7	7.7	46.2	15.4	23.1	0.0

	m) Career counseling program	15.4	0.0	7.7	53.8	23.1	7.7
	n) College counseling program	15.4	0.0	7.7	46.2	30.8	0.0
	o) Counseling the parents of students	15.4	0.0	38.5	23.1	23.1	0.0
	p) Drop out prevention program	15.4	0.0	15.4	30.8	38.5	0.0
19.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	7.7	15.4	38.5	15.4	23.1	0.0
20.	Teacher turnover is low.	7.7	30.8	53.8	0.0	7.7	0.0
21.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	7.7	30.8	53.8	0.0	7.7	0.0
22.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	15.4	30.8	53.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
23.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	15.4	7.7	38.5	15.4	23.1	0.0
24.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	15.4	15.4	53.8	15.4	0.0	0.0
25.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they	7.7	46.2	46.2	0.0	0.0	0.0

	teach.						
26.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	7.7	46.2	23.1	0.0	23.1	0.0
27.	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	7.7	30.8	53.8	0.0	7.7	0.0
28.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	30.8	30.8	38.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

C. Personnel

STATEMENT	CATEGORY						
	No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
29. District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	7.7%	0.0%	7.7%	7.7%	61.5%	15.4%	
30. The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	7.7	15.4	38.5	15.4	23.1	0.0	
31. Temporary workers are rarely used.	7.7	7.7	76.9	0.0	7.7	0.0	
32. The district successfully projects future	7.7	15.4	61.5	7.7	7.7	0.0	

	staffing needs.						
33.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	7.7	15.4	30.8	23.1	15.4	7.7
34.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	7.7	15.4	61.5	7.7	7.7	0.0
35.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	7.7	53.8	38.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
36.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	7.7	0.0	15.4	38.5	23.1	15.4
37.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	15.4	7.7	38.5	23.1	15.4	0.0
38.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	7.7	7.7	53.8	30.8	0.0	0.0
39.	The district's	7.7	0.0	15.4	7.7	30.8	38.5

health insurance package meets my needs.							
------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D. Community Involvement

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	7.7%	53.8%	38.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
41.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	7.7	0.0	15.4	38.5	15.4	23.1
42.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	7.7	7.7	61.5	7.7	15.4	0.0
43.	District facilities are open for community use.	7.7	7.7	38.5	38.5	7.7	0.0

E. Facilities Use and Management

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
44.	The district plans facilities far enough in	7.7%	7.7%	61.5%	7.7%	15.4%	0.0%

	the future to support enrollment growth.						
45.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	7.7	15.4	30.8	23.1	23.1	0.0
46.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	7.7	0.0	53.8	38.5	0.0	0.0
47.	The quality of new construction is excellent.	7.7	7.7	308	46.2	7.7	0.0
48.	Schools are clean.	7.7	7.7	69.2	0.0	7.7	7.7
49.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	7.7	7.7	69.2	0.0	15.4	0.0
50.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	7.7	15.4	53.8	0.0	23.1	0.0
51.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	7.7	30.8	53.8	7.7	0.0	0.0

F. Financial Management

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
52.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	7.7%	15.4%	53.8%	7.7%	15.4%	0.0%
53.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	7.7	23.1	61.5	0.0	7.7	0.0
54.	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	7.7	23.1	46.2	0.0	23.1	0.0

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
55.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	7.7%	15.4%	46.2%	0.0%	15.4%	15.4%
56.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	7.7	15.4	53.8	23.1	0.0	0.0
57.	Purchasing	7.7	15.4	46.2	0.0	23.1	7.7

	processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.						
58.	Vendors are selected competitively.	7.7	15.4	46.2	23.1	7.7	0.0
59.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	7.7	15.4	38.5	7.7	23.1	7.7
60.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	7.7	15.4	69.2	7.7	0.0	0.0
61.	Textbooks are in good shape.	7.7	23.1	30.8	7.7	23.1	7.7
62.	The school library meets the student needs for books and other resources.	23.1	15.4	46.2	0.0	15.4	0.0

H. Food Services

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	7.7%	7.7%	61.5%	7.7%	7.7%	7.7%
64.	Food is	7.7	15.4	69.2	7.7	0.0	0.0

	served warm.						
65.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	7.7	15.4	76.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
66.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	7.7	23.1	69.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
67.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	7.7	23.1	61.5	7.7	0.0	0.0
68.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	7.7	53.8	23.1	7.7	7.7	0.0
69.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	7.7	46.2	38.5	7.7	0.0	0.0

I. Safety and Security

STATEMENT	CATEGORY						
	No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
70. School disturbances are infrequent.	7.7%	38.5%	53.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
71. Gangs are not a problem in this district.	7.7	46.2	38.5	7.7	0.0	0.0	
72. Drugs are not a problem in this district.	7.7	38.5	38.5	15.4	0.0	0.0	
73. Vandalism is not a problem	7.7	38.5	46.2	7.7	0.0	0.0	

	in this district.						
74.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	7.7	46.2	46.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
75.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	15.4	46.2	38.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
76.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	7.7	46.2	46.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
77.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	7.7	30.8	61.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
78.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	23.1	38.5	15.4	15.4	7.7	0.0

J. Computers and Technology

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
79.	Students regularly use computers.	7.7%	23.1%	46.2%	0.0%	23.1%	0.0%

80.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	7.7	23.1	53.8	0.0	15.4	0.0
81.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	7.7	15.4	53.8	0.0	23.1	0.0
82.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	7.7	15.4	53.8	7.7	15.4	0.0
83.	The district meets student needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	7.7	23.1	38.5	0.0	30.8	0.0
84.	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	7.7	15.4	23.1	30.8	23.1	0.0
85.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	7.7	7.7	23.1	7.7	46.2	7.7

Appendix B

SURVEY RESULTS

C. Administrators and Support Staff

Exhibit B-4
Management Review of the Ricardo Independent School District
District Administrative and Support Staff Survey Results
(n=16)
Demographic Data

STATEMENT	CATEGORY		
	No Response	Male	Female
Gender (Optional)	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY					
	No Response	Anglo	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Ethnicity (Optional)	25.0%	31.3%	0.0%	43.8%	0.0%	0.0%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY					
	No Response	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
How long have you been employed by Ricardo ISD?	6.3%	56.3%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	18.8%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY			
	No Response	Administrator	Clerical Staffer	Support Staffer
Are you a(n):	0.0%	31.3%	37.5%	31.3%

STATEMENT	CATEGORY					
	No Response	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
How long have you been employed in this capacity	6.3%	56.3%	18.8%	0.0%	6.3%	12.5%

by Ricardo ISD?						
-----------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

A. District Organization & Management

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	0.0%	31.3%	37.5%	6.3%	25.0%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	6.3	31.3	25.0	12.5	12.5	12.5
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	0.0	50.0	31.3	6.3	6.3	6.3
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	0.0	43.8	37.5	0.0	12.5	6.3
5.	Central administration is efficient.	0.0	31.3	31.3	18.8	6.3	12.5
6.	Central administration supports the educational process.	0.0	37.5	37.5	12.5	6.3	6.3
7.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	0.0	31.3	50.0	12.5	6.3	0.0

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	6.3%	56.3%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
9.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	0.0	37.5	43.8	18.8	0.0	0.0
10.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	0.0	37.5	18.8	31.3	12.5	0.0
11.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0.0	25.0	18.8	43.8	12.5	0.0
12.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	b) Writing	0.0	50.0	43.8	0.0	6.3	0.0
	c) Mathematics	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	d) Science	0.0	50.0	43.8	0.0	6.3	0.0
	e) English or Language Arts	0.0	50.0	43.8	6.3	0.0	0.0
	f) Computer	0.0	43.8	37.5	6.3	12.5	0.0

	Instruction						
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0.0	37.5	50.0	6.3	6.3	0.0
	h) Fine Arts	0.0	25.0	68.8	6.3	0.0	0.0
	i) Physical Education	0.0	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
	j) Business Education	0.0	12.5	25.0	56.3	6.3	0.0
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0.0	18.8	6.3	43.8	25.0	6.3
	l) Foreign Language	0.0	18.8	25.0	31.3	25.0	0.0
13.	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	0.0	43.8	50.0	6.3	0.0	0.0
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0.0	43.8	31.3	0.0	12.5	12.5
	c) Special Education	0.0	43.8	50.0	6.3	0.0	0.0
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	0.0	18.8	12.5	56.3	6.3	6.3
	e) Dyslexia program	0.0	25.0	25.0	12.5	25.0	12.5
	f) Student mentoring program	0.0	18.8	18.8	31.3	31.3	0.0
	g) Advanced	0.0	12.5	25.0	31.3	18.8	12.5

	placement program						
	h) Literacy program	0.0	18.8	31.3	50.0	0.0	0.0
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	6.3	18.8	18.8	18.8	31.3	6.3
	j) Summer school programs	0.0	25.0	62.5	6.3	6.3	0.0
	k) Alternative education programs	6.3	12.5	18.8	56.3	6.3	0.0
	l) "English as a second language" program	0.0	25.0	37.5	37.5	0.0	0.0
	m) Career counseling program	0.0	25.0	6.3	43.8	18.8	6.3
	n) College counseling program	0.0	12.5	6.3	62.5	6.3	12.5
	o) Counseling the parents of students	0.0	18.8	37.5	31.3	6.3	6.3
	p) Drop out prevention program	0.0	18.8	12.5	43.8	12.5	12.5
14.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	6.3	12.5	43.8	25.0	6.3	6.3
15.	Teacher turnover is low.	0.0	25.0	43.8	25.0	6.3	0.0

16.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0.0	43.8	25.0	31.3	0.0	0.0
17.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	0.0	31.3	43.8	25.0	0.0	0.0
18.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0.0	12.5	25.0	12.5	50.0	0.0
19.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	0.0	18.8	50.0	31.3	0.0	0.0
20.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	0.0	37.5	50.0	6.3	6.3	0.0
21.	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	0.0	31.3	37.5	12.5	18.8	0.0
22.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	0.0	62.5	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
23.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	0.0	37.5	37.5	6.3	12.5	6.3

C. Personnel

STATEMENT	CATEGORY
-----------	----------

		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	6.3%	62.5%	25.0%
25.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0.0	6.3	31.3	18.8	37.5	6.3
26.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0.0	12.5	37.5	18.8	25.0	6.3
27.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0.0	18.8	25.0	31.3	18.8	6.3
28.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0.0	18.8	37.5	31.3	6.3	6.3
29.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0.0	31.3	37.5	12.5	12.5	6.3
30.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	0.0	43.8	25.0	6.3	12.5	12.5
31.	The district rewards competence and experience	0.0	6.3	18.8	25.0	31.3	18.8

	and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.						
32.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	6.3	6.3	37.5	31.3	12.5	6.3
33.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0.0	12.5	25.0	43.8	12.5	6.3
34.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0.0	0.0	25.0	12.5	25.0	37.5

D. Community Involvement

STATEMENT	CATEGORY						
	No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
35. The district regularly communicates with parents.	0.0%	43.8%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	
36. The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0.0	0.0	62.5	6.3	25.0	6.3	

37.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0.0	31.3	50.0	0.0	12.5	6.3
38.	District facilities are open for community use.	0.0	18.8	68.8	6.3	0.0	6.3

E. Facilities Use and Management

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	18.8%	6.3%
40.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0.0	18.8	37.5	25.0	18.8	0.0
41.	Schools are clean.	0.0	25.0	68.8	0.0	0.0	6.3
42.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0.0	25.0	56.3	0.0	12.5	6.3
43.	Repairs are	6.3	25.0	50.0	0.0	12.5	6.3

	made in a timely manner.						
44.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0.0	31.3	43.8	6.3	12.5	6.3

F. Financial Management

STATEMENT	CATEGORY					
	No Response	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%	25.0%	43.8%	25.0%	6.3%	0.0%
46. Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	0.0	25.0	37.5	25.0	12.5	0.0
47. The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	0.0	18.8	31.3	31.3	6.3	12.5
48. Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	0.0	25.0	37.5	25.0	6.3	6.3

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	6.3%	6.3%
50.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0.0	12.5	50.0	18.8	12.5	6.3
51.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	6.3	18.8	25.0	31.3	6.3	12.5
52.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0.0	12.5	43.8	31.3	12.5	0.0
53.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	0.0	25.0	68.8	6.3	0.0	0.0
54.	Textbooks are in good shape.	0.0	25.0	56.3	12.5	0.0	6.3
55.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources for students.	0.0	31.3	56.3	6.3	0.0	6.3

H. Safety and Security

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
56.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	0.0%	37.5%	56.3%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%
57.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	6.3	25.0	62.5	0.0	6.3	0.0
58.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	6.3	18.8	62.5	0.0	6.3	6.3
59.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0.0	37.5	50.0	12.5	0.0	0.0
60.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	43.8	12.5	43.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
61.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	12.5	37.5	31.3	12.5	0.0	6.3
62.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	12.5	43.8	37.5	0.0	0.0	6.3

I. Computers and Technology

STATEMENT		CATEGORY					
		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	Students regularly use computers.	6.3%	43.8%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
64.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	6.3	43.8	37.5	6.3	6.3	0.0
65.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	6.3	37.5	43.8	0.0	12.5	0.0
66.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	6.3	37.5	43.8	6.3	6.3	0.0
67.	The district meets students needs in computer fundamentals.	6.3	37.5	37.5	6.3	6.3	6.3
68.	The district meets students needs in advanced computer skills.	12.5	37.5	12.5	12.5	25.0	0.0
69.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	12.5	31.3	31.3	0.0	25.0	0.0

Appendix B SURVEY RESULTS

D. Parents

Exhibit B-2 Ricardo Independent School District Parent Survey Results (n=43)

PART A:

Gender (Optional)	
No Response	16%
Male	28%
Female	56%

Ethnicity (Optional)	
No Response	16%
Anglo	28%
African American	0%
Hispanic	59%
Asian	0%
Other	0%

How long have you been employed by Ricardo ISD?	
No Response	7%
0-5 years	30%
6-10 years	26%
11+	37%

What grade level(s) does your child(ren) attend?					
Pre-kindergarten	7%	Kindergarten	14%	First Grade	16%
Second Grade	21%	Third grade	19%	Fourth Grade	21%
Fifth Grade	19%	Sixth Grade	23%	Seventh Grade	26%

Eighth Grade	12%	Ninth Grade	0%	Tenth Grade	0%
Eleventh Grade	0%	Twelfth Grade	0%		

PART B:

A. District Organization & Management

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	4.7	11.6	44.2	25.6	11.6	2.3
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	4.7	11.6	37.2	30.2	14.0	2.3
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	4.7	20.9	41.9	20.9	4.7	7.0
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	4.7	20.9	30.2	30.2	7.0	7.0

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	The district provides a high quality of services.	4.7	23.3	37.2	16.3	11.6	7.0
6.	Teachers are	7.0	14.0	46.5	16.3	14.0	2.3

	given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.						
7.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	2.3	11.6	34.9	34.9	11.6	4.7
8.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	2.3	11.6	34.9	37.2	7.0	7.0
9.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	4.7	25.6	55.8	9.3	4.7	0.0
	b) Writing	4.7	25.6	46.5	16.3	7.0	0.0
	c) Mathematics	2.3	25.6	51.2	7.0	11.6	2.3
	d) Science	2.3	23.3	51.2	9.3	11.6	2.3
	e) English or Language Arts	2.3	27.9	53.5	9.3	7.0	0.0
	f) Computer Instruction	2.3	20.9	55.8	11.6	4.7	0.0
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	2.3	18.6	53.5	14.0	11.6	0.0
	h) Fine Arts	4.7	16.3	44.2	20.9	9.3	0.0
	i) Physical Education	2.3	20.9	53.5	9.3	11.6	2.3
	j) Business Education	4.7	9.3	16.3	48.8	16.3	4.7

	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	7.0	7.0	14.0	48.8	16.3	7.0
	l) Foreign Language	7.0	9.3	32.6	34.9	11.6	4.7
10.	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	4.7	14.0	55.8	7.0	11.6	7.0
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	4.7	16.3	41.9	14.0	16.3	7.0
	c) Special Education	4.7	18.6	30.2	37.2	4.7	4.7
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	2.3	14.0	34.9	41.9	2.3	4.7
	e) Dyslexia program	4.7	7.0	14.0	55.8	9.3	9.3
	f) Student mentoring program	4.7	7.0	14.0	51.2	18.6	4.7
	g) Advanced placement program	2.3	9.3	23.3	37.2	20.9	7.0
	h) Literacy program	4.7	7.0	23.3	48.8	11.6	4.7
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	7.0	4.7	14.0	58.1	14.0	2.3
	j) Summer school	7.0	16.3	44.2	20.9	7.0	4.7

	programs						
	k) Alternative education programs	7.0	7.0	14.0	48.8	16.3	7.0
	l) "English as a second language" program	9.3	9.3	11.6	58.1	7.0	4.7
	m) Career counseling program	4.7	7.0	14.0	53.5	16.3	4.7
	n) College counseling program	7.0	7.0	9.3	53.5	16.3	7.0
	o) Counseling the parents of students	2.3	14.0	23.3	34.9	16.3	9.3
	p) Drop out prevention program	2.3	4.7	16.3	58.1	9.3	9.3
11.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	4.7	14.0	32.6	23.3	9.3	16.3
12.	Teacher turnover is low.	2.3	18.6	39.5	23.3	11.6	4.7
13.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	2.3	18.6	53.5	7.0	9.3	9.3
14.	A substitute teacher rarely teaches my child.	7.0	4.7	48.8	4.7	18.6	16.3
15.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they	2.3	14.0	53.5	9.3	16.3	4.7

	teach.						
16.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	2.3	20.9	39.5	16.3	14.0	7.0
17.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	2.3	37.2	53.5	2.3	4.7	0.0
18.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	2.3	16.3	41.9	23.3	14.0	2.3
19.	The district provides a high quality education.	2.3	25.6	46.5	14.0	9.3	2.3
20.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	7.0	23.3	51.2	9.3	7.0	2.3

C. Community Involvement

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	2.3	23.3	48.8	9.3	9.3	7.0
22.	District facilities are open for community use.	2.3	18.6	32.6	23.3	20.9	2.3
23.	Schools have	2.3	18.6	34.9	20.9	18.6	4.7

	plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.						
--	-----------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

D. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	2.3	9.3	30.2	30.2	25.6	2.3
25.	Schools are clean.	2.3	25.6	55.8	4.7	7.0	4.7
26.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	2.3	23.3	53.5	9.3	7.0	4.7
27.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	2.3	20.9	48.8	18.6	7.0	2.3
28.	The district uses very few portable buildings.	2.3	30.2	55.8	4.7	2.3	4.7
29.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	2.3	18.6	48.8	25.6	4.7	0.0

E. Asset and Risk Management

Survey Questions	No	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly
------------------	----	----------	-------	----	----------	----------

		Response	Agree		Opinion		Disagree
30.	My property tax bill is reasonable for the educational services delivered.	4.7	16.3	53.5	11.6	9.3	4.7
31.	Board members and administrators do a good job explaining the use of tax dollars.	4.7	14.0	30.2	20.9	23.3	7.0

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	7.0	7.0	25.6	41.9	14.0	4.7
33.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	2.3	7.0	27.9	46.5	11.6	4.7
34.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	4.7	4.7	23.3	46.5	14.0	7.0
35.	Financial	4.7	7.0	27.9	53.5	4.7	2.3

	reports are made available to community members when asked.						
--	-------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	2.3	23.3	55.8	16.3	2.3	0.0
37.	Textbooks are in good shape.	2.3	16.3	53.5	14.0	14.0	0.0
38.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources for students.	2.3	20.9	53.5	7.0	7.0	9.3

H. Food Services

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	My child regularly purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.	4.7	41.9	46.5	4.7	2.3	0.0
40.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	2.3	46.5	37.2	11.6	2.3	0.0

41.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	4.7	20.9	37.2	4.7	20.9	11.6
42.	Food is served warm.	2.3	25.6	44.2	9.3	14.0	4.7
43.	Students have enough time to eat.	2.3	25.6	37.2	7.0	20.9	7.0
44.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	2.3	23.3	53.5	2.3	14.0	4.7
45.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	2.3	18.6	48.8	14.0	9.3	7.0
46.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	4.7	18.6	60.5	9.3	7.0	0.0
47.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	7.0	18.6	58.1	9.3	7.0	0.0
48.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	7.0	23.3	60.5	7.0	2.3	0.0

I. Transportation

Survey Questions	No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49. My child regularly rides the bus.	7.0	30.2	25.6	9.3	23.3	4.7

50.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	7.0	20.9	39.5	30.2	2.3	0.0
51.	The length of the student's bus ride is reasonable.	7.0	16.3	39.5	23.3	9.3	4.7
52.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	7.0	27.9	44.2	18.6	0.0	2.3
53.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	7.0	20.9	44.2	18.6	4.7	4.7
54.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our house.	7.0	20.9	39.5	20.9	4.7	7.0
55.	Buses arrive and depart on time.	7.0	25.6	39.5	25.6	0.0	2.3
56.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	7.0	27.9	32.9	30.2	0.0	2.3
57.	Buses seldom break down.	7.0	23.3	39.5	23.3	7.0	0.0
58.	Buses are clean.	7.0	23.3	41.9	25.6	2.3	0.0
59.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	7.0	25.6	41.9	20.9	2.3	2.3
60.	The district has a simple	9.3	18.6	30.2	34.9	4.7	2.3

	method to request buses for special events.						
--	---------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

J. Safety and Security

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
61.	Students feel safe and secure at school.	4.7	20.9	58.1	9.3	4.7	2.3
62.	School disturbances are infrequent.	4.7	14.0	60.5	9.3	7.0	4.7
63.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	4.7	20.9	51.2	14.0	7.0	2.3
64.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	4.7	25.6	39.5	18.6	7.0	4.7
65.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	4.7	25.6	34.9	16.3	9.3	9.3
66.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	7.0	23.3	44.2	23.3	2.3	0.0
67.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	7.0	23.3	41.9	25.6	2.3	0.0
68.	A good working	7.0	27.9	46.5	18.6	0.0	0.0

	arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.						
69.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	4.7	18.6	39.5	14.0	18.6	4.7
70.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	7.0	16.3	46.5	16.3	2.3	11.6

K. Computers and Technology

Survey Questions		No Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
71.	Teachers know how to teach computer science and other technology-related courses.	4.7	11.6	58.1	16.3	2.3	7.0
72.	Computers are new enough to be useful to teach students.	4.7	9.3	74.4	9.3	0.0	2.3
73.	The district meets students needs in computer fundamentals.	4.7	14.0	55.8	11.6	9.3	4.7
74.	The district meets students needs in advanced	4.7	7.0	46.5	23.3	11.6	7.0

	computer skills.						
75.	Students have easy access to the Internet.	7.0	2.3	37.2	30.2	9.3	14.0