TRANSMITTAL LETTER

April 9, 2002

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

Fellow Texans:

I am pleased to present our performance review of the San Perlita Independent School District (SPISD).

This review is intended to help San Perlita 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 Trace Consulting Services, Inc. of San Antonio, Texas.

I have made a number of recommendations to improve SPISD's efficiency. I also have highlighted a number of "best practices" in district operations-model programs and services provided by the district's administrators, teachers, and staff.. This report outlines 42 detailed recommendations that could save SPISD more than $272,000 over the next five years, while reinvesting $21,500 to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to reach nearly $251,000 that the district can redirect to the classroom.

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

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

Sincerely,

Carole Keeton Rylander
Texas Comptroller

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

In October 2001, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander began a review of the San Perlita Independent School District (SPISD) as part of a four-district project that also included reviews of the neighboring Lasara, Lyford and Raymondville school districts, all located in Willacy County. Based upon nearly six months of work, this Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) report identifies SPISD's exemplary programs and suggests concrete ways to improve district operations. If fully implemented, the Comptroller's 42 recommendations could result in net savings of more than $251,000 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 more valuable to the state's school districts. With the perspective of a former teacher and school board president, the Comptroller has vowed to use TSPR to increase local school districts' accountability to the communities they serve.

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

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

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

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

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

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

TSPR in San Perlita ISD

The San Perlita Independent School District is located in Willacy County in South Texas, about 35 miles northeast of Harlingen and nine miles from Raymondville. The county is primarily agricultural and SPISD is one of four school districts in the county. The district serves an area of 314 square miles that includes the towns of San Perlita and Port Mansfield, located 16 miles from San Perlita.

The district's three campuses arelocated on the south end of San Perlita, Texas on 16.5 contiguous acres. In 2001-02, the district moved its sixth grade from its middle school back to its elementary. The elementary school now includes pre-kindergarten through grade 6, while the middle school includes grades 7 and 8. The high school serves grades 9 through 12. The three schools are located on the same property and share a library and cafeteria. The district's administrative offices are adjacent to the campuses. The district is served by the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) in Edinburg, Texas.

TSPR contracted with Trace Consulting Services, Inc., a San Antonio-based firm, to assist with this review. The review team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents, business leaders and community members and held a public forum on Tuesday, October 29, at the

San Perlita ISD cafeteria. To obtain additional comments, the review team conducted small focus-group sessions with teachers and principals. The Comptroller's office also received letters and phone calls from parents, teachers and community members.

A total of 99 respondents answered written surveys distributed by the review team, including 15 district administrators and support staff, 14 teachers, 41 parents and 29 students. Details from the surveys and the public forum appear in **Appendices A** through **E**.

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

SPISD selected three "peer districts" for comparative purposes, based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The districts chosen were Benavides, Lasara and Monte Alto ISDs.

During its nearly six month review, TSPR developed 42 recommendations to improve SPISD's operations and save its taxpayers more than$272,000. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach more than $251,000over a five-year period.

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

Acknowledgments

The Comptroller's office and Trace Consulting Services Inc. wish to express their appreciation to the SPISD Board of Trustees, Interim Superintendent Marco Antonio Lara and Yolanda Garcia, administrative assistant to the superintendent, as well as district employees, students, parents and community residents who helped during the review.

San Perlita ISD

SPISD's annual budget was nearly $2.3 million for 2000-01. SPISD had the lowest property tax rate among its peer districts in 2000-01 (**Exhibit 1**).

Exhibit 1
Adopted Tax Rate and Taxable Property Value per Pupil
SPISD Vs. Peer Districts
1999-2000 Through 2000-01

District	1999-2000 Taxable Property	1999-2000 Adopted	2000-01 Adopted

	Value Per Pupil	Tax Rate	Tax Rate
Benavides	$233,226	$1.50	$1.50
Lasara	$61,954	$1.35	$1.42
Monte Alto	$73,777	$1.45	$1.54
San Perlita	**$185,979**	**$1.33**	**$1.38**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1999-2000 and TSPR peer surveys, 2000-01.

In 2000-01, SPISD served 272 students. Of these, 20.6 percent were Anglo and 79.4 percent Hispanic. Economically disadvantaged students made up 83.1 percent of the total student population. **Exhibit 2** compares SPISD's demographic characteristics with those of its peer districts, TEA's Region 1 and the state.

Exhibit 2
Demographics of SPISD, Peer Districts,
Region 1 and the State
2000-01

District	Student Enrollment	Anglo	Hispanic	African American	Other	Economically Disadvantaged
Benavides	538	2.2%	97.8%	0%	0%	86.6%
Lasara	310	2.6%	97.4%	0%	0%	88.1%
Monte Alto	451	2.4%	97.6%	0%	0%	86.7%
San Perlita	**272**	**20.6%**	**79.4%**	**0%**	**0%**	**83.1%**
Region 1	**302,528**	**3.8%**	**95.6%**	**0.2%**	**0.4%**	**82.7%**
State	**4,059,619**	**42.0%**	**40.6%**	**14.4%**	**3.0%**	**49.3%**

Source: TEA, 2000-01.

SPISD's enrollment has fallen since 1996-97, from 298 students to 264 students in 2001-02, an 11.4 percent decrease over six years (**Exhibit 3**).

Exhibit 3
SPISD Actual Student Enrollment History by Year

School Year	Actual Student Enrollment	Percent Change From the Prior Year

1996-97	298	NA
1997-98	279	(6.4%)
1998-99	289	3.6%
1999-2000	298	3.1%
2000-01	272	(8.7%)
2001-02	264	(2.9%)

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2001-02.

TEA rated SPISD as "Academically Acceptable" in 2000-01. The district's 2000-01 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) passing rate for all tests taken in grades 3 through 10 was 79.0 percent, above Region 1's average of 77.9 percent but below the state average of 82.1 percent. The district's 1999-2000 passing rate was 8.1 percent higher (86.0 percent) than that of 2000-01.

Of the district's three schools, two fell in TEA's ratings in 2001. The high school dropped from Exemplary in 2000 to Academically Acceptable in 2001 and the elementary school's rating of Recognized dropped to Academically Acceptable. In 2000-01, an error in the district's reporting of the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data, data that is reported to TEA and collected on a database of comparative educational information, caused the middle school to get a Recognized instead of an Exemplary rating. The mistake was the result of an oversight: the district failed to meet the TEA deadline for appeals regarding inaccurate PEIMS data reported for LEP students.

Despite this decline in ratings, the review team found SPISD's staff members to be dedicated, competent and focused on student achievement. The board, administration, staff and community all recognize that they must continue to make improvements wherever needed for the betterment of their students. As such, the district has a number of challenges to address, including:

- enhancing educational opportunities for students;
- improving planning efforts; and
- strengthening financial controls.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Enhance Educational Opportunities for Students

- ***Develop Campus Improvement Plans.*** SPISD does not have Campus Improvement Plans as required by state law. Instead, the district has functioned with a District Improvement Plan that does not meet the specific needs of its individual campuses. After experiencing a steady increase in TAAS passing rates for several years (from 67.2 percent in 1997 to 86 percent in 2000), the district's TAAS scores fell in 2001. By developing Campus Improvement Plans for each school, campuses can focus on strategies for meeting the needs of all students and assist them in improving their academic performance.

- ***Use the distance learning lab to offer advanced courses.*** The percentage of SPISD high school students completing advanced courses such as chemistry, physics, advanced foreign languages and computer science is only 10.6 percent, well below the state average of 17.5 percent. Teachers and administrators expressed concern that the needs of their college-bound students are not being met. The district can use the distance learning lab to offer dual high school/college credit courses to academically advanced students.

Improve Planning Efforts

- ***Integrate the district's planning documents into a district strategic plan and link it to the budget.*** While SPISD has a District Improvement Plan (DIP) and a draft technology plan, the district lacks a comprehensive plan that addresses and prioritizes all areas of need. Expanding upon the district's current planning documents and tying the plan to the budget, the district can focus the board, staff and community on accomplishing its long-term needs.

- ***Develop a long-range facilities master plan.*** SPISD lacks a facilities master plan. In 2000, the district contracted with an architectural firm to conduct a facility study; this study, however, was not comprehensive and excluded the middle school and cafeteria. The district's last bond issue was in 1946 and many of the district's facilities are in need of renovation or reconstruction. A long-range facilities plan would give SPISD the "roadmap" it needs to properly plan for the expansion or replacement of its facilities.

- ***Create a staffing allocation formula for all staffing categories and reduce staffing.*** SPISD's student enrollment fell by 34 students from 1996-97 to 2001-02, while its staffing rose by 0.7 positions. By allocating staff based on student enrollment, reducing

its staff and bringing it in line with current enrollment, the district will be able to plan more efficiently, control costs and dedicate more of its resources to the classroom.

Strengthen Financial Controls

- ***Establish a general fund balance management policy.*** In the last four years, SPISD has maintained a fund balance in excess of the TEA-recommended optimum. Districts that accumulate higher-than-optimum fund balances are often planning to spend them down on one-time expenditures such as construction or equipment. SPISD is in dire need of facility renovations and reconstruction and yet has not designated these excess funds for this purpose. A fund balance management policy would provide the district and its board members with direction on its maintenance of reserve funds.

- ***Create an investment strategy to increase interest earnings.*** The district's excess funds are kept in four certificates of deposit with a book value of more than $1.3 million that earn less than 2.2 percent interest annually. By diversifying its investments through mutual funds or investment pools, SPISD could increase its earnings by more than $18,000 over the next five years.

- ***Implement a comprehensive fixed asset management system.*** The district did not conduct an annual physical inventory in recent years. The district has a bar code reader but has not tagged assets or used the reader to track assets.By conducting annual inventories and establishing accountability for the safekeeping of fixed assets, the district can ensure that its equipment, computers and other assets are properly protected and accounted for.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

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

- ***School board members have pursued training beyond state and district minimum requirements.*** The Texas Education Code, Section 11.159, mandates the State Board of Education (SBOE) to set rules requiring each board member to attend at least 16 hours of continuing education in a board member's first year of service and eight hours each year thereafter. SPISD board members, however,

received an average of 21.8 hours of extensive continuing education from April 2000 to April 2001 by attending seminars and additional training.

- ***SPISD has taken advantage of a federally funded initiative to encourage and prepare students for college.*** San Perlita participates in GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), a federally funded initiative designed to increase the numbers of low-income students prepared for post-secondary education. The GEAR UP grant allows the district to employ one facilitator who coordinates services for 24 middle school students, including mentoring, tutoring, academic counseling and outreach to families.

- ***SPISD provides families of high school students with a computer and Internet access at home and its high school teachers with laptop computers.*** SPISD received a grant for $138,000 under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program. Cooperation between the district, the federal government and the Valley Telephone Cooperative Inc., provided 57 computers and Internet access for the families of SPISD's high school students. The district also used the grant to purchase laptop computers for every high school teacher.

- ***SPISD provides outstanding health services to students***. SPISD's nurse maintains a medical card for every student. The nurse notes the reason for visits on these medical cards, thus tracking medical issues for all students and detecting patterns requiring additional attention. In the event of a major medical emergency or a school security lockdown, the nurse can quickly access important medical information including blood type, known allergies to medications and other important information, and can quickly assist emergency medical personnel. The nurse also makes home visits to students who have been absent for two consecutive days to help reduce the number of absences.

- ***SPISD used state and federal grants to meet TEA recommendations for student-to-computer ratios.*** The district has received nearly $274,000 in technology grants and has been able to provide students and teachers with an ample supply of computers. SPISD exceeds the state's mid-term goal of three to one with a ratio of 2.2 students to every computer in the district.

Savings and Investment Requirements

Many of TSPR's recommendations would result in savings and increased revenue that could be used to improve classroom instruction. The savings estimates 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 42 ways to save SPISD more than $272,000 in gross saving over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities would cost the district $21,500 during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of more than $251,000 by 2006-07 (**Exhibit 4**).

Exhibit 4
Summary of Net Savings
TSPR Review of San Perlita Independent School District

Year	Total
2002-03 Initial Annual Net Savings	$62,233
2003-04 Additional Annual Net Savings	$45,782
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	$45,782
2005-06 Additional Annual Net Savings	$54,064
2006-07 Additional Annual Net Savings	$45,782
One Time Net (Costs)/Savings	($2,500)
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2002-2007	**$251,143**

A detailed list of costs and savings by recommendation appears in **Exhibit 5**. The page number for each recommendation is listed in the summary chart for reference purposes. Detailed implementation strategies, timelines and estimates of fiscal impacts 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 that the SPISD board ask district administrators to review these recommendations, develop an implementation plan and monitor its progress. As always, TSPR is available to help implement its proposals.

Exhibit 5
Summary of Costs and Savings by Recommendation

	Recommendation	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1 District Organization and Management								
1	Publish an annual report on the district's educational performance and conduct a public hearing to discuss its contents. p. 19	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
2	Establish a system of checks and balances for PEIMS data submissions and ensure that all necessary corrections are completed within the timelines set by TEA. p. 20	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
3	Develop an organizational structure that illustrates district functions and lines of authority. p. 22	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
4	Integrate the district's planning documents into a district strategic plan and link it to the budget. p. 24	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
5	Establish Site-Based Decision-	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	Making Committees for each campus and develop Campus Improvement Plans. p. 26							
6	Implement a staffing allocation formula. p. 33	$37,194	$37,194	$37,194	$37,194	$37,194	$185,970	$0
7	Amend job descriptions to reflect the duties of current positions. p. 35	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
8	Develop a comprehensive plan for increasing parent involvement that includes strategies for recruitment of parent volunteers and training for teachers. p. 40	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
9	Develop a quarterly district newsletter to all SPISD families and place it on the district's Web site. p. 41	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Chapter 1 Total	**$37,194**	**$37,194**	**$37,194**	**$37,194**	**$37,194**	**$185,970**	**$0**
Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery								
10	Include instructional strategies in the District and Campus Improvement Plans that specifically address the needs	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	of students who have been retained. p. 54							
11	Strengthen English as a Second Language services by using technical assistance offered through Region 1. p. 57	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
12	Develop goals, objectives and strategies for improving the gifted and talented program. p. 59	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
13	Use the distance learning lab to offer advanced courses. p. 60	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
14	Expand the CATE program to include computer and technology courses that will prepare students for careers or continued education. p. 62	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
15	Update and expand the library's book collection to meet state recommended "acceptable" standards. p. 64	$0	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($18,000)	($3,500)
16	Conduct exercises of the district's emergency management plan. p. 69	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

#	Recommendation							
17	Explore disciplinary alternative education program options. p. 71	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
18	Secure the cafeteria walk-in freezer and all facilities when unattended. p. 72	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
19	Inspect all playground equipment on district property for compliance with safety requirements and create a plan to correct any deficiencies. p. 73	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
20	Conduct a survey to determine high-traffic areas for students walking to school and have the county designate and mark them as school crossing areas. p. 74	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Chapter 2 Total	**$0**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($18,000)**	**($3,500)**
Chapter 3 Financial Management								
21	Develop internal control procedures for the business office and transfer business management duties to the accountant. p. 82	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
22	Establish a	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

	general fund balance management policy and require the superintendent to report to the board on the status of the fund balance at every meeting. p. 84							
23	Develop a budget calendar and include key stakeholders in the budget development process. p. 87	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
24	Develop an implementation strategy for GASB Statement No. 34. p. 89	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
25	Develop a Request For Proposal for auditing services and require the external auditing firm to include a management letter and schedule of findings with audited financial statements. p. 90	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
26	Create an insurance committee to evaluate the state employee health insurance plan and determine its impact on the district and its employees. p. 94	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

27	Develop and maintain a comprehensive fixed-asset management system. p. 96	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
28	Create an investment strategy to increase interest earnings. p. 100	$3,757	$3,757	$3,757	$3,757	$3,757	$18,785	$0
	Chapter 3 Total	**$3,757**	**$3,757**	**$3,757**	**$3,757**	**$3,757**	**$18,785**	**$0**

Chapter 4 Operations

29	Create a comprehensive facilities master plan. p. 112	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
30	Develop a capital improvement plan and consider applying for a Qualified Zone Academy Bond. p. 114	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
31	Maintain detailed records for all work performed by the Maintenance Department to facilitate the district's planning and budgeting. p. 116	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
32	Develop an equipment replacement plan based on priority and Food Services funds availability. p. 121	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

33	Develop procedures to ensure compliance with Texas Department of Health requirements. p. 122	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
34	Train the cafeteria manager in the financial operations of the Food Services Department. p. 123	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
35	Improve the nutritional content of meals. p. 124	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
36	Conduct annual surveys to assess customer satisfaction with cafeteria services and the quality, appearance and taste of the food. p. 125	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
37	Report eligible special education program mileage to increase state reimbursements. p. 129	$0	$9,331	$9,331	$9,331	$9,331	$37,324	$0
38	Develop a formal school bus replacement plan. p. 131	$21,282	$0	$0	$8,282	$0	$29,564	$1,000
39	Develop a schedule for the maintenance of the district's bus and vehicle fleet. p. 132	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

40	Provide expanded driver training opportunities for SPISD bus drivers. p. 134	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
41	Finalize and implement the district technology plan. p. 138	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
42	Develop a disaster recovery plan and test it periodically. p. 139	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
	Chapter 4 Total	**$21,282**	**$9,331**	**$9,331**	**$17,613**	**$9,331**	**$66,888**	**$1,000**
	Gross Savings	**$62,233**	**$50,282**	**$50,282**	**$58,564**	**$50,282**	**$271,643**	**$0**
	Gross Costs	**$0**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($4,500)**	**($18,000)**	**($3,500)**
	Total	**$62,233**	**$45,782**	**$45,782**	**$54,064**	**$45,782**	**$253,643**	**($2,500)**

Total Gross Savings	**$272,643**
Total Gross Costs	**($21,500)**
Net	**$251,143**

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the San Perlita Independent School District's (SPISD's) district organization and management personnel and community involvement functions in five sections:

A. Governance
B. District Management and Planning
C. Personnel Management
D. Staff Development
E. Community Involvement

Texas school districts are governed by elected boards of trustees. A school board's ability to perform effectively is determined by its knowledge and recognition of its unique role, which should be separate from that of the superintendent. Boards should focus on decision-making, planning and the provision of resources for district goals. The superintendent, in turn serves as the district's administrative leader, responsible for implementing board policy and overseeing the district's day-to-day operations. The superintendent should help board members fulfill their duties by providing them with training opportunities and by instituting procedures that facilitate effective board meetings, open communications and timely exchanges of information.

The modern trend in education is to shift decision-making from the central office to the schools, yet districtwide management, planning and evaluation remain critical. The board must set instructional and operational goals, objectives and policies for the district in accordance with state laws. After the board has done so, it must leave the management of the schools to the superintendent, school staffs and site-based decision-making (SBDM) committees. This process helps build trust among the community, teachers, principals and central office administrators.

BACKGROUND

SPISD is located in South Texas, about 35 miles northeast of Harlingen and nine miles from Raymondville, the county seat. SPISD is one of four school districts in Willacy County. It serves an area of 314 square miles, including the towns of San Perlita and Port Mansfield, which is 16 miles from San Perlita.

At this writing, the district is led by an interim superintendent who was awarded a 24-month contract, effective June 1, 2001 to May 31, 2003. The interim superintendent served as the school district's business manager for

almost six years before assuming the present position. During interviews with the TSPR review team, several board members said that if the interim superintendent completes the state certification process, his position will be made permanent. While his contract does not mention this arrangement, board members said they are not searching for a permanent superintendent because they expect the interim superintendent to complete certification and become the permanent superintendent.

SPISD selected three "peer districts" for comparison during this review: Benavides ISD, Lasara ISD and Monte Alto ISD. This report includes numerous comparisons of SPISD to the peer districts, the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) and the state.

Exhibit 1-1 compares SPISD student demographic information for 2000-01 to its peer districts, Region 1 and the state. In 2001-02, 226 out of SPISD's 272 students (83.1 percent) were identified as economically disadvantaged. The share of economically disadvantaged students in San Perlita is typical of South Texas: slightly lower than the peer districts, but much higher compared to the state's 49.3 percent average.

Exhibit 1-1
Student Demographics
SPISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and State
2000-01

District	Total Students	African American	Hispanic	Anglo	Other	Economically Disadvantaged
San Perlita	**272**	**0.0%**	**79.4%**	**20.6%**	**0.0%**	**83.1%**
Benavides	538	0.0%	97.8%	2.2%	0.0%	86.6%
Lasara	310	0.0%	97.4%	2.6%	0.0%	88.1%
Monte Alto	451	0.0%	97.6%	2.4%	0.0%	86.7%
Region 1	**302,528**	**0.2%**	**95.6%**	**3.8%**	**0.4%**	**82.7%**
State	**4,059,619**	**14.4%**	**40.6%**	**42.0%**	**3.0%**	**49.3%**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) 2000-01.

In 2001-02, SPISD has a student enrollment of 264 and a total staff of 54 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. SPISD includes three campuses serving high school students in grades 9-12, middle school students in grades 7-8 and elementary school students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6.

This report uses the latest (2000-01) published statistics from the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) in most of its comparisons. Current numbers for 2001-02, when available from the district, are also used.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. GOVERNANCE

According to Texas Education Code Section 11.151(b), the board of trustees of a Texas school district is a *corporate* body, elected by the public with the "exclusive power and duty to oversee the management of the public schools of the district." The board, as a legal agent of the State of Texas, derives its status from the Texas Constitution and Legislature. It must function in accordance with applicable state and federal statutes, as well as regulations interpreting those statutes and relevant court decisions. Specific powers granted to the board under the Education Code include the power and duty to:

- adopt rules and bylaws necessary to govern and oversee management of the public schools of the district;
- acquire and hold real and personal property, sue and be sued and receive bequests and donations and other money or funds;
- dispose of property no longer necessary for the operation of the school district;
- levy and collect taxes and determine the rate of tax to be levied within the limits voted and specified by law (in instances when a specific tax rate has not been adopted at an election authorizing a tax);
- issue bonds;
- adopt and file a budget for the next fiscal year and file a report of disbursements and receipts for the preceding fiscal year;
- ensure district accounts are audited annually at district expense by a certified public accountant, following the close of each fiscal year;
- approve a district-developed plan and campus-level plan for site-based decision-making and provide for its implementation;
- publish an annual report describing the district's educational performance, including school performance objectives and the progress of each school toward the objectives; and
- adopt policies providing for the employment and duties of district personnel.

Pursuant to SPISD policy BA (LEGAL), the board has the exclusive power to govern and oversee the management of the school district. The board's function is to set policy. As chief executive officer for the district, the superintendent must make sure the district follows these policies. The SPISD board and interim superintendent have a clear understanding of

each other's roles and responsibilities, which has led to a very cooperative working relationship.

SPISD's board has seven members. Each trustee is elected at large by the entire district for a three-year term (**Exhibit 1-2).** Board elections are held annually in May for about a third of its members.

Exhibit 1-2
SPISD Board Members
2001-02

Member	Years of Experience	Profession	End of Term
Nora T. Vasquez, President	10	Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)	2003
Melissa Guadiana, Vice President	4	Bank Teller	2004
Maggie Sepulveda, Secretary	3	Texas Workforce Commission Counselor	2002
Norma Llanes	8	Immigration and Naturalization Services Counselor	2004
Frances Rodriguez	3	Office Manager	2002
Felipe Quiroga	1	MHMR counselor	2003
David Rodriguez	0	Ranch hand	2002

Source: SPISD Superintendent's Office and interviews with individual board members.

FINDING

SPISD's board members have received extensive continuing education. Under the Texas Education Code, Section 11.159, the State Board of Education (SBOE) is mandated to set rules requiring each school district's board members to receive at least 16 hours of continuing education in a board member's first year of service and eight hours following a board member's first year of service. The board obtains this training from the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) and Region 1. **Exhibit 1-3** shows the training completed by the current board members for the period April 2000 through April 2001.The superintendent and all the board members jointly

attend three training sessions per year. The board members said this experience has helped them work well as a team.

Exhibit 1-3
SPISD Board Member Training
April 2000 through April 2001

Board Member	Hours Completed
Nora T. Vasquez, President	17.75
Melissa Guadiana, Vice President	21.75
Maggie Sepulveda, Secretary	28.75
Norma Llanes	28.75
Frances Rodriguez	26.25
Felipe Quiroga	29.75
David Rodriguez	Appointed in September 2000

Source: SPISD Superintendent's Office, 2000-01.

COMMENDATION

School board members are continuing their board education beyond the minimum requirements set by the state and SPISD district policy.

FINDING

Although section 39.053 of the Texas Education Code requires the board to publish an annual report summarizing the performance of the district and each separate school, SPISD has not complied fully with this requirement. According to district officials, the district held a public hearing in English and Spanish on January 17, 2001 to explain to the community the district's performance on the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), including a summary of TAAS scores. Neither the meeting nor the contents of the annual report were publicized in the local newspaper.

The Texas Education Code (section 39.053) requires the board to publicize and hold a public hearing for discussion of the annual report. This hearing must be publicized in local newspapers and any electronic media serving the school district. After the hearing, the board must make the annual report widely available to the community. This report may be combined with other district reports as long as the code's requirements are met.

The Education Code has explicit requirements concerning the annual report. It must include performance ratings; campus performance objectives and progress toward meeting these objectives; special education compliance status with TEA; comparisons with previous performance and state-established standards; and an account of the number, rate and type of violent or criminal incidents of violence on school property and information concerning the district's school violence prevention and intervention policies and procedures. The report also may include information on student enrollment and demographics, staff size and experience and finances.

The purpose of publishing the annual report and conducting a public hearing is to ensure that parents and community members are aware of the district's educational performance and have the opportunity to address areas of concern. One way to inform the community would be to publish a one page summary of the annual report and make it available to the public at the administration building or at registration.

Recommendation 1:

Publish an annual report on the district's educational performance and conduct a public hearing to discuss its contents.

The superintendent, with assistance from campus employees, should prepare an annual report on the district's educational performance and submit it to the board for approval.

The board should publish the report and conduct a public hearing on it for discussion. The board and superintendent should ensure that all parents and local community members are aware of the public hearing and encourage their attendance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and campus personnel prepare the district's annual report.	November 2002
2.	The superintendent submits the report to the board for review and approval.	December 2002
3.	The board approves and publishes the annual report.	December 2002
4.	The board conducts a public hearing to discuss the annual report.	January 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

B. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

As specified in Section 11.201 of the Texas Education Code, the superintendent is the chief executive officer of the district and is responsible for:

- the planning, operation, supervision, and evaluation of the district's educational programs, services and facilities;
- the assignment and annual performance evaluation of all district personnel other than the superintendent;
- recommendations regarding the selection of district personnel other than the superintendent, as provided by Section 11.163 of the Texas Education Code;
- the termination or suspension of employees or the nonrenewal of employees' term contracts;
- day-to-day management of the district;
- Preparation of a proposed district budget, as provided by Section 44.002 of the Texas Education Code;
- recommendations for policies to be adopted by the board and the implementation of adopted policies;
- the development of appropriate administrative regulations to implement policies established by the board of trustees;
- leadership for the attainment of student performance in the district based on indicators adopted under Section 39.051 of the Texas Education Code and other indicators adopted by the State Board of Education or the district's board of trustees;
- Organization of the district's central administration; and
- any other duties assigned by the board of trustees.

FINDING

In 2000-01, an error in the district's reporting of the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data caused the middle school to receive a Recognized instead of an Exemplary rating. PEIMS encompasses all data requested and received by TEA about public education, including student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial and organizational information. SPISD's school counselor is the PEIMS coordinator and the central administrative secretary assists in gathering the data and sending it to TEA.

The district reported accurate TAAS scores in February 2001 but failed to amend them after the state Education Commissioner ruled that school

districts could exempt recent Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) students from some portions of the TAAS.District personnel said they assumed that an eighth-grade LEP student's writing score would automatically be removed from the TEA accountability ratings. District administrators were surprised when they received their TAAS scores and realized the student's writing score had been included in the ratings. The superintendent sent a letter asking the Education Commissioner to retract the score, but the request was denied. The mistake was the result of an oversight: the district failed to meet the TEA deadline for appeals regarding inaccurate PEIMS data reported for LEP students. TEA informed districts in April 2001 that any data corrections for LEP students needed to have been made by May 10, the district did not send their appeal until September 2001, missing the TEA deadline.

Teachers said one consequence of this error was that they did not receive a bonus that would have accompanied an Exemplary rating.

Texas school districts are required to submit PEIMS data to TEA three times a year. In October, a district must supply initial information on student enrollment, annual budgets and staffing. In February, the district must provide audited financial information for the prior fiscal year. In May, final student data is submitted.

Recommendation 2:

Establish a system of checks and balances for PEIMS data submissions and ensure that all necessary corrections are completed within the timelines set by TEA.

The superintendent should provide the PEIMS coordinator with the assistance needed to ensure that data is accurate and timelines are met. All administrators should be a part of a check-off system regarding the information that will be finally submitted to TEA. In so doing the district can be ensured that everyone is in agreement with the information being reported.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and the PEIMS coordinator meet to develop a process with checks and balances for data submission that will minimize errors.	September 2002
2.	The PEIMS coordinator informs all staff of the process.	September 2002
3.	The PEIMS coordinator implements and monitors the process.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district's current organization and lines of authority are unclear. SPISD does not have a formal chart that specifies exactly how the district is organized. **Exhibit 1-4** provides an overview of the district's functional organization.

Central administration includes the superintendent, an accountant, an administrative secretary and a superintendent's secretary. The superintendent is also the district business manager and the Migrant Program coordinator. The administrative secretary performs as the attendance clerk and is responsible for PEIMS submissions to TEA.

Until 2001-02, one principal managed all three school campuses. In 2001-02, the district's technology/curriculum coordinator became elementary principal. As curriculum coordinator, the elementary principal is also responsible for providing technical assistance and program direction to all personnel involved in the application of the district's core curriculum as well as other supplemental programs. As technology coordinator, the principal provides expertise and technical assistance in the area of computers.

Exhibit 1-4
SPISD Current Organization Structure
2001-02 School Year
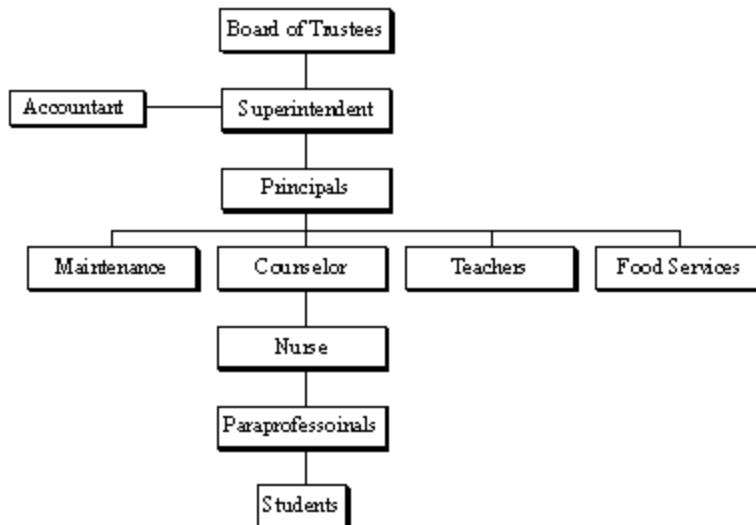
Source: SPISD Superintendent's office, 2001.

This organizational structure shows the principals and accountant reporting directly to the superintendent, and the teachers, the counselor and the Food Services and Maintenance Departments reporting to the principals. The nurse is shown as supervised by the counselor and the paraprofessionals as supervised by the nurse.

This structure, however, does not differentiate among the school principals or correctly identify the areas supervised by each. The current structure also omits key elements of the district's operations such as technology, transportation, special education and other programs.

The superintendent and both principals stated that the Food Services and Maintenance Departments report to the principals on a rotating schedule. For example, in one year the Food Services Department reports to the high school/middle school principal while the Maintenance Department reports to the elementary principal; in the following year, they reverse. The Food Services director, however, told the review team that she reports to the superintendent-a clear illustration of the staff's lack of understanding of district organization and lines of authority.

Recommendation 3:

Develop an organizational structure that illustrates district functions and lines of authority.

All key functions of the district should be identified, with direct lines of authority to superior and subordinate positions illustrated.

The structure shown in **Exhibit 1-5** defines lines of authority for each school principal and provides a clear picture of district organization. This structure shows the GEAR-UP facilitator and counselor reporting to the high school principal and the nurse reporting to the elementary principal. The counselor and nurse work with all students, thus will indirectly work with both principals. This structure also shows the Food Services manager and Maintenance supervisor reporting directly to the superintendent.

This structure makes the superintendent responsible for districtwide activities and keeps the principals focused on their educational responsibilities.

<div align="center">

Exhibit 1-5

</div>

Recommended Organization Structure
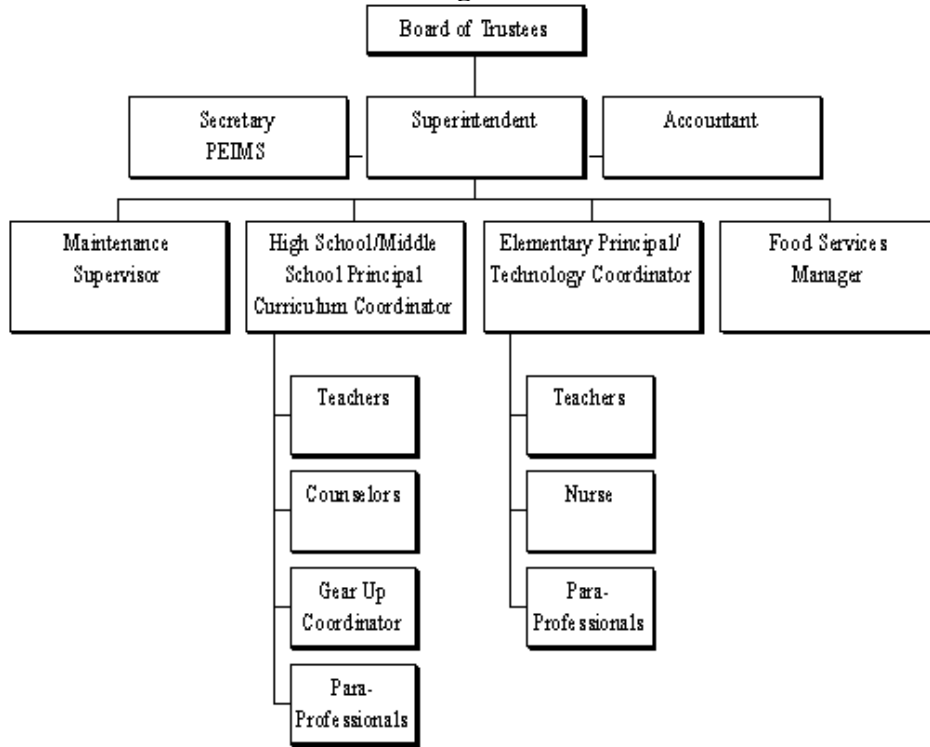
Source: Trace Consulting Services, Inc.

The elementary principal retains responsibility for technology coordination, staff and curriculum technology development and technical support. The high school principal retains curriculum coordination duties, including responsibility for providing technical assistance and program direction to all personnel involved in the implementation of the district's core curriculum and all supplemental programs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent identifies the district's functional areas and key personnel to assist in those areas.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent develops a planto organize the district's structure and realign reporting responsibilities and submits the proposed organizational chart to the board for review and approval.	April 2002
3.	The board approves the district's organizational plan.	May 2002
4.	The superintendent aligns district functions and personnel to reflect the plan.	May 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not have adequate planning documents. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) lacks clear strategies and performance measures for achieving the district's overall mission and vision for student success. It does not have a strategic plan, a document districts use for long-range district goals including facility needs. The district plans and budgets for the current year only, based on needs and requirements identified in the DIP.

The DIP, a planning instrument used mainly for the district's instructional issues features broad goals and limited strategies. It contains the district's mission, vision and philosophy statements; TAAS accountability ratings and summary reports; and a student achievement improvement plan. This plan includes goals addressing student achievement, discipline, parent involvement, attendance and staff development. The strategies for achieving these goals, however, are not well-developed or adequately related to the district's vision. The plan lacks a strong evaluation component and is not linked to the district budget.

The district's lack of long-term planning and budgeting for facilities, school buses, technology and other large expense items along with plans for a changing student population puts the district in a reactive rather than a proactive mode of operation. During the review team's visit in November 2001, a majority of the district personnel interviewed stated that the district's most pressing need is for new facilities. Planning for new facilities had just begun and the district did not provide the review team with specific planning documents addressing all the functional areas of the district's needs.

An effective five-year strategic plan prioritizes a district's goals and specifies courses of action, timelines and required resources and increases the overall effectives of the district planning process. It includes a method for evaluating the district's progress and for making adjustments to the plan as needed. The strategic plan includes all district functions and is tied to the district's budget.

Recommendation 4:

Integrate the district's planning documents into a district strategic plan and link it to the budget.

The district should revise its DIP to include goals that affect the non-instructional functions of the district. A strategic planning team including

board members, the superintendent and the Site-Based Decision-Making committee should develop the SPISD strategic plan using its current DIP as well as the draft technology plan as a base to further develop and expand its district wide planning.

The District and Campus Improvement Plans should be aligned with the budget in order to fund the district's initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The superintendent with the assistance of the district-level SBDM committee expands the DIP into a true strategic plan that addresses all areas of district need.	April - June 2002
2.	The superintendent presents the board with the revised DIP for approval.	June 2002
3.	The board approves the plan.	July 2002
4.	The superintendent implements the plan.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not have Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs). CIPs are designed to address the academic needs of students at each campus. Instead, the district includes goals and strategies for improving academic performance at each of its schools in its District Improvement Plan (DIP). The district's goals are for 95 percent of its secondary students and 90 percent of its elementary students to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) at all grade levels in all subject areas. (The TAKS, the new state-mandated assessment that will replace the TAAS in 2003, is expected to be much more rigorous.)

SPISD's academic improvement strategies for each campus include tutoring, student incentives and teacher training in TAKS objectives. While these strategies are identified in the DIP, the planning document does not include specific plans for how or when the strategies will be implemented. The sole measure for improved academic performance is "TAKS scores improved." A more substantive measure would include timelines and specify how much improvement is expected.

SPISD's average TAAS scores fell by 8.1 percent between 2000 and 2001. This followed a steady improvement in TAAS scores from 1997 to 2000. The district's 2001 passing rate of 79 percent is lower than the state average of 82.1 percent and falls in the middle range when compared to its peer districts.

Exhibit 1-6 shows TAAS performance for third- through fifth-grade students for 2000-01. SPISD's third-grade students led their peers on the reading portion and ranked above Region 1 and state averages in both reading and math. SPISD's fifth-graders scored lowest on the reading portion but did extremely well in math. The fifth grade reading score has varied over the past six years; still, the 2000-01 passing rate of 66.7 percent represented a significant decline from the 1999-2000 passing rate of 100 percent.

Exhibit 1-6
Percentage of Students Passing TAAS
SPISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and State
Grades 3-5
2000-01

District	3rd Grade		4th Grade			5th Grade	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Writing	Reading	Math
San Perlita	100.0%	93.3%	80.0%	93.3%	86.7%	66.7%	100.0%
Benavides	81.3%	87.9%	68.8%	84.4%	74.2%	75.0%	53.6%
Lasara	78.8%	93.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	93.1%	100.0%
Monte Alto	72.7%	84.8%	83.3%	88.1%	86.4%	88.2%	100.0%
Region 1	82.2%	82.1%	86.9%	90.2%	88.9%	87.3%	94.7%
State	86.8%	83.1%	90.8%	91.3%	89.2%	90.2%	94.6%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

SPISD's tenth-grade students scored well below the peer districts, Region 1 and the state on the TAAS writing exam in 2000-01 (**Exhibit 1-7**). The district's tenth-grade passing rate on the writing exam had been above 90 percent since 1996, making the 2000-01 score of 64.3 percent especially troubling.

Exhibit 1-7
Percentage of Students Passing TAAS
SPISD and Peer Districts

Grade 10
2000-01

District	Reading	Math	Writing
San Perlita	**85.7%**	**92.9%**	**64.3%**
Benavides	85.7%	85.7%	85.2%
Lasara	N/A	N/A	N/A
Monte Alto	N/A	N/A	N/A
Region 1	**87.1%**	**88.6%**	**86.2%**
State	**90.0%**	**89.3%**	**89.1%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

The Texas Education Code requires each campus to have a Campus Improvement Plan developed by a Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) committee. San Perlita incorporates its Campus Improvement Plans into the District Improvement Plan and does not have campus-level site-based decision-making committees. While SPISD is a small school district that shares its administrative staff among its campuses, TEA lists it as having separate campuses, and as such, each campus is required by law to develop its own CIP and to have a SBDM. Texas Education Code Section 11.253(c) requires each campus to develop and annually review and revise each respective CIP. SPISD policy BQB (LEGAL) identifies the duties of each campus SBDM committee. SPISD policy BQ (LEGAL) identifies the minimum content requirements for each CIP and requires the principal of each campus to develop, review and update the CIP with the assistance of the campus SBDM committee.

SBDM committees advise and work with school administrators on school planning, goal setting, budgeting, and decision-making. Districts use CIPs to outline the role the school committees play in these activities and translates the goals identified in the District Improvement Plan into campus initiatives.

Recommendation 5:

Establish Site-Based Decision-Making Committees for each campus and develop Campus Improvement Plans.

The district should establish SBDM committees for each of its campuses as described in the Texas Education Code and San Perlita ISD board policy. The principal of each campus should work with the school's

SBDM committee to develop a campus improvement plan to help the campus further the goals of the District Improvement Plan.

The CIPs should include goals, measurable objectives, strategies and timelines for ensuring optimal academic performance by SPISD students at each grade level. Given the drastic decline in TAAS scores in tenth-grade writing, this area should be emphasized at the high school level. The elementary CIP should focus on improving reading scores, especially at the fifth-grade level.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent instructs the principals to establish campus SBDM committees and to develop Campus Improvement Plans.	April 2002
2.	Principals establish SBDMs and develop Campus Improvement Plans addressing the specific academic needs of each campus.	April-August 2002
3.	The principals and SBDMs evaluate and revise the Campus Improvement Plans annually.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

C. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Personnel management is a vital part of school district operations. Effective personnel management includes the recruiting of qualified individuals to serve student needs, classifying employees and administering compensation, providing benefit plan administration, training personnel, providing staff training and conducting performance evaluations. Districts are expected to be compliant with federal and state laws and equal employment opportunity statutes.

Typical tasks of a personnel department include:

- development of wage and salary schedules and administration of salary systems;
- development of and updates to job descriptions;
- development and review of staff allocation formulas and tables;
- recruitment and hiring to fill vacant positions and placement of substitutes;
- maintenance of employee records;
- administration of employee benefits programs;
- development of local board policies regarding personnel issues; and
- preparation of reports to satisfy state reporting requirements.

The superintendent and one secretary manage SPISD's personnel function. While larger school districts assign the personnel function to an assistant superintendent or personnel director, SPISD, which experiences low turnover in personnel, is small enough to rely on the superintendent to serve as its personnel manager. Personnel activities include hiring, background and reference checks, teacher certification, salary determinations and employee terminations. Campus administrators are responsible for staff training and for providing orientation to substitute teachers.

The TEA's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) categorizes school district staff into the following groups: teachers; professional support staff, including therapists, psychologists, counselors, diagnosticians, physicians and nurses, librarians, supervisors, department heads and registrars; campus administration; central administration; educational aides; and auxiliary staff, including secretaries, clerks, and transportation and food service staff.

Exhibit 1-8 compares SPISD with its peer districts on staffing categories as a share of total employment.

Exhibit 1-8
Percentage of Staffing Categories
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Teachers	Professional Support Staff	Campus Administration	Central Administration	Educational Aides	Auxiliary Staff
San Perlita	42.86%	8.93%	5.36%	1.79%	12.50%	28.57%
Benavides	37.01%	6.30%	2.36%	0.79%	17.32%	36.22%
Lasara	36.92%	6.15%	4.62%	1.54%	26.15%	24.62%
Monte Alto	35.63%	6.90%	5.75%	1.15%	22.99%	27.59%
Region 1	42.70%	7.69%	2.50%	0.18%	11.88%	35.06%
State	50.65%	7.94%	3.07%	0.34%	10.28%	27.73%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-9 shows that SPISD's number of teachers with less than five years of experience fell between 1996-97 and 2000-01, while its number of teachers with more than six years of teaching experience increased. The district's number of first-year teachers fell by 25.9 percent and its number of teachers with one to five years of experience dropped by 61 percent since 1996-97, while the number of teachers with more than 20 years of experience rose by 80 percent. In 2000-01, 13.4 of the district's 24 teacher FTEs, or 55.8 percent, had 11 or more years of teaching experience.

Exhibit 1-9
SPISD Teachers Years of Experience
1996-97 through 2000-01

Total Years of Experience	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Beginning Teachers	2.7	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	(25.93%)
1-5 years	10.0	8.7	7.0	5.0	3.9	(61.00%)
6-10 years	4.0	3.8	5.0	5.0	5.0	25.00%

11-20 years	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.0	8.0	0.00%
More than 20 years	3.0	4.0	4.0	5.4	5.4	80.00%

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

Exhibit 1-10 shows the average number of years of teaching experience for teachers at SPISD as compared with the averages for Region 1 and the state.

Exhibit 1-10
Average Years of Teaching Experience
SPISD, Region I and State
1996-97 through 2000-01

Entity	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
San Perlita	**9.0**	**9.9**	**9.4**	**10.7**	**11.4**	**26.67%**
Region 1	10.8	11.0	11.3	11.4	11.6	7.41%
State	11.7	11.8	11.8	11.9	11.9	1.71%

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

SPISD experienced higher rates of teacher turnover in 1997-98 and 1998-99 but remained well under the regional and state averages in other years. Lasara ISD had the lowest teacher turnover rate among the peers. SPISD ranked third (**Exhibit 1-11**).

Exhibit 1-11
SPISD Teacher Turnover Rate
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Average
Lasara	6.5%	14.1%	9.0%	18.4%	4.0%	10.4%
Monte Alto	15.2%	14.3%	3.3%	19.4%	17.5%	13.9%
San Perlita	**4.2%**	**25.3%**	**25.2%**	**11.5%**	**4.1%**	**14.1%**
Benavides	12.8%	20.0%	20.8%	16.6%	12.8%	16.6%
Region 1	**10.7%**	**12.1%**	**12.7%**	**13.4%**	**13.6%**	**12.5%**
State	**12.6%**	**13.3%**	**15.5%**	**15.0%**	**16.0%**	**14.5%**

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

Exhibit 1-12 displays the salary schedule for teachers and librarians for the 2001-02 school year.

Exhibit 1-12
SPISD Salary Scale for Teachers and Librarians
2001-02

Years of Experience	Annual Salary (187 days)	Daily Rate
Beginning	$30,000	$160
1 Year	$30,500	$163
5 Years	$31,250	$162
10 Years	$35,810	$191
15 Years	$40,210	$215
20 Years	$43,110	$230
25 Years	$46,328	$248

Source: SPISD Superintendent's office, 2001-02.

Exhibit 1-13 compares average teacher salary by years of experience for SPISD and its peer districts. San Perlita ISD pays teachers above the peer average in every category of experience except for teachers in the range of 6-10 years of experience.

Exhibit 1-13
SPISD Teacher Average Salaries versus Peer Districts,
Region 1, Peer Average of State
2000-01

District	Beginning	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-20 Years	More Than 20 Years
Benavides	$28,440	$29,364	$35,397	$41,658	$41,139
Lasara	N/A	$29,121	$33,155	$43,670	$52,798
Monte Alto	$29,079	$27,697	$32,695	$39,073	$41,142
Peer Average	$28,760	$28,727	$33,749	$41,467	$45,026
San Perlita	**$30,000**	**$32,474**	**$33,631**	**$42,299**	**$50,707**
Region 1	**$27,381**	**$30,849**	**$35,732**	**$42,957**	**$47,926**

State	$29,824	$31,987	$35,304	$41,755	$48,183

Exhibit 1-14 shows average actual salaries at SPISD from 1996-97 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-14
Average Actual Salaries
1996-97 through 2000-01

Classification	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Increase from 1996-97 to 2001-01
Teachers	$29,402	$30,868	$32,848	$36,514	$39,821	35.44%
Prof. Support	$23,558	$25,035	$29,755	$31,949	$32,515	38.02%
Campus Administrators	$45,355	$42,001	$41,629	$48,500	$51,997	14.64%
Central Administrators	$53,850	$52,212	$62,500	$63,901	$66,316	23.15%

Exhibit 1-15 compares SPISD and the peer districts on average actual salaries for teachers, professional support staff, campus and central administration. SPISD pays above the peer average in every category except for professional support staff. In this category, SPISD pays less than all the peer districts as well as the region and state averages.

Exhibit 1-15
Average Actual Salaries
SPISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and State
2000-01

District	Teachers	Professional Support Staff	Campus Administration	Central Administration
Benavides	$38,526	$38,367	$48,616	$70,000
Lasara	$39,124	$39,062	$51,547	$49,941
Monte Alto	$34,813	$34,840	$44,468	$46,862

Peer Average	$37,488	$37,423	$48,210	$55,601
San Perlita	**$39,821**	**$32,515**	**$51,997**	**$66,316**
Region 1	**$37,974**	**$45,596**	**$57,877**	**$68,439**
State	**$38,361**	**$45,562**	**$58,081**	**$69,916**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 1-16 compares student/teacher ratios from 1996-97 through 2000-01. SPISD has consistently had a lower teacher/student ratio than Region 1 and state averages.

Exhibit 1-16
Ratio of Students to Teachers
SPISD, Peer Districts, Region 1 and State
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Monte Alto	12.1	14.8	14.2	13.6	14.4	19.01%
Benavides	9.9	11.6	12.6	11.5	11.3	14.14%
Lasara	11.7	11.0	12.5	11.6	12.9	10.26%
San Perlita	**10.8**	**10.5**	**11.1**	**12.2**	**11.2**	**3.39%**
Peer Average	11.2	12.5	13.1	12.2	12.9	15.18%
Region I	**15.6**	**15.5**	**15.5**	**15.3**	**15.3**	**(1.92%)**
State	**15.5**	**15.3**	**15.2**	**14.9**	**14.8**	**(4.52%)**

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

FINDING

Principals use classroom "walkthroughs" to assist with teacher development and evaluation. Teachers consistently mentioned these walkthroughs as a helpful evaluation tool. Being in the classrooms on a regular basis and providing teachers with feedback gives the principals an opportunity to build teachers' skills. The secondary principal schedules one walkthrough per day, allowing him to cover the high school and middle school every other week. The district's high school principal makes

sure to conduct formal walkthroughs at least once in a six-week period and up to three times per semester, afterward providing written feedback to the teacher. The elementary principal conducts daily informal walkthroughs and formal walkthroughs at least once a month. The principals provide teachers with positive and constructive feedback.

If principals receive several disciplinary referrals from a teacher or if a parent is concerned about a particular teacher, they make it a point to visit that teacher more often to offer assistance. The principals rely on feedback from teachers, students and parents to gauge the effectiveness of this process. The walk-throughs serve as an ongoing tool for monitoring the effectiveness of classroom management, discipline management and teaching strategies.

COMMENDATION

The principals conduct regular classroom walkthroughs to evaluate and assist teachers.

FINDING

SPISD does not use a staffing allocation formula as a baseline for assigning staff. A staffing allocation formula is developed by a school district as a guide for determining the number of staff positions needed and is typically based on student enrollment.

Student enrollment fell by 11.4 percent from 1996-97 to 2000-02, while staffing increased by 1.3 percent (**Exhibit 1-17**).

Exhibit 1-17
Student Enrollment vs. Staffing
1996-97 through 2001-02

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	Percent Change 1996-97 to 2001-02
Student Enrollment	298	279	289	298	272	264	(11.4%)
Staff	53.3	53.5	52	54.7	55.1	54	1.3%
Student/ Staff Ratio	5.6	5.2	5.5	5.4	4.9	4.9	(12.5%)
Teachers	27.7	26.5	26	24.4	24.3	23	(16.9%)
Student/	10.8	10.5	11.1	12.2	11.2	11.5	6.5%

Teacher Ratio							

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01 and PEIMS 2001-02.

The staff-to-student ratio fell from one employee per 5.6 students to one per 4.9 students between 1996-97 and 2001-02.Over the same time period, the district's enrollment fell by 34 students, but staffing increased by 0.7 positions.

SPISD's number of employees peaked at 55.1 during 2000-01 (**Exhibit 1-18**).

Exhibit 1-18
SPISD Comparison of Staff FTEs and Student Enrollment
1996-97 through 2000-01

Staff Category	Number of FTEs						Number Change	Percent Change
	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02*		
Teachers	27.7	26.5	26.0	24.4	24.3	23.0	(4.7)	(16.97%)
Professional Support	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	0	0.0%
Campus administration	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	100%
Central administration	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	0	0.0%
Educational Aides	7.0	8.0	7.0	6.7	6.7	10.0	3.0	42.9%
Auxiliary Staff	12.6	12.0	12.0	15.6	16.2	13.0	0.4	3.2%
Total	**53.3**	**53.5**	**52.0**	**54.7**	**55.1**	**54.0**	**0.7**	**1.3%**
Total Students	**298**	**279**	**289**	**298**	**272**	**264**	**(34)**	**(11.4%)**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.
*2001-02 numbers are budgeted amounts received from SPISD central office.

The district's number of teachers fell from 27.7 to 23 (4.7 teachers) from 1996-97 to 2001-02, while its number of educational aides rose by three.

While the district has adjusted the size of its teaching staff to mirror the declining student population, it has not similarly adjusted its number of educational aides.The district's educational aides serve several populations of students. District officials told the review team that two of the ten educational aides serve at-risk students and are paid with federal Title 1 funds while the others are compensated from the general fund.

The district does not use staffing formulas for all categories of staff to ensure that its staffing is appropriate in terms of the number of students enrolled in the district.

Recommendation 6:

Implement a staffing allocation formula.

A staffing allocation formula for all staffing categories should reflect differences in enrollment to facilitate efficient staffing. By implementing a staffing formula, the district can eliminate three educational aides. Money saved in staffing would allow the district to allocate more resources directly to the classroom.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent implements a hiring freeze.	Immediately
2.	The superintendent and cabinet develop a staffing allocation formula for considering enrollment in light of the unique needs of each school.	May 2002
3.	The board approves a staffing formula and hires three fewer aides for the 2002-03 school year. The superintendent transfers personnel appropriately.	August 2002
4.	The superintendent uses the staffing allocation formula in the 2002-03 budget process.	November 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This estimate assumes that the district would eliminate three educational aides with annual salaries of $9,048 each. Adding the SPISD employee benefit rate of 7.85 percent plus $2,640 to the annual salary equals $12,398 annual savings per employee.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Implement a staffing allocation formula.	$37,194	$37,194	$37,194	$37,194	$37,194

FINDING

SPISD's job descriptions are outdated and have not been modified to reflect the duties of some positions.

The district subscribes to the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) personnel services. Among other services, TASB offers districts a job description manual that provides model job description. Districts are free to amend these models to meet their own needs.

SPISD's current job descriptions are taken from the TASB job description manual without modification.For example,the job description for bus drivers does not include all of their responsibilities, including part-time driving and facility maintenance. Also, the elementary principal/curriculum/technology coordinator has three different job descriptions none of which accurately reflect his current job duties. Positions lacking current job descriptions include the nurse, Career and Technology teaching positions, the accountant position, the administrative secretary and the GEAR-UP facilitator.

Job descriptions are used to detail a position's duties, supervisor, employment terms and evaluation process. They serve to protect both employees and employers from misunderstandings regarding job performance and evaluation.

A well-written job description documents the essential functions and minimum qualifications needed to perform the job.

Job descriptions are summaries that provide enough information in the right format to be accurate and clear. Comprehensive job descriptions for school districts include the following information:

- Job title
- Role and purpose
- Qualifications
- Major responsibilities
- Essential job functions
- Equipment used on the job
- Working conditions
- Mental and physical demands
- Environmental factors

- Date approved

An analysis of the work performed in a position forms the basis of an effective job description. A quality work analysisalso provides information for a number of managerial uses. It supports the position's classification as exempt or non-exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FSLA); mistakes on this issue can have serious legal consequences.It provides comparative information for determining appropriate pay levels. It reduces the risk of employment-related lawsuits by identifying and clarifying issues related to equal pay, workplace safety, equal employment and overtime eligibility.

Positions should be reviewed at least every three years to limit district liability should the actual work performed by an employee vary from the FLSA classification assigned in his or her job description.

Recommendation 7:

Amend job descriptions to reflect the duties of current positions.

The superintendent and both principals should create a master list of positions and ask all employees to summarize their job duties. The principals then should review the existing job descriptions for accuracy and submit updated versions to the superintendent. To ensure that job descriptions remain current, the superintendent should schedule a review of all job descriptions at least once every three years.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and principals create a master list of positions and ask each employee group to prepare job descriptions.	September 2002
2.	Employees summarize their job duties.	September 2002
3.	The principals review all job descriptions for accuracy.	October 2002
4.	The principals submit detailed job descriptions to the superintendent for review and approval.	October 2002
5.	The superintendent distributes new job descriptions to all employees.	November 2002
6.	The superintendent and principals oversee the updating of job descriptions every three years or as deemed necessary.	November 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

D. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A strong staff training program contributes to high employee morale, improves the quality and quantity of work produced, improves efficiency, increases understanding of and compliance with district policies and procedures, reduces staff turnover and increases job satisfaction. Effective training programs begin with an assessment of staff training needs and conclude with an evaluation of the training provided.

FINDING

The Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1) offers a variety of training to SPISD personnel. The district offers its own training as well. Principals said that teachers are encouraged to keep abreast of new ideas, technology and teaching material by attending Region 1 training. Training orientation for substitutes is handled by the campuses.

Exhibit 1-19 shows some of the Region 1 training attended by SPISD employees since August 2001.

Exhibit 1-19
Staff Training in SPISD
August 2001-October 2001

PEIMS 2001-2002 Finance and Staff
Legal Conference for Educational Leaders
Sharon Wells Mathematics Workshop
Identification and Recruitment Recertification
SDAA Trainer of Trainers
PEIMS 2001-2002 Student Attendance
GEAR-UP Tutor Training
Social Studies Institute
ESL Teachers Mentoring ESL Teachers Conference
Advisory Academy
Middle School Writing Academy
TEKS-based Assessment (TAAS)

Spinal Screening
TIE Grant Training: SEDL Day 3

Source: Region 1, 2001.

COMMENDATION

SPISD encourages its staff to attend training provided by the Region 1 Education Service Center.

Chapter 1
DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

E. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

SPISD's community includes students and parents as well as the area's other taxpayers, businesses and special interest groups. Providing this community with accurate, timely information is an important district function. Effective communication can build trust in and support for the district and its programs.

Effective community involvement programs include strategies for improving communication with the community and within the school district; methods for recruiting volunteers and soliciting business support for campus functions; and outreach activities designed to encourage community participation in the district.

FINDING

SPISD has established relationships with local governments, businesses and civic organizations that have resulted in additional resources for its students. Board members, the superintendent, the counselor and principals each have worked to develop these relationships.

For example, in March 1999, SPISD signed an interlocal agreement with the City of San Perlita for the development of a community park on school property. The city pledged up to $220,000 to build a playground and youth recreation center and to renovate the running track. In addition to providing the land, the district agreed to maintain the playground facilities.

In addition, the Willacy County Sheriff's office provides security at home sports activities and speaks to students on Career Day and during Red Ribbon Week at no cost to the district.

Students also have benefited from scholarships sponsored by local businesses and civic organizations. SPISD's 2001 senior class received more than $12,000 in scholarships from state and local businesses and educational foundations **(Exhibit 1-20)**.

Exhibit 1-20
SPISD Senior Class 2001
Scholarships

Organization	Amount

Ford Salute to Education (Rodriguez Ford)	$2,250
Wackenhut Corrections	$500
Texas State Bank	$500
TSTC - Harlingen National Science Foundation Computer Technology	$3,125
Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show	$500
University of Texas at San Antonio	$2,000
Veterans of Foreign Wars	$300
American Legion	$300
Texas State Teachers Association	$100
Career Colleges & Schools of Texas	$1,000
Willacy County Young Farmers	$1,000
Port Mansfield Chamber of Commerce	$500
Willacy County Hospital District	$500
Total	**$12,575**

Source: SPISD Counseling Department, 2001.

Local businesses also support school and student-sponsored activities. For example, in 2001 SPISD received $1,000 when Wal-Mart matched funds raised from a car wash.

Exhibit 1-21 provides examples of SPISD's community and business partnerships.

Exhibit 1-21
SPISD Community and Business Partnerships
2000-01

Business/Organization	Activity
Wal-Mart	Job Shadowing Day and Car Wash Matching Funds
TSTC	Technology Days
UTPA - Edinburg	Basketball Camp
Rio Grande Valley Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse	Presentations at SPISD on Alcohol & Drug Abuse/Drug Enforcement Agency

City of San Perlita	Constructed Playground & Community Recreation Center
Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission	Project S.A.V.E. presentations
Area Restaurants	Donations for Fall Festival
Willacy County Sheriff's Department	McGruff The Crime Dog, Career Day, Red Ribbon Day
District Judge Filemon Vela	Motivational Speaker
Texas State Bank	Scholarship Funds
Happy the Comedian	Motivational Speaker

Source: SPISD Counseling Department, 2001.

COMMENDATION

SPISD augments its resources by partnering with local governments, civic organizations and businesses.

FINDING

While SPISD has succeeded in attracting community resources for its students, it has been unable to promote parental involvement as effectively. Teachers, administrators and parents said that while the school district has tried many strategies for increasing parent involvement, it has had little success in engaging parents to participate in the classroom and in campus decision-making processes. Several teachers said that parents often fail to attend scheduled parent/teacher conferences.

School administrators stressed that, while parents have not become involved in decision-making activities, they do participate when asked to help with school-sponsored events. For instance, parents donate money and cook and serve food at special activities. Certain events, indeed, seem to enjoy full community participation, such as the Annual San Perlita ISD Festival. The counselor reported that "Happy the Comedian" a well-publized motivational speaker event was a huge success.

SPISD has tried numerous activities for increasing parent engagement including door prizes at PTO meetings, yet it lacks a system for coordinating and evaluating these efforts. As a Title I district funded with federal dollars, SPISD must follow federal regulations requiring the district to establish a comprehensive parental involvement program.

SPISD's District Improvement Plan includes long-range goals for increasing parent involvement. The annual campus performance objective is to have 15 percent of parents involved at the elementary school level and 25 percent involved at the high school level. The DIP does not include specific goals for parental involvement at the middle school, although district staff members told the review team that the same goals listed for the elementary apply to the middle school. **Exhibit 1-22** shows strategies and evaluation methods to achieve these goals.

Exhibit 1-22
SPISD Student Achievement Plan
San Perlita Elementary and San Perlita High School
2001-02

Initiatives/Strategies/Activities	Resources	Person(s) Responsible	Evaluation Method and Criteria
Initiate a Parental Involvement Program (Volunteers)	Chapter I Regular and Migrant	Principal, Teachers, Community, Parents	Ongoing End-of-year analysis
Encourage more community/parents to serve on DEIC or SBDM Committees	Chapter I Regular and Migrant	Principal, Teachers, Community, Parents	Attendance Log
Document phone calls or letters sent home concerning student progress	Chapter I Regular and Migrant	Teachers, Students, Parents	Improved communication
Recruit community volunteers for all school-related activities	Chapter I Regular and Migrant	All SPISD Staff	Document number of volunteers will show an increase in parental involvement

Source: SPISD District Improvement Plan 2001-02.

One small school district that has developed a strong volunteer program is Grape Creek ISD. Grape Creek has an active Volunteer in Public Schools program, particularly in its elementary school. The district had 41 volunteers in 1999-2000 who contributed 343 volunteer hours towards activities such as:

- tutoring individual students;
- helping kindergarten students take computerized tests;
- shelving library books;
- assisting with school picture day;
- running errands for the dental van;
- assisting with vision and hearing screening;
- assisting with the parent teacher association; and
- helping with special projects such as University Interscholastic League-sponsored activities.

The district and its PTA sponsor an awards luncheon each year to honor volunteers. They also hold formal training orientation for new volunteers each fall, using materials from the National Association of Partners in Education, Inc., along with district materials. The districttrains teachers in how to use volunteers effectively in the classroom.

Recommendation 8:

Develop a comprehensive plan for increasing parent involvement that includes strategies for recruitment of parent volunteers and training for teachers.

The district should begin this process by identifying barriers to parental involvement. The annual festival, an event that traditionally draws out the entire San Perlita community could be used as a venue for asking community members how the district could get them more involved in the schools. Based on this feedback, the site-based decision-making committees at each campus should develop strategies for increasing parent involvement based on the campuses' needs. The strategies should be included in the Campus Improvement Plans.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The principals and the SBDM committee develop a plan for obtaining community feedback on barriers to parental involvement.	August 2002
2.	Campus staff members gather community feedback during the fall months to assist the committee in further developing ways of engaging the community.	September - December 2002
3.	The SBDM's use this feedback to develop strategies for increasing parental involvement and include them in the district and Campus Improvement Plans.	January-March 2003
4.	The principals implement and evaluate the plan for effectiveness throughout the year.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD lacks an effective vehicle for keeping district parents informed of district and campus issues and events. The review team noted that the district's Web site is still under construction and does not yet provide news of district occurrences for parents and community members.

While a link to the GEAR-UP information site does lead to a published monthly GEAR-UP newsletter, this newsletter focuses primarily on the needs of its target population, middle school students.

A teacher has volunteered to write articles about district activities and accomplishments for the three local newspapers, the *Valley Morning News*, *Raymondville Chronicle* and *The Post Writer*. In addition, school administrators communicate with parents about general activities primarily through flyers and notes sent home with students. School board meeting notices are posted in the main hallway of the high school, outside the central administration building, and are sent home to parents as well. *Board Brief*s, a summary of school board actions, are disseminated to each campus by central administration.

Elgin ISD publishes a district newsletter and distributes it by posting it on the district Web site and e-mailing it to district staff and the local newspapers. The newspaper then publishes any items it finds significant. The district has been able to accomplish this at no additional cost to the district - it is posted on the Web site by district staff.

Recommendation 9:

Develop a quarterly district newsletter to all SPISD families and place it on the district's Web site.

This newsletter should include district and campus news and events. It could be written by a group of students interested in journalism, under a teacher's guidance, or by a parent volunteer. The newsletter could be used to rally community support for school improvement projects. It should be distributed by posting it on the district Web site, sending a copy home with every student and using parent volunteers (PTO) to distribute it to area businesses, especially those that have supported school district initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent with input from the school counselor and the journalism teacher determine who should be responsible for writing and producing a districtwide newsletter.	August 2002
2.	The person or committee responsible for the newsletter develops a plan and timeline for publishing the newsletter and assigns responsibilities, as appropriate.	September 2002
3.	The newsletter is published and distributed.	October 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

This chapter examines the San Perlita Independent School District's (SPISD's) Educational Service Delivery function in three sections:

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

The primary responsibility of school districts is to educate students. Effective educational service delivery requires adequate resources, appropriate instructional guidance, qualified teachers and an understanding of students' instructional needs.

Districts must develop, evaluate and modify their instructional programs and services based on student performance, as measured by standardized tests and the achievement of learning objectives. Effective schools are characterized by strong leadership, clear goals and objectives, committed teachers and staff, high expectations and a safe and positive learning environment. Teamwork and a common belief in the district's goals help create an atmosphere conducive to student learning.

To meet the needs of all their students, school districts must have effective programs and capable teachers along with adequate resources and a knowledgeable and supportive administration. District planning must be supported by the budget. The district must have a system in place that is accountable for student performance.

BACKGROUND

The following Exhibits compare SPISD's student enrollment trends and levels of teacher education with those of its peer districts, Region 1 and the state. The information was provided by the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) databases.

In 2000-01, SPISD served 272 students. Of these, 20.6 percent were Anglo and 79.4 percent were Hispanic. Economically disadvantaged students made up 83.9 percent of the total student population. **Exhibit 2-1** compares SPISD's demographic characteristics with those of its peer districts, Region 1 and the state.

Exhibit 2-1
Demographics: SPISD vs. Peer Districts,

Region 1 and the State
2000-01

District	Student Enrollment	Anglo	Hispanic	African American	Other	Economically Disadvantaged
Benavides	538	2.2%	97.8%	0%	0%	86.6%
Lasara	310	2.6%	97.4%	0%	0%	88.1%
Monte Alto	451	2.4%	97.6%	0%	0%	86.7%
San Perlita	**272**	**20.6%**	**79.4%**	**0%**	**0%**	**83.1%**
Region 1	**302,528**	**3.8%**	**95.6%**	**0.2%**	**0.4%**	**82.7%**
State	**4,059,619**	**42.0%**	**40.6%**	**14.4%**	**3.0%**	**49.3%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-2 examines enrollment trends from 1996-97 through 2000-01. Texas student enrollment increased by 5.8 percent during this period, but SPISD enrollment fell by 8.7 percent. SPISD's enrollment has fluctuated over the past five years, but the overall trend has been downward. In 1996-97, the district had 298 students; in 2001-02, enrollment had fallen to 264.

Exhibit 2-2
Comparison of Student Enrollment Trends
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
San Perlita	**298**	**279**	**289**	**298**	**272**	**(8.7%)**
Benavides	577	557	529	539	538	6.8%
Lasara	280	270	305	287	310	10.7%
Monte Alto	422	444	439	444	453	7.3%
Region 1	**282,261**	**285,029**	**289,617**	**295,103**	**302,528**	**7.4%**
State	**3,837,096**	**3,900,488**	**3,945,434**	**4,002,227**	**4,059,619**	**5.8%**

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

Exhibit 2-3 compares student enrollment by grade level for the 2000-01 school year.

Exhibit 2-3
2000-01 Enrollment
SPISD vs. Peer Districts

Grade	Number of Students			
	San Perlita	Benavides	Lasara	Monte Alto
Early Education	**0**	*	0	0
Pre-Kindergarten	**16**	31	36	34
Kindergarten	**24**	40	22	40
First	**21**	38	34	51
Second	**22**	40	28	51
Third	**18**	45	39	41
Fourth	**17**	41	25	56
Fifth	**17**	32	35	42
Sixth	**29**	42	29	39
Seventh	**20**	42	25	46
Eighth	**21**	42	37	51
Ninth	**19**	39	0	0
Tenth	**22**	33	0	0
Eleventh	**12**	37	0	0
Twelfth	**14**	35	0	0
Total	**272**	**537**	**310**	**451**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-4 lists the percent of teachers with bachelor, master and doctorate degrees. SPISD ranks first among the peers in its percentage of teachers holding bachelor's degrees (87.6 percent); this level is also higher than the state average of 74.7 percent. All of SPISD's teachers hold degrees.

Exhibit 2-4
San Perlita vs. Peer Districts

Teacher Degrees
2000-01

Teacher Degree	San Perlita	Benavides	Lasara	Monte Alto	State
No Degree	**0.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	**1.3%**
Bachelor	**87.6%**	61.1%	87.5%	85.9%	**74.7%**
Master	**12.4%**	38.9%	12.5%	13.8%	**23.4%**
Doctorate	**0.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	**0.5%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

SPISD issues emergency teaching certificates to individuals qualified to teach particular subject areas who lack teaching certificates. This practice is used across the state to fill the need created by a critical teacher shortage. **Exhibit 2-5** shows that SPISD had three individuals working with emergency certificates and one with a district teaching permit during 2000-01. This was a higher number of non-certified personnel than any of the peers.

Exhibit 2-5
Number of Teacher Permits
SPISD and Peer Districts
2000-01

Certificates	San Perlita	Benavides	Lasara	Monte Alto
Emergency (certified)	**3**	0	0	2
Emergency (uncertified)	**0**	0	0	0
Nonrenewable	**0**	0	0	0
Temporary classroom assignment	**0**	0	0	0
District teaching	**1**	2	0	0
Temporary exemption	**0**	0	0	0

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Instructional delivery directly affects student learning. Effective teachers use different teaching styles to help students with different learning styles. They review and incorporate new teaching materials, ideas, concepts, activities, processes and presentation styles to improve student performance.

In Texas, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is used as a primary measure of instructional effectiveness. TAAS is administered in grades 3-8 and 10. It currently includes a reading and mathematics test in grades 3-8 and 10 and a writing assessment in grades 4, 8 and 10. Science and Social Studies tests are included at grade 8, but are not used in determining accountability ratings. Because five tests are administered in grade 8, this grade usually has the lowest percent of students passing all tests. The Spanish version of TAAS is given in grades 3-6.

TEA is making changes to the TAAS administration schedule, particularly at the high school level. By 2003, TAAS will be administered in grades 9, 10 and 11. Reading and mathematics tests will be added at grade 9. The exit-level examination will be moved to grade 11 and will include science, social studies, English language arts and mathematics. A science test will be added to grade 5.

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) will replace the TAAS in spring 2003 and will be based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), a state-based guide of skills and knowledge students are expected to attain at each grade level. According to the Office of Texas High School Education's *Critical Issues Report #1,* "this TEKS-based program will be more rigorous and comprehensive than the TAAS tests that have been administered since 1994." The TAKS will be expanded to include more grade levels and subject areas. A new exit-level assessment will be given to students in grade 11 and will be expanded from two to four subject areas: mathematics, including Algebra I and Geometry; English language arts, including English III and writing; social studies, including early American and U.S. History; and science, including biology and integrated chemistry and physics. With the addition of science and social studies to the new exit-level test, end-of-course exams will be eliminated after the 2002 spring semester.

TEA assigns annual ratings to each district and school, based on TAAS results, dropout rates and the quality of data submitted to the agency. The

state accountability system includes five ratings for districts: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, Academically Unacceptable and Suspended: Data Inquiry. The rating category Suspended: Data Inquiry is assigned to districts when serious data reporting errors affect one or more of the base indicators used to determine accountability ratings. **Exhibit 2-6** presents a summary of the ratings that can be applied by TEA to schools and districts.

Exhibit 2-6
TEA Accountability Ratings
2000-01

Rating	Applicability/Explanation
Exemplary	District and school
Recognized	District and school
Academically Acceptable	District
Acceptable	School
Academically Unacceptable	District
Low-Performing	School
Alternative Education (AE: Commended, AE: Acceptable, AE: Needs Peer Review, or AE: Not Rated	Schools that applied for and are identified as eligible to be evaluated under alternative education procedures.
Charter School	At the district level, open-enrollment charter schools receive the label Charter School. At the school level, they receive one of the four school ratings listed above, based on the regular accountability system. First-year charter schools are not rated.
Not rated	These schools include those that do not serve students within the grade 1 to grade 12 span, such as pre-kindergarten centers and early education through kindergarten schools.
Academically Unacceptable: Special	Special Accreditation Investigations may be conducted when excessive numbers of absences or exemptions of students eligible to be tested on state assessment instruments

Accreditation Investigation	are found; in response to complaints related to alleged violations of civil rights or other legal requirements; in response to compliance reviews of financial accounting practices and state and federal program requirements; when extraordinary numbers of students are placed in alternative education programs; and in response to allegations involving conflict among members of the board of trustees or between the board and the district administration.
Suspended: Data Inquiry	These districts and campuses have their ratings suspended due to serious errors in the reporting of PEIMS data that affect one or more of the base indicators used for assigning accountability ratings. The errors must be of such magnitude that the results are deemed to be unsuitable for ratings purposes.

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

To receive an Exemplary rating, at least 90 percent of all students, as well as 90 percent of African American, Hispanic, Anglo and economically disadvantaged students when considered as separate groups, must pass the TAAS reading, writing and mathematics tests.

To achieve a Recognized rating, 80 percent of all students and each student group must pass the same TAAS reading, writing and mathematics tests.

In 2000-01, to be rated Academically Acceptable, 50 percent of each student group must pass TAAS. Beginning in 2000-01, scores for students with disabilities and results from the TAAS Spanish version of reading and mathematics in grades three through six were included in the accountability calculations.

SPISD's district accountability rating declined from Exemplary in 1996-97 to Academically Acceptable in 2000-01 (**Exhibit 2-7**).

Exhibit 2-7
Accountability Ratings
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
San Perlita	**Exemplary**	**Recognized**	**Recognized**	**Recognized**	**Academically Acceptable**

Benavides	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable	Academically Acceptable
Lasara	Academically Acceptable	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized
Monte Alto	Academically Acceptable	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized	Recognized

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

SPISD's sixth, seventh and eighth graders scored higher than Region 1 and state averages in every category except seventh grade reading (**Exhibit 2-8**).

Exhibit 2-8
Percentage of Students Passing TAAS
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
Grades 6-8
2000-01

	6th Grade		7th Grade		8th Grade				
District	**Reading**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Math**	**Writing**	**Science**	**Social Studies**
San Perlita	**90.0%**	**95.0%**	**85.7%**	**92.9%**	**100.0%**	**92.9%**	**86.7%**	**100.0%**	**92.3%**
Benavides	68.8%	62.5%	86.8%	81.6%	84.6%	74.4%	89.7%	84.2%	42.1%
Lasara	70.4%	92.6%	76.2%	100.0%	96.9%	97.0%	90.1%	93.8%	78.1%
Monte Alto	90.0%	97.1%	88.9%	97.1%	95.5%	100.0%	90.7%	95.5%	70.5%
Region 1	**78.6%**	**88.7%**	**84.2%**	**87.3%**	**88.2%**	**89.9%**	**82.1%**	**87.5%**	**66.6%**
State	**85.6%**	**91.4%**	**89.4%**	**89.6%**	**91.9%**	**92.4%**	**85.8%**	**91.8%**	**77.0%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-9 comparesSan Perlita ISD's TAAS scores, all tests taken, with those of its peer districts, Region 1 and state averages.

Exhibit 2-9
Percent of Students Passing TAAS, All Tests Taken (Grades 3-8, & 10)
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
San Perlita	**67.2%**	**78.6%**	**83.8%**	**86.0%**	**79.0%**
Benavides	67.4%	64.7%	61.9%	66.1%	68.6%
Lasara	67.5%	81.8%	76.1%	71.3%	83.4%
Monte Alto	68.4%	75.6%	82.9%	84.6%	82.7%
Region 1	**66.5%**	**66.5%**	**73.9%**	**74.6%**	**77.9%**
State	**73.2%**	**77.7%**	**78.1%**	**79.9%**	**82.1%**

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

In 2000-01, TEA stopped using attendance rates in its accountability system. **Exhibit 2-10** presents attendance rates for all SPISD schools for 1999-2000. The attendance rate for the district, 97.3 percent was above the state average of 95.6 percent.

Exhibit 2-10
Attendance Rates by School
1999-2000

School	Grade Levels	Attendance Rate
San Perlita Elementary	Pk-5	97.9%
San Perlita Middle School	6-8	98.4%
San Perlita High School	9-12	95.9%
Region 1	**EE-12**	**95.9%**
State	**EE-12**	**95.6%**
San Perlita ISD	**EE-12**	**97.3%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1999-2000.

Annual dropout rates for SPISD and peer districts are shown in **Exhibit 2-11**.SPISD's dropout rates for 1995-96 through 1997-98 were lower than both the Region 1 and state averages. In 1998-99, SPISD ranked first among its peer districts for dropouts with 0.7 percent, but the district remained far below Region 1 and state averages for dropout rates in every year.

Exhibit 2-11
Annual Dropout Rates

SPSD vs. Peer Districts
1995-96 through 1999-2000

District	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Benavides	1.6%	2.1%	3.1%	0.4%	1.7%
San Perlita	**0.0%**	**0.6%**	**0.0%**	**0.7%**	**0.0%**
Lasara	0.0%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Monte Alto	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Region 1	**2.1%**	**1.6%**	**1.8%**	**1.7%**	**1.7%**
State	**1.8%**	**1.6%**	**1.6%**	**1.6%**	**1.3%**

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

Exhibit 2-12 shows retention rates, the numbers of students who failed to be promoted, by grade level for SPISD, its peer districts and the state average. SPISD experienced high retention rates for students in sixth (21.1 percent) and seventh grade (10.5 percent) in 2000-2001. The district had a total student enrollment of 272 in 2000-01, including 29 sixth-graders and 20 seventh-graders. SPISD's retention rates for the middle school years are significantly higher than its peers and the state averages, although it should be noted that low enrollment can make one or two students retained in each grade level represent considerably higher percentages than in larger districts.

Exhibit 2-12
Retention Rates by Grade Level
SPISD vs. Peer Districts and State Average
2000-01

Grade Level	San Perlita	Benavides	Lasara	Monte Alto	State Averages
1	**5.3%**	3.1%	14.8%	8.3%	5.8%
2	**0.0%**	2.8%	5.7%	2.7%	3.1%
3	**0.0%**	2.9%	8.0%	4.2%	2.2%
4	**0.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	1.3%
5	**0.0%**	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	0.8%
6	**21.1%**	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
7	**10.5%**	0.0%	2.8%	6.4%	2.8%

| 8 | **0.0%** | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 1.9% |

Source: TEA, AEIS 2000-2001.

FINDING

SPISD participates in GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), a federally funded initiative designed to help prepare low-income students for post-secondary education. The GEAR UP program follows a group of students for four years beginning in middle school. SPISD is in its second year of participation in the program and the students being served through this initiative are in the eighth grade. The SPISD GEAR UP grant allows the district to employ one facilitator who coordinates program services, including mentoring, tutoring, academic counseling and outreach to families.

The GEAR UP facilitator monitors students' grades to make sure that she is aware of their academic needs. She provides each of 24 student participants with 30 minutes of individual academic counseling per month. Students who are failing a course atmid-six weeks are referred to an after-school tutoring program. During these hour-long tutoring sessions, students complete school assignments and work on TAAS objectives. SPISD has opened this tutoring program to students in the seventh grade even though they are not GEAR UP participants.

GEAR UP includes the following services:

- *Advisory curriculum*: students learn study skills;
- *Career Interest Inventory*: students familiarize themselves with potential careers;
- *Student planners*: students use planners to organize homework, tests and school schedules;
- *Video conferencing equipment*: students communicate with GEAR UP students, parents and educators from other schools;
- *GEAR UP Web page*: students can use it to gather information on colleges and universities;
- *Parent communication*: the programprovidesparents with information on higher education; and
- *Field trips*: students and parents visit local colleges and universities.

SPISD, along with 14 other school districts in the area, received the federal GEAR UP grant through Region 1, which continues to help the districts with the program.

COMMENDATION

SPISD has taken advantage of a federally funded initiative to encourage and prepare students for college.

FINDING

Since 1998-99, SPISD has retained a large percent of its students in the first and sixth grades. Sixth-grade retentions rose from 5.9 percent in 1999-2000 to 21.1 percent in 2000-01-a rate 20 times higher than the state average.

Exhibit 2-13 shows San Perlita's retention rates by grade for the last five years.

Exhibit 2-13
Annual Retention Rates by Grade
SPISD
1996-97 through 2000-01

Grade Level	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
1	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	10.0%	5.3%
2	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
4	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	5.9%	21.1%
7	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.5%
8	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-2001.

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

In 1994, a report by the TEA Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education, *First Impressions*, urged Texas educators "to eliminate the practice of retention." In 1992, about 10 percent of first graders were retained. By 1999, that percentage had dropped to 5.4 percent.

Some Texas schools promote students who are not academically prepared. While many educators agree retaining students can produce negative long-term consequences, "social promotions" for students who cannot master their schoolwork also can produce long-term negative effects.

The passage of the 1999 social promotion law (Texas Education Code §28.0211) requires educators to establish strong accelerated programs for students who have been retained. Most children who cannot read by the third grade have a difficult time catching up to their peers. TEA's Early Childhood Task Force recommends that schools identify student needs early in the school year. The task force also recommends that schools use portfolios and checklists to show students' academic progress over time. Multiple assessments can ensure students are identified early in their schooling and provided with the necessary resources to succeed in later years.

In 1993, the 73rd Legislature allowed districts to establish extended-year programs. Many of these programs serve students in grades K-8 who would otherwise be retained. Travis Heights Elementary in Austin ISD and Roquemore Elementary in Arlington are two schools that offer extended-year instruction. Travis Heights Elementary also uses a heterogeneous, mixed-age classroom arrangement. The Childhood Task Force found that both these strategies could make "retentions" unnecessary.

At present, SPISD's District Improvement Plan does not address the special instructional needs of retained students and the district has no Campus Improvement Plans to address the needs of students at each campus.

Recommendation 10:

Include instructional strategies in the District and Campus Improvement Plans that specifically address the needs of students who have been retained.

These strategies should consider both the short- and long-term effects of retention and should include an accountability component providing for periodic assessment of student progress. The strategies should consider the reasons for SPISD's high retentions rate in some grades. Specific

instructional strategies for students who have been retained will provide teachers a resource for targeting their instruction.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Curriculum/Technology instructs the district-level SBMD committee to develop strategies for addressing retention during its annual review and updates the district improvement plan.	April 2002
2.	Principals ensure that these strategies are incorporated into the campus improvement plans as they are developed.	August 2002
3.	The principals and campus-level SBDMs committees evaluate and revise strategies as appropriate.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

B. SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The Texas Education Code requires school districts to identify students with special needs and offer them a differentiated curriculum. Bilingual, gifted and talented and special education programs each are designed to meet the needs of students who are not served well in regular education. The career and technology program and vocational classes introduce students to job skills required to gain employment.

Exhibit 2-14 compares the share of students identified as needing special education, bilingual education/ESL and gifted and talented services. It also shows the percent of students enrolled in career and technology programs.

Exhibit 2-14
Student Enrollment by Program
Percent of Total Enrollment
2000-01

District	Special Education	Bilingual/ ESL	Career/ Technology	Gifted/ Talented
San Perlita	**13.2%**	**21.0%**	**21.7%**	**11.4%**
Benavides	8.9%	8.7%	17.5%	7.1%
Lasara	7.7%	30.6%	0.00%	4.8%
Monte Alto	8.4%	36.6%	0.00%	10.6%
Region 1	**10.3%**	**35.4%**	**18.3%**	**8.8%**
State	**11.9%**	**12.6%**	**18.9%**	**8.4%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-15 compares expenditures on special education, bilingual/ESL, career and technology and gifted and talented services.

Exhibit 2-15
Percent of Expenditures by Program
2000-01

District	Special Education	Bilingual/ ESL	Career/ Technology	Gifted/ Talented

San Perlita	**11.4%**	**1.7%**	**6.4%**	**0.6%**
Benavides	9.3%	1.9%	5.2%	0.1%
Lasara	5.5%	2.5%	0.00%	0.6%
Monte Alto	5.2%	3.5%	0.00%	0.5%
Region 1				
State	**12.6%**	**4.3%**	**4.1%**	**1.8%**

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

Bilingual Education/English As A Second Language (ESL)

Texas Education Code Chapter 29 requires that school districts with an enrollment of at least 20 limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in the same grade offer a bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) program. LEP students are those whose primary language is other than English and who lack the English-language skills to succeed in the regular academic environment.

The law specifies that bilingual education must be provided in the pre-kindergarten through the elementary grades and that bilingual education, instruction in ESL, or other transitional language instruction approved by TEA must be provided in post-elementary grades through grade 8. For students in grades 9 through 12, only ESL instruction is required.

Bilingual education uses both the student's native language and English for instructional purposes. The amount of instruction in each language is commensurate with students' proficiency in both languages and their level of academic achievement. Content-area instruction, such as math, science, and social studies, is provided in both languages. Students in K-2 receive most instruction in their native language, with a designated time for ESL instruction. As a general rule, transition into English instruction takes place in the third grade.

ESL instruction is designed to develop proficiency in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composition of both oral and written English. Depending on the student's language ability levels, the amount of time allotted to English-language instruction may vary from total immersion to instruction in the regular program in elementary, and from one to two periods in grades 6-12. Parents may waive Bilingual/ESL instruction. Students on waived status receive no modifications and must take the TAAS test in the year in which they enroll.

SPISD administers an oral language proficiency test to students who have a language other than English stated on the home language survey. Students in Pre-K through 12 are tested in their home language. If their home language is Spanish, the test is administered in Spanish. If their home language is other than Spanish, SPISD tests students using an informal oral language assessment.

After students are tested, the district's Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) reviews their scores and determines if students need LEPservices.The board appoints the LPAC committee every year.After students are classified as LEP, the LPAC requests approval from their parents to place them in the ESL program. (Parents must grant permission before a student can be provided with LEP services.) SPISD does not provide bilingual classes because it does not have the number of students at any grade level needed to support a bilingual teacher.

FINDING

SPISD's teachers do not believe the district's English as a Second Language program is effective. ESL students are placed in a pullout ESL program or taught in regular education classes with modifications. The elementary school offers a 50-minute daily pullout program for students who need this service. The middle school and high schools offer an ESL class to help students with Language Arts.

While only 22 percent of the district's parents responded to the TSPR survey with dissatisfaction in the ESL program, 64.3 of the teachers rated the district's ESL program as ineffective. **Exhibit 2-16** shows the survey results regarding the ESL program.

Exhibit 2-16
Survey Results
Effectiveness of the ESL Program

Survey Statement: The district has an effective English as a Second Language program.	Agree/ Strongly Agree	No Opinion	Disagree/ Strongly Agree
Teachers	28.6%	7.1%	64.3%
District Administrators and Campus Support Staff	46.7%	20%	33.3%
Parents	36.5%	41.5%	22.0%

Source: TSPR survey results, November 2001.

Region 1 provides several programs to help school districts strengthen bilingual/ESL programs. One such project is the Comprehensive Title VII project being implemented in Roma ISD, Hidalgo ISD and Weslaco ISD. The program trains teachers to use ESL methodologies and Spanish instruction in all subject areas to teach LEP and non-LEP students alike. This is intended to enhance the English and Spanish language proficiency of students, by providing training, technical assistance and follow-up services to teachers, teacher-aides and parents. Region 1 also offers the Bilingual/ESL consortium, which provides ongoing staff development.

Recommendation 11:

Strengthen English as a Second Language services by using technical assistance offered through Region 1.

The district should contact the director of bilingual/ESL services at Region 1 for help with developing and implementing a solid ESL program. Region 1 staff will visit the district and provide ongoing technical assistance and training as SPISD develops a program for providing more effective ESL services.

Region 1 can also help the district identify and apply for grants to strengthen bilingual/ESL services.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Curriculum contacts Region 1 for information regarding technical assistance in the area of ESL instruction.	April 2002
2.	SPISD's director of Curriculum meets with Region 1 staff and develops a plan for improving ESL services.	May 2002
3.	SPISD ESL staff works with Region 1 in implementing the planned changes for delivery of ESL services.		August 2002-December 2002
4.	The director of Curriculum monitors program effectiveness and seeks help from Region 1 as needed.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented using existing resources.

Gifted and Talented

Texas law requires all school districts to identify and provide services to students identified as gifted and talented (G/T). In 1990, the State Board of

Education (SBOE) adopted the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*, a guide intended to help school districts meet the state's requirements. In 1996, SBOE updated the plan to incorporate the Texas Education Code Section 29.123 requirements. The updated plan attempts to ensure program accountability for state-mandated G/T services. The goal of effective Gifted/Talented programs is to keep these high-ability students engaged in the process of schooling.

FINDING

SPISD's percentage of students identified as gifted and talented is above the state and Region 1 averages. In 2001-02, SPISD identified 11.4 percent of its students as G/T, compared to 8.4 percent for the state and 8.8 percent for Region 1. The identification process occurs during the spring semester of every year. Staff members, parents or other students nominate students. At the high school level, students may self-nominate. The district posts a public notice in the spring regarding nominations for the Gifted/Talented program. After the nominations have been received, the counselor proceeds to request parent permission for testing. The Identification Committee screens the students who have been nominated. The committee reviews grades, assessments; parent questionnaires and achievement test scores and determines whether the student qualifies for G/T services.

COMMENDATION

SPISD has a strong gifted and talented student identification process.

FINDING

While the district does an excellent job of identifying gifted and talented students, it lacks a strong program for serving its G/T students. **Exhibit 2-17** provides survey results regarding the district's effectiveness in the gifted and talented program. Teacher and administrator/support staff surveys showed that more than 33 percent disagreed that the district's G/T program is effective. **Exhibit 2-17** indicates survey results on the effectiveness of the G/T program.

Exhibit 2-17
Survey Results
Effectiveness of the Gifted and Talented Program

Survey Statement:	Agree/	No	Disagree/

The district has effective special programs for the Honors/Gifted and Talented Education students.	Strongly Agree	Opinion	Strongly Agree
Teachers	49.9%	7.1%	42.8%
District Administrators and Campus Support Staff	46.7%	20%	33.4%
Parents	61.0%	9.8%	29.3%
Students	34.4%	41.4%	27.6%

Source: TSPR survey results, November 2001.

The 31 students identified as gifted and talented in 2000-01 were served primarily in the regular classroom. The principals said that all SPISD teachers are trained in gifted and talented instruction and that they modify their curricula to meet these students' needs. Students at the middle school have a daily class in which they work on special projects in addition to the work they get in the regular classroom.

Districts across the state have successfully implemented the recommendations in the state plan for gifted and talented education, and have used creative, innovative programs that have been allocated the necessary staff to implement the plan.

Recommendation 12:

Develop goals, objectives and strategies for improving the gifted and talented program.

The district should use the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* as a guide in improving its G/T program. This could be done in various ways. One alternative would be for the district to develop relationships with neighboring school districts to create an Advanced Academic Cooperative allowing member districts to share teachers, curricula and resources. The district could seek help from Region 1 in this effort.

In addition, to begin strengthening its program, the district should appoint a committee to develop goals, objectives, strategies and evaluation techniques to be incorporated in the district and campus improvement plans. These would serve as a guide for building and evaluating the program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent creates an Advanced Academics advisory committee composed of a teacher from each school and a community representative.	April 2002
2.	The Advanced Academics advisory committee conducts a needs assessment of the gifted and talented program.	April - May 2002
3.	The committee determines the extent to which each school in the district is implementing the recommendations in the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students.*	April - May 2002
4.	The Advanced Academics committee develops a three- to five-year plan for achieving exemplary status as outlined in the state plan and secures staff and board approval.	June 2002
5.	The director of Curriculum incorporates the plan into the district and campus improvement plans.	June 2002
6.	The committee evaluates the plan.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD has a state-of-the-art distance learning lab that goes unused. The distance learning lab instead houses students in the disciplinary Alternative Education Placement program and the On Campus Suspension program (OCS).

In Fall 2001, the district attempted to offer higher-level, college credit courses in partnership with Texas State Technical College (TSTC) through the district's distance learning lab but the plans fell through due to lack of student interest. Three senior class students who had initially shown an interest in these classes chose to stay with their peers in the regular classroom just before the 2001-02 school year began. The district has an articulation agreement with TSTC that allows students to take college-credit courses through the distance learning lab tuition-free.

The distance learning lab was developed in 1995-96 with funds provided through the Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant. The grant was written with the assistance of the Valley Telephone Cooperative Inc. The distance learning lab was intended to enable neighboring school districts to expand the course offerings available at each school, however, district staff said that teachers in the other school districts (Raymondville, San Isidro and Mirando City) were unable to coordinate their teaching

schedules in order to make the distance learning lab work as initially envisioned.

In addition, TSPR's parent, student and teacher surveys indicated that the respondents feel the district's offering of advanced courses is weak. The percentage of SPISD high school students completing advanced courses such as chemistry, physics, advanced foreign languages and computer science is only 10.6 percent, well below the state average of 17.5 percent.

Districts fortunate enough to have a distance leaning lab, offer dual high/school college credit courses to students at their home campus. This means that a high school student can access a college-credit course and not have to travel to that college or university to attend classes. All instruction can be accessed in the convenience of their home campus' distance learning lab and still obtain college credit after meeting all course requirements.

Recommendation 13:

Use the distance learning lab to offer advanced courses.

To help ensure adequate student interest and participation in the distance learning lab, teachers and the high school counselor should begin promoting the benefits of taking dual high school/college credit courses. One way the district can help motivate students to take college-credit classes is by inviting recent San Perlita ISD graduates now in college, to speak with the secondary students about the importance of a solid academic background and accessing as many advanced courses as possible.

The district should also reopen dialogue with neighboring districts to promote the use of the learning lab for students needing to access advantaged classes.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The secondary principal and school counselor seek input from teachers and students to identify the core academic areas in most need of advanced level curricula and begin promoting classes to be offered to seniors through the distance learning lab.	April 2002
2.	The secondary principal and school counselor develop strategies to motivate students and other school district staff to promote the use of the distance learning lab.	May 2002
3.	The secondary principal submits the strategies to the superintendent for approval.	June 2002

4.	The superintendent approves the strategies.	June 2002
5.	The secondary principal implements the strategies and pre-registers senior students for dual high/college credit classes through the distance learning lab.	August 2002
6.	The secondary principal and counselor monitor student progress in the programs and make adjustments as necessary.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented using existing resources.

Career and Technology Education (CATE)

Career and technology education (CATE) programsare designed toprepare students for the workplace. Section 29.181 of the Texas Education Code requires school districts to provide a curriculum that affords each student the opportunity to "master the basic skills and knowledge necessary for managing the dual roles of family member and wage earner; gaining entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job or continuing the student's education at the post-secondary level."

The Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 74, Subchapter A requires school districts to offer career technology education courses in at least three of eight areas: agricultural science and technology, business, health science technology, home economics, technology/industrial technology, marketing, trade and industrial and career orientation.

FINDING

The CATE program is not preparing students for careers in computer and technology. The course offerings in this area are limited to keyboarding and word processing applications. The program emphasizes agricultural science and includes a few business courses serving approximately 85 students.

SPISD's high school students each have a computer with Internet access in their homes. The district is able to offer this resource through a USDA grant. While students have ample access to computers, the district lacks the classes to build expertise in computer technology. Students would benefit from classes such as Web site design, desktop publishing, computer programming and repair and database design and management.

Exhibit 2-18 lists SPISD's course offerings.

Exhibit 2-18
SPISD Career and Technology Program Offerings by Career Clusters
2001-02

Business Education
Course Offerings Keyboarding Word Processing Applications Accounting Advanced Accounting Business Education Administrative Procedures
Agriculture
Course Offerings Agricultural Science-Introduction to World Ag Agricultural Science-Applied Ag Science & Tech Agricultural Science-Intro to Ag Mechanics Agricultural Science-Home Maintenance & Improvement Agricultural Science-Animal & Plant Production Agricultural Science-Equine Science Agricultural Science-Horticultural Plant Production Agricultural Science- Animal Science Agricultural Science -Wildlife & Recreation Mgmt

Source SPISD Student Handbook, 2001-02.

Santa Gertrudis ISD, a small school district with less than 300 students, has developed a strong instructional technology program. High school students can enroll in a four-year career/technology program that begins with basic computer application and graphic skills and culminates with experience in business management and entrepreneurship. As seniors, students work in the production, marketing, sales and service of computers.

Effective CATE programs maximize school resources and coordinate their course offerings with area colleges and businesses to optimize their training and employment opportunities.

Recommendation 14:

Expand the CATE program to include computer and technology courses that will prepare students for careers or continued education.

The director of Curriculum/Technology explores opportunities to expand the CATE program to include new computer classes. The district should seek aid from Region 1 for staff development in teaching computer technology courses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The director of Curriculum/Technology with the assistance of technology teachers develops computer and technology courses to be included in the CATE program.	August 2002
2.	The director of Curriculum/Technology contacts Region 1 for staff development opportunities in computer training.	September 2002
3.	The director of Curriculum/Technology submits recommendations to the superintendent and board for approval to use Region 1 for training.	October 2002
4.	The superintendent and board approve the training.	October 2002
5.	The secondary principal implements the training.	November 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented using existing resources.

Library Program

The 1995 Legislature rewrote all of the state's public education laws, returning a great deal of authority to local school districts. Legislation affecting school libraries was changed to read as follows:

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, in consultation with the State Board of Education, shall adopt standards for school library services. A school district shall consider the standards in developing, implementing of expanding library services. (Texas Education Code 33.021).

Texas School Libraries, a study prepared for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in 2001 found that 10 percent more students at schools with librarians met the minimum TAAS requirements in reading than in schools without librarians. While socio-economic variables account for the greatest difference in TAAS reading scores across the state, the variance associated with the presence of a librarian on campus is significant. At the high school level, the library variable accounted for 8.2 percent of the variance in TAAS reading scores. In general, library

variables were more predictive of TAAS reading scores than the number of school computers per student, teacher experience and teacher turnover.

FINDING

While the library has excellent computer equipment and offers access to the Internet, it has an inadequate book collection and does not meet state-recommended standards. In addition, the district does not have a certified librarian. Local district policy EFB states that the district shall provide and maintain a library media program as an integral part of the district's instructional resources.

The district's library located in the high school facility, serves 264 students in grades pre-K through 12, in 2001-02. It is staffed by a library aide who is working to complete a bachelor's degree and has 8.5 years of experience in public libraries. In interviews with the library aide, he stated that his primary goal for this school year was to have the library system fully automated by December 2001. Once the system was automated, he would be able to better assess the library's needs and begin updating its collection.

At the time of TSPR's review, the district had no inventory of its book collection, which the librarian estimated at about 7,000 outdated books. Of these, the library aide estimated 5,000 to be elementary level. In addition, the library's research resources formiddle and high school students are grossly inadequate.Each classroom visits the library once a week but, due to its limited collection, students spend more time in the library being tested or working on computers than on reading. The library aide said one of his goals is to get the students to enjoy reading but that this is difficult to accomplish given the poor selection of reading material.

The district's student achievement improvement plan found in the DIP lists the library as a resource for improving high school student performance. The strategy is to encourage high school students to participate in the Accelerated Reader Program; however, there is little to entice high school readers in the Accelerated Reader book collection. The library aide stated he has had difficulty in getting students to select books from the secondary accelerated reader collection.

SPISD students also do not have a community library to supplement the district collection. The closest public library is in Raymondville, about nine miles from San Perlita.

In May 1997, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission adopted a series of recommended standards published as *School Library Program Standards: Guidelines and Standards*.

The goal of the school library program outlined in the *Guidelines and Standards* is to ensure that students and staff alike become effective users of ideas and information and literate, life-long learners. To accomplish this task, the library program should provide instruction in research and the evaluation of resources, individual guidance and access to materials in multiple formats. To assist districts, the guidelines offer criteria that identify library programs as exemplary, recognized, acceptable or below standard in the areas of the library learning environment, curriculum integration, resources, library program management and facilities.

Many small districts explore various ways such as grant funding to access needed funds for improving their library programs. The American Association of School Libraries (ALA) offers internet resource guides on collection development and grant sources. The ALA Web site is www.ala.org. Another Web site that compiles a list of federal, state and foundation grants targeted for schools is www.schoolgrants.org. This site allows the user to search by area of interest, type of grant or area. The Texas Library Connection, a free service from TEA provides online resources equivalent to $32,000 of printed materials.

Other districts increase the services they provide students through partnerships with governments, community agencies or other school districts. SPISD already shares a Spanish teacher with Lyford ISD and has partnered with the City of San Perlita for playground facilities.

Recommendation 15:

Update and expand the library's book collection to meet state recommended "acceptable" standards.

The district should bring the district library up to "acceptable" standards as defined in the *School Library Program Standards: Guidelines and Standards,* by first focusing on upgrading its library book collection. The district should explore funding opportunities by applying for grants to assist them in the needed library upgrades and should match 50 percent of those funds. The district contracts for its grant writing function.

In addition the district should consider forming a partnership with the city that might result in transforming the San Perlita ISD library into a community library. The city could be responsible for hiring a certified librarian and additional staff, while the district would provide the facilities and material resources.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent instructs the district's library aide to identify	April

	grant opportunities to begin upgrading the library's book collection.	2002
2.	The superintendent seeks approval from the board to contract with the grant writer.	May 2002
3.	The board approves the grant writer.	May 2002
4.	The grant writer is contracted with and begins to write grants.	August 2002
5.	The superintendent seeks approval from the board to match 50 percent of grant monies obtained for library upgrades.	January 2003
6.	The superintendent explores forming partnerships with the City of San Perlita to consider making the school library a community library, sharing expenses.	June 2003
7.	The board approves the 50 percent funding match.	June 2003
8.	The library aide purchases 500 new books.	July 2003

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation assumes that the district would match 50 percent of the costs of upgrading the library's book collection. The district would use the first year, 2002-03, to identify and apply for grants.

To purchase 500 new books at $18 per copy will cost a total of $9,000 (500 books x $18 = $9,000). Half of these funds ($4,500) are assumed will come from grants and half from district funds.

The district would pay the contract grant writer $275 a day x 2.5 days or approximately $700 per grant. Costs are estimated with the assumption that the grant writer would be contracted to write five grants the initial year. In the first year, the grant writer would be paid from general funds. In subsequent years the grant funds should be able to pay for the cost of the grant writer.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
The district contracts for a grant writer.	($3,500)				
Update and expand the book collection to meet state recommended "acceptable" standards.	$0	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)

Net Savings (Costs)	($3,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)	($4,500)

Health and Wellness Services

FINDING

Despite its limited resources, SPISD offers comprehensive health services to its students. SPISD employs one licensed vocational nurse to serve 264 students in the district for 2001-02. The nurse maintains health and student immunization records, stores medical release forms in case of a medical emergency and dispenses medication in accordance with proper policies and procedures. All health records are locked in a drawer to protect students' identities. The nurse also provides vision, hearing and spinal screening once a year.

The nurse also conducts home visits when students have been absent for more than two consecutive days. On November 28, 2001, San Perlita ISD offered free dental screening to all students with cooperation from Su Clinica, a local community clinic. Permission forms were sent to parents in English and Spanish and returned by November 16, 2001. The screening made parents aware of any potential dental problems.

COMMENDATION

The nurse provides outstanding health services to students.

Special Education

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires districts to provide free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities regardless of the severity of their disability. The law requires, moreover, that this education be provided in the "least restrictive environment." Students with disabilities must be included in state and district assessment programs. IDEA also requires school districts to develop an individualized education program (IEP) for each child receiving special education services. The IEP is expected to include input from regular education teachers and to be coordinated with the education plans for students in regular education.

IDEA recommends that the following practices be implemented to effectively serve students with disabilities:

1. *Pre-referral intervention in regular education*. When a student experiences an academic problem in the regular education program, intervention should occur. If steps taken by the regular

education teacher do not support satisfactory results, the problem(s) should be referred to special education staff.

2. *Referral to special education for evaluation*. Referring a student to special education means writing an official request with supported documentation. The referral information must include an explanation of steps that have been taken in regular education to solve the problem prior to referral.

3. *Comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation*. Once a student has been referred to special education, the district must provide a comprehensive nondiscriminatory evaluation or assessment within a prescribed amount of time.

4. *Initial placement through an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee*. After the assessment is complete, a meeting is held to discuss the results and determine if the student qualifies for special educational services in one of 13 categories. If the student qualifies, an IEP plan is written for the student's education.

5. *Provision of educational services and supports according to a written Individualized Education Program (IEP)*. The ARD committee develops an IEP, which includes information regarding the classes, subject areas, development areas, and life skills courses in which the student will be instructed. The IEP also includes information regarding the amount time the student will spend in regular education as well as related needs like counseling, guidance, or speech therapy.

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

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

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

SPISD's Special Education program has a pre-referral intervention process in place. Students who have difficulty learning in the classroom are referred to an Instructional Intervention Team composed of the district's principals, the counselor, nurse, classroom teacher and a parent. The team reviews the referral packets and develops plans to attempt to resolve concerns in the regular classroom setting. The plans include specific strategies for teachers to use in an effort to meet the student's needs in the least restrictive environment. Students who continue to perform below

grade-level academic standards are referred for Special Education services.

Exhibit 2-19 compares special education program enrollment information for 1998-99 through 2000-01.

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Exhibit 2-19
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
Number of Special Education Students and Teachers
1998-99 through 2000-01

</div>

District	1998-1999		1999-2000		2000-2001	
	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
San Perlita	**37**	**2.0**	**37**	**1.9**	**36**	**1.9**
Benavides	73	2.3	71	2.4	48	1.3
Lasara	24	1.0	23	1.0	24	1.0
Monte Alto	34	1.0	45	1.0	38	1.0

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1998-99 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-20 compares special education expenditures for 2000-01. SPISD's special education expenditure, at $3,635 per student, was higher than Lasara's and Monte Alto's.

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Exhibit 2-20
SPISD and Peer Districts
SPISD Budget Expenditures for Special Education
2000-01

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District	Number of Students Enrolled	Budgeted Special Education Expenditures	Percent of Budgeted Expenditure	Per-Student Expenditure
San Perlita	**36**	**$130,875**	**11.4%**	**$3,635**
Benavides	48	$204,400	9.3%	$4,258
Lasara	24	$55,172	5.5%	$2,299

Monte Alto	38	$90,550	5.2%	$2,383

Source: TEA, AEIS, 2000-01.

FINDING

SPISD is a member of the WIL-CAM Pupil Services Cooperative for special education programs. The WIL-CAM cooperative includes Lasara, Lyford, San Perlita, Santa Rosa, Raymondville and Rio Hondo. The cooperative operates under local district policies and WIL-CAM cooperative managing board policies. The six superintendents of the school districts served by WIL-CAM are members of the managing board and manage the cooperative in compliance with federal and state laws. Each school district contributes funding each year for the operation of the cooperative. In return, the school districts avoid the need to contract for additional personnel to meet serve special education students.

WIL-CAM is staffed by 12 employees and is housed at Raymondville ISD. The staff includes the director of special services, an instructional supervisor, head educational diagnostician, various diagnosticians, counselors, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist and a speech therapist. The services offered to participating school districts are:

- directorship of the special education program
- supervision of special education teachers
- diagnostician testing
- counseling
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- speech therapy; and
- medical exams for students

Participation in WILCAM is a cost-effective way for the district to offer these services.

COMMENDATION

SPISD participates in a special education cooperative that provides services and personnel for special education students.

Chapter 2
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

C. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Student safety is a major responsibility for school districts and requires an active program to ensure maximum effectiveness. School districts must develop effective policies, procedures and programs to guarantee the security not only of students but also of district staff.

SPISD's two principals who are responsible for the general safety of all students and personnel share San Perlita ISD safety and security responsibilities.

While none of the schools have identification badges for staff, visitors, or students, school visitors are required to sign in at the main office. This requirement is displayed on signs at entrances of each school.

FINDING

While SPISD has developed a comprehensive emergency management plan, it does not conduct emergency exercises except for quarterly fire drills. San Perlita ISD board policy CKC (Legal) requires school principals to conduct emergency drills but does not specify how often these drills should be conducted. The district's emergency management plancovers the following:

- stranger on campus
- weapons/shooting on campus
- chemical leaks
- bomb and telephone threats
- serious injury or death
- threat of violence to staff or students
- fire evacuation
- natural disasters.

The plan outlines courses of action to be taken depending on the emergency. Effective practice drills would familiarize teachers, staff and students with potential emergency situations and the appropriate courses of action. Exercises also provide an opportunity for evaluating emergency procedures for effectiveness.

Recommendation 16:

Conduct exercises of the district's emergency management plan.

The superintendent and campus principals should develop scenarios to test different aspects of the district emergency plan and conduct exercises at least quarterly. The superintendent should notify local law enforcement and emergency personnel of the training prior to the actual exercise so as not to cause an unneeded response. The superintendent also should notify parents and the local community that an exercise has been conducted to keep the public informed and avoids rumors.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and campus principals develop exercise scenarios based on the district's emergency management plan.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent notifies local law enforcement and emergency personnel of upcoming exercise.	Quarterly prior to conducting an exercise
3.	The superintendent and principals conduct an exercise using one of the scenarios.	May 2002 - Quarterly
4.	The superintendent and principals evaluate exercise to identify procedural problems.	May 2002 - Quarterly after each exercise
5.	The superintendent notifies parents and local community that an exercise had been conducted.	Immediately after exercise has concluded
6.	The superintendent ensures procedures are updated to correct any problems identified in exercises.	June 2002 - Quarterly after exercise evaluation

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Current SPISD practices for On-Campus-Suspension (OCS) and the Alternative Education Program (AEP) are not consistent withprocedures stated in SPISD's Student Code of Conduct and student handbook. San Perlita's discipline policy and district code of conduct describing acceptableand non-acceptable behavior and its consequences is contained in a student handbook. The Code of Conduct specifically details aspects of what is expected in student behavior, prohibited conduct and possible consequences for unacceptable behavior. The Code of Conduct also allows flexibility in the disciplinary consequences based on the circumstances surrounding the incident andthe student'spast history. The code give administrators flexibility to choose disciplinary techniques and type of program necessary to target corrective behavior. These choices include OCS, with a maximum term of five days, and AEP placement with a

minimum term of six weeks. OCS may be used for general misconduct violations including cheating, leaving school grounds without permission and fighting. AEP is used for more serious violations including drug/alcohol possession, assault and lewd behavior.

SPISD staff said the district technically no longer uses OCS because students violating acceptable behavior standards or the code of conduct are all sent to the on-campus disciplinary AEP room. This practice has blurred the distinction between OCS and AEP. Regardless of the severity of misbehavior, students are placed in the same classroom.

The on-campus AEP is located in a high school classroom and is supervised by a substitute teacher or an educational aide. The student's receive assignments from their classroom teachers and the teachers are available during their conference periods to help students complete their work. In the past SPISD students who were referred to the AEP were sent to Raymondville ISD's AEP program but due to parent complaints, the district decided to house the students in the district.

Exhibit 2-21 shows the type and number of times disciplinary incidents occurred within the district in recent years.

Exhibit 2-21
Discipline Data 1998-99 to 2000-01

Incident	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Disruptive behavior	3	2	7
Possessed, sold or used marijuana or other controlled substance	0	3	2
Possessed, sold, used or was under the influence of an alcoholic beverage	0	2	0
Used, exhibited or possessed an illegal knife	0	0	1
Violation of student code of conduct not included in codes 33 and 34	19	1	7
Possessed, purchased, used or accepted a cigarette or tobacco product	0	0	1
Total number of incidents	**22**	**8**	**18**

Source: Regional Education Service Center X (Region 10).

Many districts who cannot fund or house their AEP students enter into partnerships with other districts to provide the needed services for this group of students.

Disciplinary AEP and OCS are effective means for correcting disciplinary problems, but each should have distinctly different processes for placement, duration of placement, and restrictions placed on the student. On-Campus Suspension (OCS) is a means of correcting minor infractions of the Code of Conduct not warranting placement in an AEP.

According to TEC section 37.008 (i), a regional education service center may provide to the district information on developing an AEP program that takes into account the district's size, wealth and existing facilities in determining the program best suited to the district.

Recommendation 17:

Explore disciplinary alternative education program options.

The school district should explore partnering with another school district to offer AEP services.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts Region 1 for assistance in identifying an AEP program or partnership with another distric t that would best suit the district's needs.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent seeks approval from the board to restructure the AEP program and consider entering into a partnership with another school district.	May 2002
3.	The board gives approval for the new AEP program to be implemented.	May 2002
4.	The district relocates its AEP students to an alternative setting apart from its OCS students.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD has unsecured areas and equipment in its maintenance and transportation facilities and in the cafeteria. The maintenance and transportation facilities are left unattended throughout the day. A walk-in

freezer located just outside the cafeteria is unlocked during school hours. The facilities area and the walk-in freezer have locks, but they are not used during school hours.

Left unlocked, these unattended facilities are vulnerable to theft of the district property inside them. The unlocked walk-in freezer is a safety hazard for the students and is in violation of the Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 756, Section 756.012(a) and (b).

Recommendation 18:

Secure the cafeteria walk-in freezer and all facilities when unattended.

The cafeteria walk-in freezer and all district facilities should be locked when unattended. Keys should be given to personnel needing access on a frequent basis and a sign-out key should be available for personnel requiring infrequent access.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs all district personnel to secure facilities and the cafeteria walk-in freezer while unattended.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent publishes procedures on securing district facilities and equipment.	May 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The playground around the gazebo area does not meet child safety requirements. The surface area is composed of regular grass and hard-packed dirt. The playground equipment was purchased and installed by the city of San Perlita but it is located on SPISD property. The district staff does not let children use the playground during school hours, but children can and do play on the equipment after school and on weekends.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's *Handbook for Public Playground Safety* recommends a shock-absorbing surface material under and around all playground equipment. Such materials could include unitary materials, rubber-like material poured in place, and loose filler such as sand, gravel, shredded wood products and shredded tires. **Exhibit 2-22** provides a checklist for playground safety.

Exhibit 2-22
Consumer Product Safety Commission
Public Playground Safety Checklist

Number	Steps to be Taken
1	Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
2	Check that protective surfacing extends at least six feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
3	Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least nine feet apart.
4	Check for dangerous hardware, such as open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
5	Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than nine inches.
6	Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
7	Look out for tripping hazards such as exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
8	Make sure elevated surfaces, such as platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
9	Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good shape.
10	Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.

Source: Consumer Product Safety Commission, CPSC Document #327.

Recommendation 19:

Inspect all playground equipment on district property for compliance with safety requirements and create a plan to correct any deficiencies.

The superintendent should obtain a copy of the Consumer Product Safety Commission's *Handbook for Public Playground Safety* and ensure that all playground equipment located on school district property complies with these safety standards. Once deficiencies, particularly in the playground, are identified, the superintendent should work with the PTO and other

community organizations to seek assistance and contributions for needed replacements.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent obtains a copy of the *Handbook for Public Playground Safety.*	April 2002
2.	The superintendent has all playground equipment on school district property inspected for compliance with the safety standards.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent works with maintenance to ensure that all safety deficiencies are corrected.	June 2002
4.	The superintendent ensures that all playground areas are inspected for safety monthly.	June 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources. SPISD maintenance personnel would conduct the inspections and make needed repairs. Contributions and donated labor should be solicited to correct some playground equipment deficiencies.

FINDING

SPISD's surrounding area has no school crossing areas or guards for students walking to school, creating a potential safety hazard. Many SPISD students, including elementary students, walk to and from school and cross the town's streets at various places.

Most schools in Texas have designated street crossing areas around schools that are clearly marked as school crossings, and have crossing guards supervising children who cross the streets. Most school crossing areas also have a much lower speed limit for vehicle traffic during school hours.

Designated street crossing areas, crossing guards and lower vehicle speed limits all decrease the potential for accidents.

Recommendation 20:

Conduct a survey to determine high-traffic areas for students walking to school and have the county designate and mark them as school crossing areas.

The superintendent should ask local law enforcement personnel such as a sheriff's deputy or county constable to survey the routes students take while walking to school and identify high-traffic areas. The school district should work with city and county officials to designate and mark these as school crossing areas. The district also should train parent volunteers to perform guard duties at these crossings at the beginning and end of each school day.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent asks local law enforcement personnel to conduct a survey to identify high-traffic areas for students walking to school.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent asks local city and county officials to designate identified high-traffic areas as official school crossing areas.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent has school staff members recruit parent volunteers for guard crossing duty.	May 2002
4.	The superintendent ensures that parent volunteers are trained.	August 2002
5.	The superintendent places school crossing guards at officially designated school crossing areas.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the San Perlita Independent School District's (SPISD's) Financial Management functions in three sections:

A. Financial Management
B. Asset and Risk Management
C. Purchasing

Effective financial management in schools requires proper planning, budgeting and ongoing evaluation of how the district uses its resources. Financial management is most effective when resources are used to meet priorities established by the district, resources are allocated efficiently and decision-makers are provided with timely, detailed financial information in a useful and easily understood format.

Asset management involves managing the district's cash resources and physical assets and safeguarding them against theft, destruction and obsolescence. Risk management refers to the identification, analysis and reduction of risk to district personnel and assets through insurance and safety programs.

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 district needs, while complying with local, state and federal regulations.

BACKGROUND

State law requires Texas school districts to conduct school programs in accordance with the state constitution. The Texas Education Code (TEC) spells out the specific requirements with which school districts must comply and authorizes the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish standards for all school districts.

School districts also must meet financial management requirements established by federal and state laws, rules and regulations. TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG) outlines accounting and reporting requirements for Texas school districts. Internally developed policies and procedures, Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) guidelines also affect school districts' financial management activities.

State funding for public education is appropriated to school districts through three "tiers." Tier I funding is designed so that school districts and the state share in the basic cost of education. Tier I formula also provides partial funding for school transportation. Tier II funding is allotted based on student attendance, as measured by weighted average daily attendance (WADA).WADA is a measure of the special needs and costs of students in such programs as special education, compensatory education, bilingual education and gifted and talented education. Tier I allotments are adjusted for each individual district's property tax base, making district property wealth a significant factor in the state funding formula. This formula recognizes that certain types of students require additional resources to meet their educational needs. Tier II funding rewards the district's local tax efforts by guaranteeing that tax efforts beyond the annual required local share in Tier I. Texas Senate Bill 4 of 1999 added a new component to the education funding formula. Tier III funds allow local school districts to receive partial state funding for debt service requirements on previously issued bonds.

Exhibit 3-1 shows SPISD's general fund revenues for 1997-98 through 2000-01. The district's total revenues per student increased by 20.3 percent over this period.

Exhibit 3-1
SPISD Budgeted Revenues
1997-98 through 2000-01

Revenue Source	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Increase/ (Decrease)
Local tax revenues	$563,000	$567,000	$635,340	$649,886	15.4%
Other local and Intermediate revenues	$36,200	$37,850	$36,600	$55,442	53.2%
State program revenues	$1,276,581	$1,282,260	$1,498,364	$1,490,494	16.8%
Federal program revenues	$105,893	$109,650	$119,500	$127,500	20.4%
Total revenues	**$1,981,674**	**$1,996,760**	**$2,289,804**	**$2,323,322**	**17.2%**
Total	**$7,103**	**$6,909**	**$7,684**	**$8,542**	**20.3%**

revenues per student					

Source: TEA, Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 1997-98 through 2000-01.

SPISD's total expenditures rose by 16.8 percent from 1997-98 through 2000-01. Expenditures for instruction-related services decreased from 50.6 cents in 1997-98 to 49.9 cents in 2000-01, falling below the state average of 52 cents (**Exhibit 3-2**).

Exhibit 3-2
SPISD Total Expenditures by Function
As a Percentage of Total Expenditures
1997-98 through 2000-01

Function	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Instruction	50.6%	51.3%	48.5%	49.9%
Instruction-Related Services	2.2%	5.1%	4.6%	4.7%
Instructional Leadership	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
School Leadership	7.3%	4.5%	7.0%	7.0%
Student Support Services	3.5%	3.5%	3.9%	3.3%
Student Transportation	1.9%	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%
Food Services	5.3%	5.4%	5.3%	5.7%
Co-curricular/Extracurricular Activities	2.4%	2.6%	2.9%	2.8%
Central Administration	11.9%	10.9%	10.4%	9.9%
Plant Maintenance and Operations	9.1%	8.8%	10.0%	9.8%
Security and Monitoring Services	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Data Processing Services	0.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%
Debt Service	4.1%	2.7%	2.9%	3.5%
Capital Outlay	1.0%	3.1%	2.6%	1.7%
Total Expenditures	**$1,965,933**	**$1,980,855**	**$2,271,799**	**$2,295,901**

Total Expenditures per Student	$7,046	$6,854	$7,623	$8,441

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

The Texas Constitution authorizes local governments including school districts to levy property taxes. Property taxes levied by school districts are important because of the significant impact of the amount of funding provided. The two categories of property taxes levied by school districts include maintenance and operations (M&O) and interest and sinking (I&S) taxes. The M&O portion is used to cover the routine operating costs of education while the I&S portion is used to pay debt service connected with building programs. **Exhibit 3-3** compares SPISD's adopted tax rates with its peer districts and the state average from 1996-97 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 3-3
Comparison of Total Tax Rates
1996-97 through 2000-01

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
San Perlita	**$1.153**	**$1.183**	**$1.263**	**$1.333**	**$1.380**
Benavides	$1.500	$1.500	$1.500	$1.500	$1.500
Lasara	$1.170	$1.200	$1.220	$1.350	$1.430
Monte Alto	$1.400	$1.430	$1.450	$1.450	$1.540
State Average	$1.430	$1.497	$1.540	$1.512	$1.475

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

SPISD's adopted tax rate for 2001-02 is $1.458 per $100 of property valuation, 5.65 percent higher than the rate levied for 2000-01. The tax rate is entirely for maintenance and operations; at present, SPISD does not levy taxes for I&S.

Although SPISD's business property values fell by 11.8 percent from 1996-97 through 2000-01, total property values rose by 0.8 percent over the same period of time. Residential property values increased by 10.8 percent (**Exhibit 3-4**).

Exhibit 3-4
SPISD Property Values
1996-97 through 2000-01

Category	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Increase/ (Decrease)
Business	$11,574,472	$11,245,385	$10,847,412	$10,761,218	$10,212,569	(11.8%)
Residential	$16,796,456	$17,065,840	$17,669,036	$18,072,240	$18,614,820	10.8%
Land	$26,577,686	$27,040,237	$27,171,229	$26,630,181	$27,262,060	2.6%
Oil & Gas	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	0.0%
Other	$421,998	$414,524	$505,063	$508,219	$398,086	(5.7%)
Total value (after exemptions)	**$50,182,192**	**$50,547,210**	**$50,844,625**	**$50,218,812**	**$50,586,243**	**0.8%**
Value per Pupil	$168,397	$181,173	$175,933	$168,520	$185,979	10.4%

Source: TEA, AEIS, 1996-97 through 2000-01.
Note: The total value is calculated after exemptions.

Chapter 3
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

SPISD's interimsuperintendent has been with the district for almost eight years and also serves as the district's business manager. In May 2001, the superintendent hired an accountant to gradually take over some business management duties, due to the fact that the superintendent must spend a great deal of his time managing the district's other programs and finances.

The school board approves and signs about 90 percent of all checks issued by the district, including payroll checks. The district has not established direct deposit for its payroll. The superintendent reconciles all bank accounts other than the one for the student activity fund, which is reconciled by the administrative secretary.

SPISD has seven bank accounts that include:

- Local maintenance;
- General operating;
- Lunch;
- Federal programs;
- Payroll;
- Finance; and
- Student activity.

The district's procedures for the handling of cash, accounts payable and payroll are detailed in district policies and the staff handbook, although there is no comprehensive procedures manual for business office functions. The superintendent stated that he is in the process of developing such a manual.

SPISD competitively bids its depository contract every two years. The current contract was awarded to Texas State Bank and expires on August 31, 2003. The district pledged securities to the bank's safekeeping agent, Frost Bank of San Antonio.

Effective cash and investment management involves sound banking relationships, accurate cash projections, the management of cash receipts, controls over cash disbursements and investments made in safe investment vehicles. As the district's designated investment officer, the superintendent has overall responsibility for cash and investment management.

FINDING

In November 2001, SPISD installed comprehensive financial management software, the Resource Service Center Computer Cooperative (RSCCC), provided by the Regional Education Service Center I (Region 1). The RSCCC is a menu-driven accounting system including several modules to help the district track its finances. RSCCC contains the following modules:

- Accounts payable;
- Accounts receivable;
- Budget control;
- Fixed assets;
- General ledger maintenance;
- Payroll processing; and
- Purchasing.

This accounting system replaces the obsolete Disk Operating System (DOS) driven software previously used by the district that had very limited capabilities and hurt productivity. The old version was not user friendly and did not allow the district to run reports without having first performed month-end closing. The new system is supported by Region 1 staff and will allow SPISD to generate reports that will provide its decision-makers with accurate and current financial information.

COMMENDATION

SPISD enhanced its financial management planning, budgeting and evaluating capabilities by using a comprehensive financial management software provided by Region 1.

FINDING

SPISD has centralized the management of its student activity funds. The central administrative office secretary is responsible for collecting funds from various approved money-raising activities such as group or class candy sales and a la carte sales from the district's cafeteria. Individuals responsible for collecting activity funds for the various programs bring cash to the central office with a document indicating the amount of funds to be deposited. The secretary thencounts the funds again and issues a receipt for the deposit. The secretary also conducts the monthly bank reconciliation for activity funds and issues checks for individual activities upon receipt of requests for goods or services.

Centralized activity fund management allows for tight control over these funds and eliminates the need for the monitoring of activity funds at individual schools. This process reduces the risk of mismanagement and theft.

COMMENDATION

SPISD has centralized the management of its student activity funds.

FINDING

The SPISD's business office lacks adequate internal controls. The superintendent is personally responsible for many of the district's financial activities and has served as both superintendent and business manager for the last two school years; before becoming superintendent, he had been the business manager for almost six years. As already noted, the superintendent has hired an accountant and plans to gradually delegate some business management duties to the accountant.

As of the review team's onsite visit in October and November 2001, the superintendent, as the designated investment officer for the district, remains responsible for the development of cash projections and the district's budget and investments of district funds. In addition, the superintendent continues to reconcile the district's bank accounts; accounts on which he has the authority to write checks. The superintendent told the review team that two signatures are required on each check written.

The bank statement is the official record of all transactions affecting the cash balance on deposit during the preceding month. TEA's FASRG states that all bank accounts should be reconciled on a monthly basis by a person not involved with the safeguarding of fund assets (cash or investments).

TEA recommends procedural controls for cash management including the delivery of bank statements and paid warrants or checks in unopened envelopes directly to the employee preparing the reconciliation; review and approval of all reconciliations; and investigation of unusual items by an official who is not responsible for receipts and disbursements.

TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG) recommends internal control procedures in the following areas:

- Budgets and planning;
- Cash;
- Investments;
- Procurement and payables;
- Revenues and receivables;
- Capital assets;
- Employee Compensation;
- Electronic Data Processing; and
- Financial Reporting.

Recommendation 21:

Develop internal control procedures for the business office and transfer business management duties to the accountant.

The superintendent should expedite the completion of a comprehensive business office procedures manual, complete with adequate internal control procedures. The accountant should acquire training in district budget development and administration and assume responsibility for monthly reconciliations of the district's bank accounts.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent completes the business office procedures manual and submits it to the board for review and approval.	April 2002
2.	The board designates the accountant as the district's business manager for the coming school year.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent trains the accountant in the district's business operations and delegates business management responsibilities to the accountant.	May - June 2002
4.	The accountant obtains continuing education on his role as the district's business manager.	August 2002 - Ongoing
5.	The accountant acts as the district's business manager.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not have an effective fund balance management policy to address the manner in which the district should increase revenues or decrease expenditures. The superintendent told the review team that the fund balance had been maintained high as a "safety measure due to the uncertainty of their facilities" but felt it should have been designated for particular needs.

In the last four years, SPISD has maintained a fund balance in excess of the TEA-recommended optimum. Fund balances, or reserve balances, are established by school systems to function as the district "savings account"; they provide funds in case of emergencies, pay bills in times of inadequate cash flow and allow districts to build up savings for large purchases not

affordable within a single year (such as a new computer system or renovations on facilities).

The fund balance of the district general fund, then, is one of the primary measures of solvency for the school district. Bond rating agencies view fund balances as a reflection of districts' financial strength.

TEA has developed a formula for estimating an optimum school district general fund balances and provides a schedule to be used in making this calculation. TEA recommends that the optimal fund balance be equal to the sum of the total reserved fund balance (money legally earmarked for a specific future use, such as a reserve for encumbrances), total designated fund balance (funds set aside by school district management for tentative plans or commitments), the amount needed to cover fall cash flow deficits in the general fund and one month of average cash disbursements as made during the regular (non-summer) school year.

Exhibit 3-5 shows SPISD's optimum general fund balance for 1997-98 through 2000-01.

Exhibit 3-5
Analysis of SPISD General Fund Balance
1997-98 through 2000-01

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Estimated amount needed to cover cash flow deficits in general fund	$0	$0	$0	$0
Estimate of one month's average cash disbursements during the regular school session	$232,988	$256,287	$283,259	$293,173
Optimum fund balance and cash flow	$275,588	$314,978	$342,443	$333,506
Excess/(deficit) undesignated unreserved general fund balance	$524,601	$567,893	$530,170	$457,965
Percentage over optimum fund balance	190.4%	180.3%	154.8%	137.3%
Total designated fund balance	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**
Total reserve fund balance	**$42,600**	**$58,691**	**$59,184**	**$50,247**
Total general fund	**$800,189**	**$882,871**	**$872,613**	**$791,471**

Exhibit 3-6 compares SPISD's general fund balance with the TEA recommended general fund balance from 1997-98 through 2000-01. SPISD's fund balance exceeded the optimum balance in each year.

Exhibit 3-6
Comparison of SPISD General Fund Balance
1998-99 through 2000-01
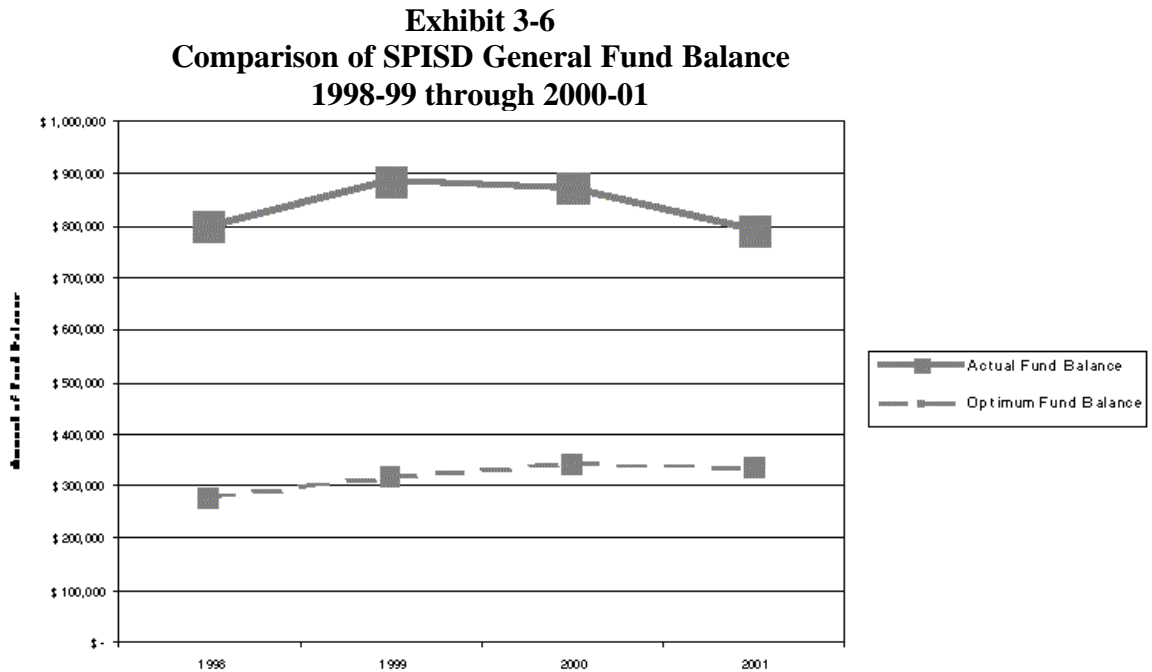
Source: SPISD audited financial statements, 1998 through 2001.

Districts that accumulate a higher-than-optimum fund balance often plan to use excess funds for one-time expenditures such as construction or equipment.

Recommendation 22:

Establish a general fund balance management policy and require the superintendent to report to the board on the status of the fund balance at every meeting.

This policy should establish goals concerning the optimum fund balance and include a means of attaining and maintaining the desired level. The policy should provide the superintendent with clear directions on how to increase revenues or decrease expenditures to meet the district's fund balance goals. It also should also require that every agenda item contain a fiscal impact statement.

The essential elements of this policy should be a means of keeping the board informed about the status of the fund balance. In every board packet, the superintendent should include a summary of the beginning fund balance, the revenues received during the month, the month's expenditures and the ending fund balance. Any significant events that have had a major impact on the fund balance during that month should be explained. This would help ensure that the board and district administration are always completely aware of the district's financial position.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent drafts a fund balance policy with the assistance of the account.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent presents the policy to the board for approval.	May 2002
3.	The board approves the policy and directs the superintendent to implement.	May 2002
4.	The accountant develops the required reports that will be submitted to the board.	June 2002
5.	The accountant prepares the reports for the board.	July 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD principals, the food services manager, the maintenance supervisor and the Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) committee have little or no involvement in the planning and development of the district's budget. The current process does not allow cooperative interaction between departments and campuses so that everyone understands where the district's resources are being spent.

The superintendent develops the budget and presents it to the school board for adoption. After adoption, the principals and functional supervisors receive their respective budgets. As of the review team's onsite visit in November 2001, the principals and functional supervisors had not yet been provided with campus or functional budget information, although they were submitting purchase orders to the superintendent for approval or disapproval.

In addition, the district does not provide campus administrators and functional supervisors with monthly expenditure reports showing the budget, expenditures to date and remaining budget by account code. This type of reporting is commonly used by school districts and can be produced by the RSCCC. In addition, this report can be furnished in summary format to the school board for review and approval.

TEA's FASRG states that the budgeting process is comprised of three major phases: planning, preparation and evaluation. The budgetary process begins with sound planning. Planning defines the district and campus goals and objectives and develops programs to attain them. Once these programs and plans have been established, the superintendent, makes budgetary resource allocations to support them.

The budget must be evaluated for its effectiveness in attaining goals and objectives. Such evaluations typically examine how funds have been spent, what outcomes resulted from the expenditure and to what degree these outcomes achieved the objectives stated during the planning phase. This evaluation is important in determining the following year's budgetary allocations. School district budgeting is a continuous cycle of planning and evaluation to achieve district goals.

Public hearings are the final step in the budget development process. The Texas Education Code mandates these hearings, which serve as the final opportunity for public review of the proposed budget and typically include a presentation of a summary of the proposed district budget by the board president, the superintendent or a designee. Individuals and interest groups then may present feedback on the proposed budget before the school board legally adopts it. Once the budget is legally adopted, funds are considered available for expenditure.

SPISD board policy CE (LOCAL) requires budget planning as an integral part of overall program planning. **Exhibit 3-7** shows SPISD board policy regarding the annual operating budget.

Exhibit 3-7
SPSID Board Policy CE (LOCAL)
Annual Operating Budget
Issued April 17, 1990

Element	Policy
Budget Planning	Budget planning shall be an integral part of overall program planning so that the budget effectively reflects the district's programs and activities and provides the resources to implement them. In the planning process, general educational goals,

	specific program goals, and alternatives for achieving program goals shall be considered. Budget planning and evaluation are continuous processes and should be a part of each month's activities.
Ad Hoc Committees	The Board may appoint ad hoc committees of representative citizens and district personnel to provide a wider expression community opinion on financial aspects of the school program. The Board shall define in precise terms the scope of the committee's charge and shall designate the period of time committee members shall serve. The committee shall be dissolved upon completion of its charge or the expiration of the term set by the Board, whichever comes first.
Schedules	The Superintendent or designee shall supervise the development of a budget calendar and a specific plan for budget preparation. The budget schedule shall include time lines for designated individuals or groups to submit their budget proposals.
Availability of Proposed Budget	After it is presented to the Board and prior to adoption, a copy of the proposed budget shall be available upon request from the business office or Superintendent. The Superintendent or designee shall be available to answer questions arising from inspection of the budget.
Budget Hearing	The annual public hearing on the proposed budget shall be conducted as follows: • The Board President shall request at the beginning of the hearing that all persons who desire to speak on the budget give their names to the secretary. Only those who sign in with the secretary shall be heard. • Speakers shall confine their remarks to the appropriation of funds as contained the in the proposed budget. • No officer or employee of the district shall be required to respond to questions from speakers at the hearing.
Authorized Expenditure	The adopted budget provides authority to expend funds for the purposes indicated and in accordance with state law, Board policy and the district's approved purchasing procedures. The expenditure of funds shall be under the direction of the Superintendent or designee who shall ensure that funds are expended in accordance with the adopted budget.
Budget Amendments	The budget shall be amended when a change is made increasing any one of the functional spending categories or increasing revenue object accounts and other resources.

The administrationconducted a budget workshop for 2001-02 for the boardon August 15, 2001 at 6:00 p.m. in the school library. This workshop preceded a regular board meeting held later that evening.

SPISD held a public hearing on the budget on August 31, 2001. Besides school board members and two employees of the district's central administrative office, only one member of the public participated in the public hearing, which indicates that there is little participation by residents of SPISD in the district's business operations. According to the board's meeting minutes, nocommunity member participated in the public hearing before the motion was made to approve the budget and its amendments.

In addition, no documents presented at either the budget workshop or the public hearing containing any information identifying the impact of the budget's revenues and expenditures on the district's general fund balance.

Many districts establish a formal budget calendar to identify key points in the process and an overall timetable extending through board approval of the budget. Such a calendar can be a useful planning tool because it establishes specific tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines for all committees and central and campus-level staff members. It shows the steps needed to develop and adopt the budget within the time established by law. Without a budget calendar, the board and administration can miss important dates and overlook tasks or perform them out of sequence.

Recommendation 23:

Develop a budget calendar and include key stakeholders in the budget development process.

The superintendent should establish an annual budget calendar including dates for workshops, public hearings and board workshops. The calendar should identify key action steps and identify the personnel assigned to each. The budget calendar should be published in local newspapers to encourage community involvement. **Exhibit 3-8** contains excerpts of a sample budget calendar the district could use.

Exhibit 3-8
Budget Calendar Sample

Target Date	Activity/Process	Responsibility
2/25/YY	Projected enrollments developed.	Assistant Superintendent for

		Administration
3/06/YY	Budget process outlined to principals and staff.	Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Finance
3/08/YY	Campus budget preparation begins.	Principals and staff
4/01/YY	Campus budgets completed.	Principals
4/03/YY	CIC advisory review.	Campus Improvement Councils
5/19/YY	Superintendent's review of preliminary district budget begins.	Superintendent
6/16/YY	Budget workshop.	Superintendent and School Board
6/24/YY	Administrative budget meeting.	Input from Citizens
7/16/YY	Budget workshop.	Superintendent and School Board
8/13/YY	Official public budget hearing.	School Board, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Finance
8/27/YY	Budget adopted.	School Board

Source: TEA Financial Accountability System Resource Guide.

SPISD could revise this calendar based on its own needs. Two important dates for budget preparation and adoption, however, are mandated by TEA. The district budget must be complete by August 20th of each year and adopted by August 31.

The RSCCC budget module allows the district to work on a budget for the next school year without affecting the current budget year or the current financial records. The module also allows the district to work on proposed budget changes and view their cumulative results. The budget should consider multi-year efforts incorporating the financial impacts of long-range objectives.

After the board adopts the budget, the superintendent should provide monthly reports of program revenues and expenditure details to campus administrators and program supervisors. The administration should provide the board with quarterly status reports on the district's budget that detail revenue and expenditure information and the impact of district operations on the fund balance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops a budget calendar and presents it to the board for review and approval.	April 2002
2.	The board approves the district's budget calendar.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent explains the budget development process to principals, functional supervisors and Site-Based Decision-Making committees.	May 2002
4.	The principals, Food Services manager and Maintenance supervisor develop program budgets.	May 2002
5.	The SBDM committee reviews the campus budgets and recommends amendments where necessary.	May 2002
6.	The superintendent reviews and approves the proposed budget.	June 2002
7.	The superintendent and board participate in budget workshops and consider community input on budget development.	July - August 2002
8.	The board conducts a public hearing for budget review and adopts the budget complete with amendments.	August 2002 - Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD is not prepared for implementation of GASB 34. The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued its Statement of Financial Accounting Standards No. 34 (GASB 34) in 1999. GASB 34 significantly changes the way Texas school districts and other state and local government entities must report their finances to the public. TEA requires school districts to implement the new standards by the 2001-02 school year.

Under the new rule, anyone with an interest in school finance, such as current and prospective residents and businesses, will have access to school budget information. School financial reports will provide information about the cost of providing services to students as well as a narrative analysis of the school district's financial performance. These reports must show whether current revenues are adequate to pay for current services. Districts also will be required to calculate and record depreciation for school facilities and equipment, and to disclose the costs of all programs supported by tax revenues.

SPISD's external auditor told TSPR that, over the last few years, the auditing firm has encouraged the district to upgrade its financial software and obtain training on the implications of GASB 34. The district has begun to update its financial software but has not yet trained its staff on implementing the GASB 34 standards.

Recommendation 24:

Develop an implementation strategy for GASB Statement No. 34.

The superintendent and accountant should work with the district's external auditor and representatives of Region 1 to develop a plan for GASB 34 implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and accountant work with Region I representatives to develop a plan for GASB 34 implementation.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent presents the board of trustees with information on GASB 34 and detailed issues regarding its implementation.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent and accountant implement procedures to satisfy the requirements of GASB 34.	July 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

During the eight years in which the present superintendent has functioned as business teacher, manager and interim superintendent, SPISD has contracted with the same external auditor for its state-required annual audit of district financial records. The firm used by SPISD provides audit services for several school districts in the area, all of them performed by one partner in the firm. The firm prepares SPISD's annual financial statement and any adjusting entries that need to be made to its general ledger.

TSPR found, however, that the district's auditing firm did not provide SPISD with an annual management letteror a schedule of findings. A review of the district's audited financial statements for fiscal 1998, 1999 and 2000 indicated that the auditor has not provided the district with an annual Management Letter and has provided no schedule of findings. In addition, the auditor has not yet provided SPISD with a letter of

engagement for the current fiscal year. The auditing firm submits SPISD's audit reports to TEA in accordance with board policy CFC (LEGAL).

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), a national organization devoted to improving the quality of governmental accounting, auditing and reporting, publishes an *Audit Management Handbook* to assist governments in procuring high-quality audit services. The handbook suggests 24 steps for preparing a request for proposals (RFP) for audit services. For example, the handbook suggests the following elements be included in an RFP to ensure broad participation:

- Identify individuals to evaluate the proposer's qualifications;
- Describe in detail particular qualifications that will be considered favorably. This gives respondents the opportunity to emphasize important strengths that might otherwise be overlooked; and
- Conduct a pre-proposal conference. This conference gives each respondent an opportunity to ask and answer pertinent questions about the district's operations and the firm's qualifications and experience.

The fact that SPISD has not changed auditors for a long period of time does not violate any law. Auditing standards do, however, require auditors to maintain independence so that the public views their opinions, conclusions and recommendations as impartial.

Recommendation 25:

Develop a Request For Proposal for auditing services and require the external auditing firm to include a management letter and schedule of findings with audited financial statements.

In addition to local advertising for qualified auditors, the distric t could place advertising notices in the newsletter of the State Society of Certified Public Accountants.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and accountant develop a request for proposals, including evaluation criteria and a timeline for the selection of a new external auditor, and submits to the board for review and approval.	April 2002
2.	The superintendent develops strategies to encourage more qualified auditing firms to participate in the selection process.	April 2002
3.	The board approves the RFP.	May 2002

4.	The accountant advertises the RFP in accordance with bidding laws and local board policy.	May - June 2002
5.	The superintendent and accountant review all bids received and select an auditing firm for the coming school year's audit.	July 2002
6.	The auditing firm provides the district with an engagement letter for 2002-03 and begins collecting data for its audit of the 2001-02 school year.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

B. ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Asset management entails the investment of district funds in a way that creates good interest potential while simultaneously safeguarding the district's cash. Effective asset management also ensures that taxes are collected quickly and efficiently and that fixed assets are accounted for and safeguarded against loss, damage and theft.

Effective risk management calls for the identification, analysis and reduction of various types of risk facing the district's personnel and property with insurance and safety programs. Workers' compensation insurance protects district employees in the event of work-related accidents and injuries. Property and casualty insurance protect the district from liabilities arising from property damage, bodily injury and other situations that place the district at risk. SPISD also contributes $180 per month for each professional employee and $220 per month for support service employees and paraprofessionals toward health insurance coverage.

Despite the lack of a formally implemented safety plan, SPISD has experienced low workers' compensation losses over the last four years. From 1997 through 2000, the district saw only eight minor claims resulting in $1,228 in disbursements from SPISD's risk management fund.

The Texas Association of School Boards' (TASB) Risk Management Fund carries SPISD's workers' compensation policy. This will expire on November 17, 2002. TASB provides the district with claims administration and payment, claims adjustment and risk management analysis services. **Exhibit 3-9** summarizes SPISD's 2001-02 workers' compensation premiums by employee classification.

Exhibit 3-9
Estimated Annual Workers' Compensation Premiums
2001-02

Classification	Experience Adjusted Rates	Actual Payroll	Contribution
Bus Drivers	0.04618	$33,776	$1,560
Administrative	0.00308	$1,473,821	$4,539
All Other	0.05878	$195,706	$11,504

Total	**0**	**$1,703,303**	**$17,603**

TASB also provides SPISD's commercial insurance coverage through a policy effective for three consecutive years. **Exhibit 3-10** describes the coverage in place as of the policy's November 17, 2001 renewal date.

Exhibit 3-10
Commercial Insurance Coverage
2001-02

Policy	Coverage Limits	Deductible	Annual Premium
Property & casualty blanket replacement cost limit on buildings, personal property and auxiliary structures	$4,272,700	$1,000	$7,392
Miscellaneous property computer equipment	$251,355	$250	$603
General liability aggregate (includes personal injury and employee benefits liability	$1,000,000 per occurrence	$1,000	$750
School professional legal liability	$2,000,000 per occurrence $2,000,000 annual aggregate	$1,000	$3,385
Fleet liability	$100,000 per person $300,000 per occurrence bodily injury		$2,463
Automobile comprehensive automobile collision	$100,000 property damage Actual cash value	$250	$599 $998
Total - all coverage			**$16,190**

FINDING

SPISD and its employees will be affected by the new statewide school employee health insurance plan. The district's management of this program may have a direct impact on its financial condition and the actual benefits derived by its employees.

The 2001 Texas Legislature established a statewide school employee health insurance plan for teachers and other school district employees.

Districts with 500 or fewer employees will be required to participate in the new state insurance plan beginning in fall 2002. If a district of this size participated in a risk pool as of January 1, 2001, it may elect to remain in the same risk pool or to participate in the new teacher retirement state pool. In addition, if a district of this size was individually self-insured on or before January 1, 2001 and has continued the self-insured program since that time, it may elect not to participate in the state pool. SPISD was not self-insured and did not participate in a risk pool as of January 1, 2001; therefore, SPISD will be required to participate in the state insurance program beginning in 2002-03.

The new law further provides that districts that are parties to a health insurance contract in effect on September 1, 2002 are not required to participate until the expiration of the contract period. All full-time employees and part-time employees who are members of the state's Teacher Retirement System (TRS) are automatically covered by the basic state plan. Higher levels of coverage will require additional district and employee contributions. To assist with these costs, the state will send each district $75 per month per covered employee and will give each employee an additional $1,000 annually to help pay for additional employee coverage, dependent coverage, compensation or any combination thereof. Part-time employees who are members of TRS may participate if they or the district pays the full cost.

Districts are required to make a minimum contribution of $150 per employee per month. If they are not meeting this level of contribution, the state will assist them in paying this share, but will phase out this aid over the next six years. Districts contributing more than $150 a month per employee may use the difference between their current expenditure and the required $150 a month minimum effort to provide additional insurance coverage or other employee compensation.

Exhibit 3-11 summarizes the health insurance options available to San Perlita ISD employees effective October 1, 2001. Trustmark Insurance Company is the insurer with Starmark performing as the insurance plan administrator. Robert C. Ranking of McAllen, Texas is the agent for the district's group health plan and was selected by SPISDfor 2001-02 as a result of competitive bidding.

Exhibit 3-11
SPISD Employee Health Insurance Options and Premium Cost
2001-02

Plan	Coverage	Total Monthly Cost

| 60/50 PPO Plan | Annual Deductible: $1,000 Individual/$3,000 Family

$15,000 Co-Insurance Limit

60% in network, 50% outside of network

Office Visits: $25

RX: $10 generic/$20 name brand/$200 deductible

$7,000 Individual In-Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum; $8,500 Individual Combined In and Out of Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum; $17,000 Family Combined In and Out of Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum | Employee:
$263.54

Employee/Spouse:
$446.59

Employee/Child:
$488.06

Employee/Family:
$616.11 |
| 80/60 PPO Plan | Annual Deductible: $1,000 Individual/$3,000 Family

$5,000 Co-Insurance Limit

80% in network, 60% outside of network

Office Visits: $25

RX: $10 generic/$20 name brand/$200 deductible

$2,000 Individual In-Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum; $3,000 Individual Combined In and Out of Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum; $6,000 Family Combined In and Out of Network Out-of-Pocket Maximum | Employee:
$327.47

Employee/Spouse:
$554.80

Employee/Child:
$536.93

Employee/Family:
$764.26 |

Source: SPISD Employee Benefits.

Recommendation 26:

Create an insurance committee to evaluate the state employee health insurance plan and determine its impact on the district and its employees.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

| 1. | The superintendent and accountant establish an insurance committee including administrators, teachers and support staff to research and | April 2002 |

		consider the options, provisions and limitations of the statewide school employee health insurance plan for 2002-03.	
2.		The insurance committee gathers information to determine the options available to the district through the state health plan and prepares a report to the board and superintendent on the impact of the funding changes on the district and employees for 2002-03.	June 2002
3.		The superintendent presents the plan to the board for approval.	June 2002
4.		The superintendent informs district staff members of the district's plan of action for employee health insurance for the 2002-03 school year.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not maintain a current listing of its fixed assets. The district did not conduct a physical inventory for 2000-01 and interviews with several district employees indicated that no one has tracked the district's acquisition and disposal of fixed assets for several years.

The external auditing firm stated that it has computed and posted fixed-asset adjusting entries for SPISD for several years but has not been involved in tracking assets for insurance purposes. The auditor further stated the auditing firm planned to cover GASB 34 issues at the November 2001 meeting of the school board and provide SPISD with assistance with implementing GASB 34 standards for assets worth more than $5,000.

The review team inspected selected capital equipment that has been capitalized with a value of more than $5,000 and found that some items have been tagged for inventory purposes. However, SPISD no longer tags assets as they are acquired and does not track them to the point of disposition.

Fixed assets include a school district's most valuable items, including furniture, equipment, land, buildings, library books, and vehicles.

TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* defines fixed assets as purchased or donated tangible items that have a useful life of more than one year and a unit value of $5,000 or more, are not consumed as a result of use, and may be reasonably accounted for through a physical inventory system. TEA requires assets costing $5,000 or more to be

recorded in a fixed-asset group of accounts and items worth less than $5,000 as an operating expense of the appropriate fund.

Managing and safeguarding fixed assets is one of the most important administrative tasks in a district. Timely and dependable information on fixed assets in inventory is critical to effective resource management. Given the often-high dollar amount associated with fixed assets, poor management decisions in this area can negatively affect the rest of the district.

Efficient fixed-asset management provides information for planning and control purposes, such as the type of asset, its original cost and its physical location. This information is necessary for inventory records and depreciation calculations; it also provides a basis for valuations needed for insurance purposes, such as calculating premiums and providing replacement values for claims.

The district has a bar code reader but has not tagged its assets or used the reader to track assets. The district's newly installed RSCCC accounting system contains a fixed-asset module that can be used to track the acquisition and disposal of assets. The external auditor said that it has recommended that the district use this software for the last two years, although it has produced no management letters or findings in its audited financial statements to affirm this statement.

According to GASB 34, as of September 1, 2001, SPISD is required to begin reporting its capital assets net of depreciation. GASB 34 requires that the cost of fixed assets be recognized through depreciation over the life of the asset. Only a few exceptions will be allowed, such as land, permanent infrastructure, assets acquired long ago and assets with a short life or low value. This means that the district will be required to track and depreciate many items. The superintendent said he attended a workshop to help him understand the GASB requirements and that he plans to send the district's accountant for training in 2001-02.

The FASRG recommends annual physical inventories at schools. The FASRG also requires assets costing $5,000 or more to be recorded in a district's fixed-asset group of accounts. As noted above, TEA guidelines call for less-expensive items to be recorded as an operating expense of the appropriate fund. These guidelines also allow school districts to establish lower thresholds for control and accountability. For example, computer and audiovisual equipment that costs less than $5,000 does not have to be accounted for in the fixed asset group of accounts, but some districts maintain lists of such assets anyway, to ensure control and accountability.

Recommendation 27:

Develop and maintain a comprehensive fixed-asset management system.

Principals and school-level staff should be responsible for conducting inventories at their schools each year. The business office should provide each campus and department with inventory listings each year to enable this reconciliation. The principals, campus staff and department supervisors should match the inventory identification numbers on the inventory list with identification tags that have been affixed to the properties.

SPISD should request assistance from Region 1 with the use of the fixed-asset module. Once the district's assets are properly accounted for in RSCCC, the process must be maintained. Only those assets with a value of $5,000 or greater need to be priced but all equipment and supplies should be listed so that they can be tracked. As part of the physical inventory process, every teacher, custodian, secretary, counselor, nurse, bus driver, administrator and food service worker should account for every piece of furniture and equipment in his or her room by reconciling them with an inventory listing provided by the business office.

Region 1 should train the accountant or other district personnel on the RSCCC fixed asset module for no additional cost beyond the annual fee the district pays to Region 1.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent plans the district's physical inventory and assigns each campus principal, Food Services manager, Maintenance supervisor, counselor, nurse and teacher responsibility for conducting an inventory of district property and equipment.	April 2002
2.	The accountant acquires training from Region 1 in use of the fixed-asset module of the RSCCC software and provides GASB 34 compliance information to campus administrators and support service supervisors.	April 2002
3.	District employees, including principals, teachers, Food Services manager, Maintenance supervisor, nurse and counselors, conduct a physical inventory of assets by providing a listing of their equipment to the accountant.	May 2002
4.	The accountant enters asset data into the RSCCC system.	June 2002
5.	The purchasing agent tags all fixed assets.	June 2002 - Ongoing

6.	The accountant tracks the acquisition, transfer and disposition of assets in accordance with GASB 34 using the RSCCC system.	June 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not maximize its return on investments by diversifying its portfolio. A diversified portfolio includes various types of investments to hedge against declining interest rates and markets as well as investments to take advantage of increases in interest rates and market values. SPISD investment policy CDA (LOCAL) states that the main goals of SPISD's investment program are to ensure the safety of district funds and maximize financial returns within current market conditions.

The superintendent has not attended investment officer training in more than two years. The accountant has attended this training but has not been appointed by the board as the district's investment officer; the superintendent continues to perform investment duties.

The district's investments include four certificates of deposit (CDs) at Texas State Bank and pledged securities with a book value of more than $1.3 million that are maintained with Frost Bank in San Antonio. As the CDs mature, the superintendent evaluates payable and payroll needs and purchases a new CD with the excess funds. **Exhibit 3-12** shows excerpts from the district's investment policy.

Exhibit 3-12
Excerpts from SPISD Board Policy CDA (LOCAL)
Other Revenues: Investments
Issued July 21, 1997

Investment Authority	The Superintendent or other person designated by Board resolution shall serve as the investment officer of the District, shall recommend appropriate legally authorized and adequately secured investments, and shall invest District funds as directed by the Board and in accordance with the District's written investment policy and generally accepted accounting procedures. The investment officer shall be bonded or shall be covered under a fidelity insurance policy. All investment transactions except investment pool funds and mutual funds shall be executed on a delivery versus payment basis.

Approved Investment Instruments	From those investments authorized by law and described further in CDA (LEGAL), the Board shall permit investment of District funds in only the following types, consistent with the strategies and maturities defined in this policy: • Obligations of the U.S. or Texas or its agencies and instrumentalities and political subdivisions including collateralized mortgage obligations directly issued by a federal agency or instrumentality of the United States as permitted by Government Code 2256.009. • Certificates of deposit as permitted by Acts of the 74th Legislative Session, Chapter 32. • Fully collateralized repurchase agreements permitted by Government Code 2256.011. • Banker's acceptances as permitted by Government Code 2256.012. • Commercial paper as permitted by Government Code 2256.014; money market mutual funds and no-load mutual funds. • Public funds investment pools as permitted by Government Code 2256.016-2256.019.
Safety and Investment Management	The main goal of the investment program is to ensure its safety, as well as to maximize the financial returns within current market conditions in accordance with this policy. The investment officer shall observe financial market indicators, study financial trends, and utilize available educational tools in order to maintain appropriate investment managerial expertise. Investments shall be made in a manner that ensures the preservation of capital in the overall portfolio and offsets, during a 12-month period, any market price losses resulting from interest rate fluctuations by income received from the balance of the portfolio. No individual investment transaction shall be undertaken that jeopardizes the total capital position of the overall portfolio.
Diversity	The Investment portfolio shall be diversified in terms of investment instruments, maturity scheduling, and financial institutions to reduce risk of loss resulting from over concentration of assets in a specific class of investments, specific maturity, or specific issuer.
Monitoring Market Prices	Monitoring shall be done monthly and more often as economic conditions warrant by using appropriate reports, indices, or benchmarks for the type of investment. The investment officer shall keep the Board informed of significant declines in the

	market value of the District's investment portfolio. Information sources may include financial/investment publications and electronic media, available software for tracking investments, depository banks, commercial or investment banks, financial advisors, and representatives/advisors of investment pools or money market funds.
Safekeeping and Custody	The cash, collateral, and investments of the District shall be held by an independent third party with whom the District has a current custodial agreement. The District shall retain clearly marked receipts providing proof of the District's ownership, or the District may delegate to an investment pool the authority to hold legal title as custodian of investments purchased with District funds.
Portfolio Report	In addition to the quarterly report required by law and signed by the District's Investment officer, a comprehensive report on the investment program and investment activity shall be presented annually to the Board. This report shall include a performance evaluation, which may include, but not be limited to, comparisons to 91-day U.S. Treasury Bills, six-month U.S. Treasury Bills, the Fed Fund rates, the Lehman bond index, and rates from investment pools. The annual report shall include a review of the activities and total yield for the preceding 12 months, suggest policies, strategies, and improvements that might enhance the investment program, and propose an investment plan for the ensuing year.

Source: SPISD Board Policy Manual,1997.

Exhibit 3-13 shows the district's investment portfolio as of December 2001.

Exhibit 3-13
SPISD Investment Portfolio
As of December 2001

Type of Investment	Amount	Date of Maturity	Rate of Interest
Certificate of Deposit	$175,000	1/18/02	2.20%
Certificate of Deposit	$25,738	1/28/02	1.91%
Certificate of Deposit	$225,000	2/14/02	1.93%
Certificate of Deposit	$325,607	3/20/02	1.77%

Source: SPISD Superintendent's Office.

The Texas Local Government Investment Pool (TexPool) is the largest and oldest local government investment pool in the state of Texas and provides investment services to more than 1,700 communities throughout the state. The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts oversees TexPool, which was organized in 1989 to offer cities, counties, school districts and other local government entities a safe, efficient and liquid investment option for their funds. TexPool is managed conservatively with investments consisting exclusively of U.S. Government securities, repurchase agreements collateralized by U.S. Government securities and AAA-rated no-load money market mutual funds. In addition, TexPool is governed by and complies with the Public Funds Investment Act. **Exhibit 3-14** shows monthly rates of return for TexPool for 2000 and 2001.

Exhibit 3-14
TexPool Monthly Rate History
2000 and 2001

Month	2000	2001
January	5.5840%	6.0921%
February	5.7793%	5.6657%
March	5.9141%	5.3807%
April	6.0731%	4.9536%
May	6.2340%	4.4525%
June	6.4370%	4.2559%
July	6.5191%	4.0913%
August	6.5526%	3.8843%
September	6.5656%	3.4668%
October	6.5485%	2.8912%
November	6.5510%	2.6291%
December	6.4856%	2.3597%
Monthly Average	6.2703%	3.9803%

Source: TexPool website, www.texpool.com.

Recommendation 28:

Create an investment strategy to increase interest earnings.

SPISD should consider investing in some funds with higher yields. To diversity its portfolio, the district also should consider investing in mutual funds and investment pools to maximize earnings while protecting principal balances.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The board designates the accountant as the district's investment officer.	May 2002
2.	The superintendent, accountant and school board develop an investment strategy based on local policy and in accordance with the Public Funds Investment Act.	June 2002
3.	The superintendent and accountant develop and document a system of internal controls to designate specific procedures for investment management and submit a plan to the auditor for review.	June 2002
4.	The accountant obtains annual training on his role as the district investment officer.	July 2002 - Ongoing
5.	The investment officer provides the board with detailed quarterly and annual investment reports.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

As of December 2001, SPISD had $751,345 in certificates of deposit earning between 1.77 percent and 2.20 percent interest. The lowest monthly rate of return earned by the TexPool during 2001 was 2.3597 percent. The fiscal impact assumes a conservative rate of return increase of 0.50 percent on the district's investments based on the December 2001 balance. SPISD could realize an increase in annual yield of $3,757 beginning in 2002-03.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Create an investment strategy to increase interest earnings.	$3,757	$3,757	$3,757	$3,757	$3,757

Chapter 3
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

C. PURCHASING

Effective purchasing ensures that a district can provide quality materials, supplies and equipment in a timely manner, in the right quantity, at the right time and at the best price, in accordance with all applicable purchasing and bid requirements established by the Texas Education Code and local district policy.

SPISD's elementary school principal/Curriculum and Technology official manages the textbook function as one of his many duties. The elementary principal/Curriculum and Technology official reports to the superintendent.

The district places textbook orders each April for the coming school year, using TEA's Educational Materials online textbook requisition system. The district is entitled to order up to 110 percent of its maximum pupil enrollment for the grade or subject in question. Whenever possible, the district buys textbooks that are accompanied by reference information available over the Internet, to expand the learning opportunities provided by the books.

SPISD's textbook order is based on the highest level of enrollment of the preceding school year. When textbook shortages occur, the elementary principal places orders as requested by principals. Central office, Maintenance, or school employees deliver textbooks to the SPISD central office, where they are unpacked and inventoried. Maintenance staff then delivers the textbooks, including extra copies, to the schools based on their requirements. Teachers inventory textbooks for their classes and advise students of district textbook policy as they issue the books.

In accordance with Section 31.102 of the Texas Education Code, textbooks ordered through TEA become the property of the state, and the school board is their legal custodian. The district must report lost or damaged books to each campus principal. Books damaged or lost by students must be replaced at the parents' expense, although the district is not allowed to withhold grade reports or transcripts to encourage parents or students to pay balances due. When the district receives payment for a lost or damaged book, the funds must be used to order replacement books from TEA's textbook depository. If the district is unable to recover replacement costs from parents, it becomes responsible for purchasing the replacements. SPISD has not reported any lost textbooks since 1999 and does not have any outstanding payments due for lost textbooks.

TSPR administered surveys to students, parents, teachers and campus and district administrators on textbook issuance and quality. **Exhibit 3-15** shows the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that textbooks are delivered in a timely manner and are in good condition.

Exhibit 3-15
SPISD Survey Results
Quality of Textbook Materials
November 2001
Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing with the Statement

Survey Statement	District Administrators	Parents	Teachers	Students
Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	66.7%	80.5%	85.7%	62.1%
Textbooks are in good shape.	66.7%	56.5%	78.6%	24.1%

Source: TSPR Survey Results, November 2001.

State Purchasing Mandates

The Texas Education Code includes state purchasing laws designed to provide the best value to school districts through a competitive bidding process. The Texas Legislature revised the state's statutes concerning competitive procurement during the 76th Texas Legislative session to explain the competitive bidding process more completely to vendors and to show that the process should provide maximum value to the district. Generally, when districts purchase groups of items valued at $25,000 or more in the aggregate, they must follow one of the processes summarized in **Exhibit 3-16**:

Exhibit 3-16
Competitive Procurement Methods

Purchasing Method	Method Description
Competitive bidding	Requires that bids be evaluated and awarded based solely upon bid specifications, terms and conditions contained in the request for bids, bid prices offered by suppliers and pertinent factors affecting contract performance. Forbids negotiation of prices of goods and services after proposal opening.

Competitive sealed proposals	Requires the same terms and conditions as competitive bidding, but allows changes in the nature of a proposal and prices after proposal opening.
Request for proposals	Generates competitive sealed proposals and involves several key elements, including newspaper advertisement, notice to proposers, standard terms and conditions, special terms and conditions, a scope-of-work statement, an acknowledgment form/response sheet, a felony conviction notice and a contract clause.
Catalog purchase	Provides an alternative to other procurement methods for the acquisition of computer equipment, software and services only.
Interlocal contract	Provides a mechanism for agreements with other local governments, the state or a state agency to perform governmental functions and services.
Design/build contract	Outlines a method of project delivery in which the school district contracts with a single entity for both the design and construction of a project. (The "single entity" usually is a team of firms including a general contractor, architect and sometimes an engineer. One firm almost never performs both design and construction.)
Job order contracts	Provides for the use of a particular type of contract for jobs (manual labor work) for minor repairs and alterations.
Construction management contracts	A contract used to construct, rehabilitate, alter or repair facilities with the services of a professional construction manager.
Reverse Auction Procedure	A bidding process that involves bids by multiple suppliers, unknown to each other, in a manner that allows the suppliers to bid against each other.

Source: TEA Financial Accountability System Resource Guide and Legislative Briefing Book.

A centralized purchasing function is essential to efficiency in purchasing for the following reasons:

- Small-volume purchases can be consolidated into larger-volume purchases for the entire district.
- Vendors and the business community have a single central contact within the district.

- Purchasing personnel are trained in purchasing, sourcing, prices, and vendor relations, saving the district money and allowing for a more efficient purchasing process.
- Purchasing personnel are trained in state and federal laws and local board policies applicable to purchasing, providing for better compliance.

A school district purchasing administrator or an assistant typically prepares competitive procurement specifications, evaluates competitive procurement bids, maintains a vendor list, supervises the processing of purchase orders and evaluates the performance of vendors. Buyers and clerical staff typically write, review and modify specifications for competitive procurements; help evaluate bid responses; identify sources to obtain competitive prices and terms; maintain an updated vendor list from which purchases can be made; and obtain and verify vendor price quotes. SPISD personnel with purchasing process duties are described in **Exhibit 3-17**.

Exhibit 3-17
SPISD Personnel with Purchasing Process Duties
November 2001

Job Title	Duties	Supervisor
Superintendent	Reviews and approves purchases.	Board of Trustees
Accountant	Develops RFPs, evaluates proposals submitted and reviews contracts. Supervises accounts payable, fixed-asset accounting, receiving and purchase order functions. Prepares purchase order listing for submission to the superintendent and board of trustees for review and approval for payment.	Superintendent
Superintendent's secretary	- Receives purchase orders and assigns vendor number, encumbers purchase orders, annotates purchase-order log and forwards purchase orders to accounts payable clerk. - Forwards purchase orders to superintendent for signature, returns signed purchase orders to accountant. - Sends purchase-order copies to requestors and files copies, receives and files signed purchase orders, reviews and completes purchase	Superintendent

	orders, enters payment information, runs reports and performs quality control, performs check printing, receives and annotates checks, mails checks and files purchase orders after checks are processed. • Prints checks, returns checks to accounts payable.	
Administrative secretary	Accepts delivery of goods, organizes inventory and delivers goods from central administration to schools or contacts the school ordering the item(s), as assigned.	Superintendent

Source: Interviews with SPISD Central Office personnel.

SPISD maintains a centralized purchasing system in which purchasing requests originating from teachers, principals, administrators and directors are submitted and processed by staff in the district's central office. Since the school district consists of three schools located near the central office, the time needed to distribute purchase orders is minimal. SPISD has no departmental budgets for purchasing and does not allocate salaries or operating costs outside of the business office for the persons involved in the purchasing process. Purchase orders flow from the schools or departments to the district central office for review and processing by the superintendent's secretary, who then forwards the purchase order through the accountant to the superintendent. The superintendent reviews the requested purchase, checks the budget, approves the purchase order and returns it to the superintendent's secretary When the teachers, principals or staff wants to make a purchase from local stores, the superintendent approves the purchase amount and the superintendent's secretary provides the requestor with a credit card for local stores such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot, HEB and Sears. The credit card is signed out by the requestor, who makes the purchase and returns the card and receipt to the superintendent's secretary. **Exhibit 3-18** outlines the district's current purchase order process.

Exhibit 3-18
SPISD's Purchase Order Process

1. Requestor at a school or office prepares the purchase order and forwards to the appropriate school principal.
2. Principals or department supervisors review purchase requests and forwards to SPISD Central Office for further processing by the superintendent's secretary.

3. Superintendent's secretary reviews purchase orders and assigns vendor numbers, encumbers orders, annotates the purchase-order log and forwards purchase orders to the accountant. The accountant reviews the purchase order, adds it to SPISD's list of purchase orders for approval of payment at the next Board of Trustees meeting and forwards the purchase orders and list of purchase orders to the superintendent.
4. The superintendent approves the purchase order and returns it to his secretary. The superintendent's secretary sends purchase-order copies to requestors and files copies, receives and files signed purchase orders, reviews and completes purchase orders, enters payment information, runs reports and performs quality control.
5. The superintendent presents the list of purchase orders to the board of trustees for payment approval. After the board reviews and approves the list, the superintendent provides the list of purchase orders approved for payment to the superintendent's secretary who then prints checks, receives and annotates checks, mails checks and files purchase orders after the checks are processed.

Source: SPISD Central Office personnel.

FINDING

SPISD combines regular and recurring purchases on a single purchase order. Purchases made using this procedure are limited to $500 for building maintenance and food service items. This procedure reduces the number of purchase orders that must be prepared by 33 percent, saving purchase-order forms and the time required to prepared them. This procedure also reduces purchase-order processing work by the superintendent, superintendent's secretary and accountant. **Exhibit 3-19** shows SPISD's annual purchase order volume.

Exhibit 3-19
Annual Purchase Order Volume
1999-2000 through 2001-02

Year	Volume
1999-2000*	900
2000-01*	900
2001-02*	600
Average	**800**

Source: SPISD Central Office personnel.
*Estimates.

COMMENDATION

SPISD has reduced processing work by combining multiple purchases in a single purchase order.

Chapter 4
OPERATIONS

This chapter examines the San Perlita Independent School District's (SPISD's) operations in four sections:

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

These functions are central to daily operations and must be well-managed for the district to achieve its educational objectives.

High-quality student services are essential to the success of any school district's mission. Facilities must be adequately maintained to ensure the safety of students and staff and to create an environment conducive to learning. Student transportation must provide safe and timely transportation for children to and from school and school-related activities. Food Services should provide appealing, nutritionally sound and cost-effective meals to all children, while the district's technology program must be organized to attain the entire organization's requirements for the planning, implementation, integration and support of existing and new technology for both instructional and administrative purposes.

Chapter 4
OPERATIONS

A. FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

Facilities Planning

A comprehensive facility, maintenance and energy management program should coordinate school district physical resources. This program should integrate facilities planning with all other aspects of school planning. The most effective and efficient plant operations and maintenance programs involve facilities managers in strategic planning, design and construction. In addition, effective facilities maintenance departments operate under clearly defined policies and procedures. Efficient facilities operations help districts keep pace with changing enrollment and the needs of instructional programs and are essential to building public trust and confidence in district management.

SPISD's campuses arelocated on the south end of the town of San Perlita, Texas. The district consists of about 16.5 contiguous acres, six primary structures and three portable buildings. The district's buildings include an administration building, gymnasium, weight room, art studio, high school, chemistry portable, Pre-Kindergarten portable structure, kindergarten portable,middle school**,** elementary school, a bus barn and storage. These buildings range in age from about 70 years to a little more than 20 years (**Exhibit 4-1**). Construction types vary from standard load-bearing masonry structures to structural steel/pre-engineered metal building structures clad with masonry, stucco and metal.

The district has not issued any bonds since 1946. In September of 1930 the board passed an order authorizing issuance of bonds in the amount of $100,000 for construction of school buildings and purchase of additional land. Only $72,000 of the bonds authorized were issued and sold; however, authority for the issuance of the remaining $28,000, which were cancelled or destroyed, had never been revoked or rescinded. Of the $28,000 of bonds that had never been issued and sold, bonds totaling $19,500 had passed their maturity date, leaving a total of $8,500 of bonds that had not matured. The board passed an order for the issuance of the remaining $8,500 in bonds in January of 1946.

Exhibit 4-1
Age, Year Built and Square Footage of SPISD Facilities
November 2001

Facility	Year	Age	Square

	Built		Footage
Gymnasium	1967	34	13,760.82
Weight Room	1932	69	597.76*
Art Studio/Book Room	1932	69	597.76*
San Perlita High School (six classrooms)	1932	69	8,069
San Perlita Middle School (seven classrooms)	1978	23	6,624.63
Cafeteria/Vocational Education	1960	41	6,192.94
San Perlita Elementary School (six classrooms)	1932	69	7,265.69
Library	1952	49	2,260.12
Science Portable	N/A	N/A	1,815.30
Kindergarten Portable	N/A	N/A	724.93
Bus Parking Barn	1967	34	2,560
Total Square Footage			**50,468.95**

Source: SPISD Maintenance Department, SPISD Facilities Study Architect's Project #9904 submitted by CKN Architects. Does not include Administration Building, or Pre-K Portable.
*Weight Room and Art Studio are additions to High School building.

FINDING

SPISD does not have a formal facilities master plan to set priorities for capital improvement projects based on enrollment trends. Two of the district's three schools, the high school and elementary school are almost 70 years old and in need of several repairs. The superintendent mentioned the need for renovations to some of the buildings, in particular the cafeteria, however, the district has not developed a plan to specify when these renovations or new construction will occur and what kind of funding approach the district will use for these projects.

The only facilities planning documents SPISD could provide to the review team consisted of a 2001 property appraisal packet from the Texas Association of School Boards, a hand-drawn map of the district, a 1997 facility needs survey sent to all Texas public school superintendents by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts and a facility study conducted in 2000 by an architectural and mechanical engineering firm from Edinburg,

Texas. The Comptroller survey filled out by the previous superintendent indicated a need for three new schools at a total cost of about $8.5 million, while the facilities study reflected various construction assessments.

The facility study did not include the middle school facility and the accompanying engineer's report indicates that the cafeteria was locked and also could not be included in the study. The information on square footage and age of district facilities provided by these sources is conflicting and incomplete. While this study is an important source of information, it cannot replace true long-range planning.

Most school districts use a facilities master plan to set strategy for future land acquisitions, building renovations and new construction projects. Effective school facilities master plans incorporates the following elements:

Facility Capacity. Each school's capacity should be established by setting standards to govern student-to-teacher ratios and a required square feet of classroom space per student. These standards also should address the minimum size of core facilities such as gymnasiums, cafeterias and libraries.

Facility Inventory. An accurate and current facility inventory is an essential tool for managing school facilities use. Each school inventory should identify the use and size of every room. This allows planners to judge each school's capacity accurately. The school planner should modify the inventory as needed to keep it up to date.

Enrollment Projections. Effective planning requires accurate enrollment projections made for at least five years into the future. Accurate projections require planners to examine neighborhood demographics and track new construction activity in the district. School planners should work in coordination with county and city planners to track growth patterns.

Attendance Zones. While portable classrooms can temporarily alleviate overcrowding due to fluctuating enrollments, they can become detrimental to the educational program if they are overused. Therefore, an effective enrollment management plan calls for adjustments to attendance zones whenever necessary. While such adjustments often prove unpopular with parents and students, they are needed if all students are to have equal access to school facilities.

Capital Improvement Master Plan. Effective planning requires the district to anticipate its future needs and balance them against its resources. A capital master plan charts desired future improvements to school facilities

and identifies funding sources. The planning process, which should involve the community at large, should identify district goals and prioritize projects based on those them.

Exhibit 4-2 shows the facilities planning process recommended by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Such a planning model allows the district to identify and address a variety of planning issues in the development of its master plan.

Exhibit 4-2
Facilities Planning Process Recommended by TEA

Program Element	Mission	Responsibilities	Deliverables
Planning	Needs assessment	Identify current and future needs	Demographics, enrollment projections, facilities survey, boundary, funding, education program, market, staff capability, transportation analysis
	Scope	Outline required building areas; develop schedules and costs	Programming, cost estimating, scheduling, cost analysis
	Strategy	Identify structure	Facilities project list, master schedule, budget plan, organizational plan, marketing plan
	Public approval	Implement public relations campaign	Public and media relations
Approach	Management plan	Detail roles, responsibilities and procedures	Program management plan and systems
	Program strategy	Review and refine details	Detailed delivery strategy
	Program guidelines		Educational specifications, design guidelines, computer-aided design standards

Source: TEA.

Recommendation 29:

Create a comprehensive facilities master plan.

SPISD should develop a long-range facilities master plan to document its facilities needs, including maintenance and new construction. A facilities master plan should identify each major repair or renovation needed at each school and identify and prioritize district goals. The plan should consider external factors such as community needs as well as internal factors such as whether the district needs to dedicate some of the excess fund balance of nearly $500,000 to finance some of its building projects.

The plan should also estimate the number and location of facilities needed in the future, based on multi-year enrollment projections.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent uses the TEA model to assess SPISD's status in facility planning.	April-May 2002
2.	The superintendent meets with the school principals and the Maintenance supervisor to assign responsibilities for completing the district's long-range facilities plan and to design a method for soliciting community involvement in the facilities planning process.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent compiles components of the facilities master plan and develops a formal facilities master plan document.	June 2002
4.	The superintendent presents the facilities master plan to the board for review.	July 2002
5.	The board approves the facilities master plan.	August 2002
6.	The superintendent annually monitors progress toward implementing the facilities master plan.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not have a formal capital improvement plan. A typical capital improvement plan is a component of the master facilities plan that contains a detailed description for each proposed capital project, an assessment of its priority, a description of the work to be performed and its estimated costs.

The 2000 SPISD facilities study reported a general, overall degradation of building materials and systems and included some cost estimates for electrical, plumbing and air conditioning repairs, but did not include a comprehensive assessment of all district buildings; as noted above, the middle school and cafeteria were not evaluated. In addition, the study did not attempt to estimate costs for the renovation or repair of the district's structures.

Exhibit 4-3 cites the study's estimates of costs to repair or replace mechanical systems in the high school and elementary school buildings. The 2000 facility study concluded that the two buildings, constructed in 1932, need $361,974 in mechanical systems repairs and replacements.

Exhibit 4-3
Estimated Costs to Repair or Replace
SPISD High School and Elementary School
Mechanical Systems

System	Needed Repairs	Cost per Unit	Total Cost
Air Conditioning	Install new central system	$8,000 per classroom	$96,000
Electrical Lighting	Replace lighting with new fixtures	$1,500 per classroom	$18,000
Electrical Power	Upgrade all electrical systems	$5.00 per building square foot	$87,974
Plumbing	Replace sewer lines	$80,000 per building	$160,000
Total			**$361,974**

Source: SPISD Facilities Study Architect's Project #9904 submitted by CKN Architects.

In preparing a capital improvement plan, districts should include costs and a plan for obtaining the needed funding. One way to raise funds for such work may be to issue Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs) to renovate existing facilities. QZAB is a federally funded program, created by the federal Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, which provides federal tax credits to lenders who purchase bonds from school districts. The tax credits allow authorized districts to obtain interest-free funding; the district does not pay interest, only the amount borrowed.

TEA reviews applications for the QZAB program. From 1998 through 2001, Texas received annual federal QZAB allocations of $32.8 million, $34.8 million, $32.5 million and $32.8 million respectively.

There is an $8 million limit per QZAB application and the debt must be repaid within 12 years. A district can make only one application per calendar year. Any funding not allocated by December 31 of each year is rolled over into the next year for new applications.

To apply for the ability to issue QZABs, the district superintendent must complete an application and include a written assurance from a business "partner" who will contribute 10 percent of the funding needed to create a new academic program at the qualified school. The 10 percent contribution may be made in the form of cash, property, equipment, professional services or volunteer services. The school may partner with a single company or several entities to reach the 10 percent threshold. The bond proceeds must benefit an individual school located within a federally designated Empowerment Zone a federally designated Enterprise Community or any other school with at least 35 percent of its student population eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

The application may be made for a bond, a personal property lease-purchase agreement or a loan. Bonds must be authorized and issued under the authority of Texas Education Code Chapter 45, subchapter A. A lease-purchase agreement must be qualified under Local Government Code section 271.005, pertaining to personal property. A loan must meet the requirements of Texas Education Code section 45.103. QZAB-approved funds must be used to renovate or repair a classroom facility or to purchase equipment such as computers and networking hardware to enhance an academic program.

To achieve QZAB designation, a district must meet the program's proof of eligibility, provide an assurance of a private business contribution and submit the district's program intent. The application must be filed and the designation approved before the district issues its QZAB debt. The application process takes about 30 days from the date of submission to TEA to final approval. Upon receipt of QZAB designation, the district has 180 days to issue the bonds. The QZAB designation will lapse if the bonds are not issued within that time.

Recommendation 30:

Develop a capital improvement plan and consider applying for a Qualified Zone Academy Bond.

Effective school districts analyze the impact of new facilities on each line item of operating costs. While energy and other efficiencies are achieved through new construction, adding space can increase operating costs. If the district is confident that renovating an existing facility is the most appropriate course of action, the district should explore funding available through the federal Qualified Zone Academy Bonds program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

1.	The superintendent and facilities planning committee develops a capital improvement plan.	June 2002
2.	The board of trustees approves and selects repair/rehabilitation projects for individual schools based on information provided by the planning committee.	August 2002
3.	The board of trustees and superintendent form an alliance with a company or companies to provide a 10 percent contribution to the project.	August 2002
4.	The superintendent obtains information from the Texas Education Agency about the QZAB program and begins the application process.	August 2002
5.	TEA approves the application and SPISD receives QZAB designation.	August - September 2002
6.	SPISD issues QZAB bonds and initiates repair and rehabilitation projects.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Maintenance and Custodial Operations

The SPISD Maintenance Department has six employees including three general maintenance personnel (one of them the supervisor) and three custodians (**Exhibit 4-4**).

Exhibit 4-4
Organization of SPISD Maintenance Department
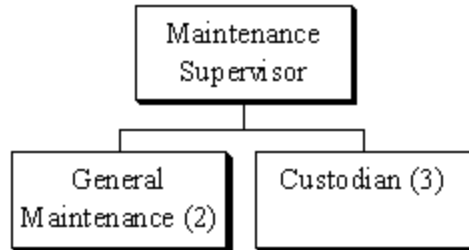
Source: SPISD Maintenance department, November 2001.

The Maintenance supervisor supervises building maintenance and transportationand also performs maintenance duties and drives a school bus for the district. Maintenance personnel are responsible for completing repair work orders and for grounds-keeping. In addition to the supervisor, one other maintenance worker also serves as a bus driver. Three daytime custodians are responsible for the high school, middle school and elementary school. The district determines the custodians' work schedules and provides their equipment and supplies.

The custodians are responsible for cleaning all classrooms, restrooms, the school gymnasium, central administration offices and cafeteria. Other duties include cleaning chalkboards, arranging tables and chairs in the cafeteria for lunch, regulating heating and air-conditioning systems and opening and closing buildings each day.

FINDING

The Maintenance supervisor does not maintain adequate records of work performed by department staff or contract workers. While the Maintenance supervisor retains copies of work orders,he does not keep documentation of major repairs or renovations on individual pieces of equipment.

What records the department does keep are createdmanually and typically are sketchy at best. The review team assessed several work orders and noted that they were not assigned priorities; while most had a completion date, some still appeared to be outstanding.

School districts find it more difficult to plan and budget for preventive maintenance or equipment replacement if they cannot track maintenance records. For this reason, maintenance departments in other districts typically keep itemized records of all work performed, the workers involved, the number of hours worked, materials used and associated costs. Most keep maintenance records on individual pieces of equipment

as well; these records can assist districts in the budget process and in determining equipment replacement needs.

Recommendation 31:

Maintain detailed records for all work performed by the Maintenance Department to facilitate the district's planning and budgeting.

The Maintenance supervisor should begin keeping records of all work completed by the department as well as any that is contracted out. Records should itemize all work performed, by whom, the number of hours worked, materials used and the associated costs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the Maintenance supervisor to develop a form for maintenance staff to use in recording all work performed on equipment, including labor and materials costs.	April 2002
2.	The Maintenance supervisor organizes the maintenance forms by equipment every three months and summarizes the maintenance costs.	May 2002 - Quarterly
3.	The Maintenance supervisor submits the quarterly summaries of maintenance work performed to the superintendent as part of the planning documentation used in the annual budget process.	Annually

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
OPERATIONS

B. FOOD SERVICES

School food services operations must provide students and staff with appealing and nutritionally sound breakfasts and lunches at a reasonable cost in a clean, safe and easily accessible environment. Food services operations can be judged by a number of yardsticks, including staffing levels, productivity, food costs, amount of waste, participation in breakfast and lunch programs, nutritional value, the variety of meals served, wait time per student served, financial self-sufficiency and the ratio of meals served to the labor hours needed to create them. A well-managed food services department is critical to the health and academic success of all students.

The federal government sponsors the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to provide funding for meals for more than 27 million children each year in nearly 96,000 schools across the U.S. TEA's Child Nutrition Programs Division oversees these programs in Texas public schools.

The SBP began as a pilot project in 1966 and is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through its Food and Nutrition Service. The project originally was designed to provide categorical grants to assist schools serving breakfasts to children identified as nutritionally needy. Recognizing the importance of a nutritious breakfast, the USDA has actively promoted the School Breakfast Program and has attempted to improve the nutritional quality of all school meals.

President Harry Truman established the National School Lunch Program under the National School Lunch act signed in 1946. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to nearly 27 million children every school day. The federal government also provides schools with surplus food products through the USDA.

Under the basic school breakfast and lunch programs, household income determines whether children must pay for their meals or receive a reduced-price or free meal. Annual household income must be below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (which amounts to a household income of $30,895 for a family of four) for children to receive a reduced-price meal; annual household income must fall below 130 percent of the federal poverty level ($21,710 for a family of four) for children to receive a free meal.

School food and nutrition programs are important to learning readiness, health promotion and disease prevention. Many districts view school meals as an integral part of the educational process and strive to ensure their quality and affordability.

The Texas School Food Service Association (TSFSA) has identified standards of excellence for evaluating school food service programs. TSFSA states that effective programs:

- Identify and meet current and future needs through organization, planning, direction and control.
- Maintain financial accountability through established procedures.
- Meet students' nutritional needs and promote sound nutritional practices.
- Provide appetizing, nutritious meals through effective, efficient systems management
- Maintain a safe and sanitary environment.
- Encourage student participation in food service programs.
- Provide an environment that enhances employee productivity, growth and morale.
- Promote a positive image to the public.
- Measure their success in fulfilling regulatory requirements.

SPISD's Food Services Department is headed by a cafeteria manager who reports to a principal. The district operates one cafeteria and employs four full-time workers including the manager. The manager supervises two cooks and a dishwasher. The cooks prepare food, assist in serving meals, clean the kitchen and help as needed. The dishwasher cleans tables and chairs in the dining area, washes dishes, prepares tea and punch and performs other miscellaneous tasks.

The cafeteria manager runs the department, helps prepare breakfast meals and acts as the cashier. The school custodian sweeps and mops the dining area after all tables and chairs have been cleaned. **Exhibit 4-5** shows the organization of the SPISD Food Services department.

Exhibit 4-5
SPISD Food Services Organizational Structure
2001-02
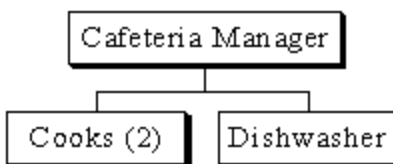
Source: SPISD cafeteria manager, November 2001.

Several menu items are prepared from scratch, including chili meat, pancakes, turkey, fried chicken, spaghetti sauce and enchiladas. Daily meal preparation requires an average of 27 labor hours on the staff's part.

The cafeteria manager spends about three hours a day preparing breakfast and acting as cashier and spends the rest of her time overseeing the department. She is also responsible for the cafeteria's inventory, supplies purchasing, cash management, meal counts, nutritional program, menus, supervisory duties and other responsibilities.

Exhibit 4-6 compares SPISD's food service expenditures with those of its peer districts. This function accounted for 6 percent of SPISD's total budgeted expenditures for 2000-01, the second-lowest share among the peer districts.

Exhibit 4-6
Percentage of Food Services Expenditures
SPISD vs. Selected Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Enrollment	Food Services Expenditures	Percentage of Total Budgeted Expenditures
Lasara	310	$153,780	8.1%
Monte Alto	451	$252,754	7.6%
San Perlita	**272**	**$129,942**	**6.0%**
Benavides	538	$189,000	4.9%

Source: TEA, AEIS 2000-01.

Exhibit 4-7 shows the Food Services Department's proposed budget and estimated revenue for
2001-02.

Exhibit 4-7
SPISD Food Services Proposed Budget and Estimated Revenues
2001-02

Description	Revenues	Expenditures
Local, Intermediate, Out of State	$7,100	
State Program	$1,500	
Federal Program	$122,500	

Total Revenue	$131,100	
Payroll Costs		$83,829
Contracted Services		$300
Supplies & Materials		$46,671
Other Operating Expenses		$300
Total Expenses		$131,100

Source: SPISD Proposed Budget 2001-02.

Meals per labor hour (MPLH) is a performance standard used to gauge the efficiency of food service operations in school districts, hospitals, restaurants and similar settings. MPLH is the number of meals served in a given period divided by the total labor hours worked to produce and serve those meals. SPISD's MPLH is slightly higher than industry standard.

Exhibit 4-8 reflects the MPLH ratio. MPLH shows a variance (.25) for August 2001 and (.18) for September 2001.

Exhibit 4-8
SPISD Meals Per Labor Hour
September 2001

Month	Number of Meals Served	Number of Hours Worked	MPLH	Industry Standard MPLH	MPLH Variance+/(-)
August 2001	5,569	405	13.75	14	(.25)
September 2001	7,091	513	13.82	14	(.18)

Source: SPISD Food Services data, August and September, 2001 and Dorothy V. Pannell, Controlling Costs in the Food Services Industry.

Cafeteria sales, for the purpose of determining MPLH, are calculated as "meal equivalents," a measure allowing for the consideration of breakfasts and a la carte sales. **Exhibit 4-9** provides a conversion table showing how SPISD's MPLH was determined.

Exhibit 4-9
Conversion Rates for SPISD Meal Equivalents

Lunch meal	1	1 meal equivalent
A la carte dollars	$3.00	1 meal equivalent
Breakfast meal *	2 breakfasts	1 meal equivalent

Source: Adapted from Pannell, School Foodservice Management for the 21st Century, and 5th Edition, 1999.
*Industry standard

To evaluate SPISD's Food Services staffing, TSPR's review team followed the guidelines provided in **Exhibit 4-10**. These staffing guidelines are based on either a "conventional" or "convenience" system for preparing meals.

The conventional system involves meals prepared from scratch and dishes that must be washed. The convenience system uses more processed foods and disposable trays and utensils. SPISD prepares a great deal of its meals from scratch, but often uses disposable trays and utensils. Even so, TSPR chose to apply the more conservative assumptions of the conventional system.

Exhibit 4-10
Sample Staffing Guidelines for On-Site Meal Production (MPLH)

Number of Meal Equivalents	Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH)	
	Conventional System MPLH	Convenience System MPLH
Up to 100	8	9
101-150	9	10
151-200	10-11	12
201-250	12	14
251-300	13	15
301-400	14	16
401-500	14	18
501-600	15	18
601-700	16	19
701-800	17	20

| 801-900 | 18 | 21 |
| 901+ | 19+ | 22+ |

Source: Adapted from Pannell, School Foodservice Management for the 21st Century, and 5th Edition, 1999.

TEA reviews SPISD's food service operation as provided for in a contract between TEA and SPISD.

SPISD's Food Services Department has operated under the National School Lunch Program's "Special Assistance Provision Two" since 1995-96. Districts in which more than 80 percent of the student body qualifies for free and reduced-price meals usually use Provision Two.

When the district applied for Provision Two status, 83 percent of its students qualified for free and reduced-price meals; therefore, all students enrolled in SPISD schools are eligible to eat free under Provision Two.

The school district is scheduled to renew its applications for the NSLP and SBP in 2002-03.

FINDING

The Food Services Department does not have an equipment replacement plan or an inventory listing all of its equipment. In 2000-01, SPISD replaced its refrigerator and freezer with new equipment. Most of the equipment in the school cafeteria, however, is more than 20 years old.

The cafeteria's grill, stove, sink, convection oven, sink counter, food preparation table, and cabinets have been in place since 1975. Though operable, the equipment is inefficient and increases production time for cafeteria workers. Some of the oven doors, for instance, do not close tightly, which increases baking time. The food preparation table is made of butcher block, when according to industry standards, it should be stainless steel. In addition, the sink counter is in bad condition.

The Food Services Department has not invested funds to take care of these problems, despite the presence of substantial fund balances in the food service operation revenues.

TEA's *Administrator's Reference Manual for the Child Nutrition Program* provides specific guidelines for district food services programs. The manual specifies that a food service program's fund balance should not exceed three months of operational expenditures to maintain the nonprofit

status required under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Programs. If a balance in excess of this maximum occurs, the school should take immediate steps to reduce the balance or create a plan to do so within a year.

For the last four years SPISD has maintained funds in the Food Services account in excess of the three-month guideline (**Exhibit 4-11**).

Exhibit 4-11
SPISD Fund Balance
1997-98 through 2000-01

Year	Total Expenditures	Average Three Month Expenditure	Ending Fund Balance	Fund Balance Excess
2000-01	$129,942	$32,485	$49,298	$16,813
1999-2000	$158,485	$39,621	$52,359	$12,738
1998-99	$128,647	$32,162	$55,733	$23,571
1997-98	$125,623	$31,406	$40,211	$8,805

Source: SPISD Audited Annual Financial Reports 1997-98 through 1999-2000 and the SPISD superintendent's office for 2000-01 data.

Federal standards require that proceeds from a food services operation be used only for program purposes, such as purchases of equipment, service, and supplies, a reduction in the prices of children's meals or improvements in the quality of the food served.

Recommendation 32:

Develop an equipment replacement plan based on priority and Food Services funds availability.

The Food Services department projects a fund balance of more than $49,000 for the period ending August 31, 2001. This amount represents more than four months of operating costs for the department ($129,942 annual operating budget divided by 12 months = $10,828 monthly operating costs.) Federal regulations impose a 3 month operating cost fund balance on schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

SPISD could comply with this regulation and meet the equipment needs of its cafeteria within its projected fund balance.

Newer, more efficient equipment would increase productivity and reduce operating costs as well as reduce the district's electricity consumption and eliminate equipment downtime.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Food Services manager and cooks conduct a needs assessment for kitchen equipment needing repair or replacement.	April 2002
2.	The Food Services manager estimates costs to repair or replace this equipment.	May 2002
3.	The Food Services manager and superintendent develop a plan for the repair or replacement of aged or obsolete equipment that identifies funding sources within the budget.	May 2002
4.	Food Services equipment is repaired or replaced as funds become available.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD does not have procedures to ensure compliance with the Texas Department of Health (TDH) standards. TDH provides these inspections as an advisory service to public schools to assist them in maintaining proper environmental health practices.

According to TDH's inspection reports, the district received six demerits in 1999 and 21 in 2001. Some of the violations found included the following:

- light fixtures not properly shielded;
- toxic paint bottler stored on worktable next to slicer;
- sanitizer not being used in the floor rinse;
- accurate working thermometers not provided in the walk-in refrigerator;
- faucet in three-compartment utensil sink in need of repair;
- wiping towels not kept in sanitizing solution;
- pots and pans not stored properly to prevent contamination;
- no exhaust vent in the employee restroom;

- old food not at proper cooling temperature; and
- employees washing hands in the utensil sink.

Some of these violations have been cited on several occasions. For example, the light fixture violation was cited in three separate inspections in 1998, 1999 and 2001. In 2001, the Food Service Department also received nine demerits requiring immediate corrective action. (The severity of a violation determines the amount of time the district has to take corrective action.)

Many school district food service operations develop procedures to assist cafeteria employees in knowing what is expected of them and what TDH will look for in its annual inspections. These procedures help schools reduce their number of demerits and increase the safety of their staff members and the children they serve.

Recommendation 33:

Develop procedures to ensure compliance with Texas Department of Health requirements.

SPISD should develop a checklist for cafeteria employees based on the Form No. E-3 09/98 used by TDH's inspectors.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The cafeteria manager develops a checklist using the Form No. E-3 09/98 used by the Texas Department of Health for its inspections.	April 2002
2.	The cafeteria manager performs a monthly self-inspection and uses the checklist to ensure compliance.	April 2002 - Ongoing
3.	The cafeteria manager uses the checklist as a training tool for employees.	May 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The SPISD Food Services manager does not have a thorough working knowledge of the department's $131,000 operating budget. The manager does not keep and is not provided with an accounting of the department's monthly revenues and expenditures. Invoices for purchases are given to the central administrative office, where they are maintained. The manager

does not maintain profit-and-loss statements, average daily labor costs or supply costs. The superintendent maintains the budget for the Food Services Department and informs the manager when the department needs to reduce its costs.

Good business practice requires a manager to have knowledge of his or her department's budget and its monthly revenues and expenditures. Many districts train their cafeteria managers until they can assume financial responsibility for the operation.

Recommendation 34:

Train the cafeteria manager in the financial operations of the Food Services Department.

The cafeteria manager needs the appropriate tools and working knowledge to ensure the department's success and to participate in planning for the future.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts Region 1 for assistance in providing budget management training to the Food Services manager.	April 2002
2.	The cafeteria manager attends financial training through Region 1.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent meets with the Food Services manager on a quarterly basis to review the cafeteria manager's performance regarding the financial operations of the cafeteria.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

Nutrition standards for SPISD school meals fall below USDA guidelines. Region 1 conducted a School Meal Initiative (SMI) review of SPISD on August 31, 2001. Such a review assesses a district's efforts in meeting nutritional guidelines and goals. **Exhibit 4-12** lists some of the recommendations cited by Region 1.

Exhibit 4-12
School Meal Initiative Improvement Plan
September 11, 2001

Recommendation	Recommended Corrective Activities
Calories are more than 110 percent of the target for grades K-3. They should be between 100-110 percent of the target.	Decrease portion size as appropriate. Provide nutritional education to influence students to choose healthier foods.
Total fat content of meals is 32.47 percent and should be less than 30 percent.	Balance high-fat dishes with low-fat dishes. Bake, grill, or broil instead of frying. Use more low-fat recipes.
Only four standardized recipes were used. The district should start standardizing and adjusting recipes.	Adjust and modify correctly any USDA recipes used. Network with other districts to obtain similar recipes that have been standardized.
Saturated fat content of meals is 11.84 percent and should be lower than 10 percent.	Stop using animal fats for cooking or seasoning. Use standardized recipes to prevent food service staff from adding additional saturated fat.

Source: Regional 1 SMI Review-report, 2001.

Smithville Independent School District (SISD) created a team of parent and community volunteers to monitor its Food Services and make recommendations for improvement. The team used a checklist to review food quality, service, facilities and schedule and general service. Reviews were conducted unannounced and the results were shared with the Food Service department to develop corrective actions. For example, a review of an elementary school contained substantive comments concerning the number of choices available to students, the nutritional balance of food offerings, optional drinks and a need for additional monitors in the cafeterias.

Recommendation 35:

Improve the nutritional content of meals.

The Food Services Department should strive to meet the nutritional standards recommended in Region 1's School Meal Initiative review. It can accomplish this by creating a committee of parent and community volunteers to monitor the cafeteria's food quality and make recommendations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent initiates a food services quality assurance review.	September 2002
2.	The superintendent assembles a quality review team made up of parents and community representatives.	September 2002
3.	The superintendent develops a checklist for evaluating the nutritional quality of the food.	October 2002
4.	The superintendent trains quality review team members in conducting a food services review.	November 2002
5.	Members of the quality review team conduct an unannounced food service evaluation and complete the evaluation checklist.	December 2002
6.	The quality review team meets to review results and formulate recommendations.	January 2003
7.	The superintendent and the quality review team share the results of the evaluation with the Food Services director.	February 2003
8.	The cafeteria manager implements the recommendations of the review team.	March 2003
9.	The superintendent monitors the implementation of team's recommendations and tracks impact on the nutritional value of meals.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The Food Services Department does not conduct an annual survey to assess satisfaction with food quality, appearance and taste. Cafeteria employees do receive positive and negative comments from students about the food, but the district has no mechanism for tracking satisfaction with menus, nutrition and services.

TSPR surveyed students, parents and teachers on the quality of food, cafeteria discipline and cafeteria facilities and staff. **Exhibit 4-13** lists the results of these surveys. Numbers shown depict the percentage of respondents who agree and strongly agree with the survey statements.

Exhibit 4-13
SPISD Survey Results
Quality of Food Services Food and Services

Agree and/or Strongly Agree
November 2001

Survey Statement	Parents	Teachers	Students
The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	43.9%	57.1%	10.3%
Food is served warm.	73.2%	78.5%	27.5%
Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of the day.	73.1%	78.5%	79.3%
Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	65.9%	92.8%	44.8%
Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	63.4%	71.4%	48.2%
Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	78.1%	85.7%	58.6%
Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	80.5%	78.5%	58.6%
The school breakfast program is available to all children.	87.8%	N/A	68.9%
Students have enough time to eat.	56.1%	N/A	48.2%

Source: TSPR Survey Results, November 2001.

These results indicate that only 10.3 percent of the high school students agree that the cafeteria food looks and tastes good and only 27.5 percent think the food is served warm. Students also commented that the food is unhealthy. An example cited by one student was a lunch menu consisting of a corn dog, corn bread, and corn on the cob.

Many districts survey their customers to help them improve their services and thus to increase their participation rates.

Recommendation 36:

Conduct annual surveys to assess customer satisfaction with cafeteria services and the quality, appearance and taste of the food.

These surveys could be sent home with students and distributed to teachers and administrators at each school. Comment boxes also could be placed in each cafeteria to allow persons to provide anonymous feedback.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The cafeteria manager develops a list of survey questions to be asked to assess satisfaction with cafeteria food and service.	April 2002
2.	The cafeteria manager places a suggestion box in the cafeteria and reviews the recommendations received each month.	April 2002 - Monthly
3.	The cafeteria manager distributes surveys to students, teachers and administrators.	May 2002
4.	The cafeteria manager receives survey responses, analyzes them and determines recommendations for improvements.	May 2002
5.	The cafeteria manager conducts follow-up satisfaction surveys with quick questionnaires randomly administered among students and staff.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
OPERATIONS

C. TRANSPORTATION

The primary goal of every school district's transportation department is to transport students to and from school and school functions in a timely, safe and efficient manner.

Texas school districts can receive state funding for the transportation of regular and special students between home and school, and of career and technology students to and from vocational training locations. Extracurricular transportation takes students to events during and after school and on weekends such as interscholastic and athletic competitions. A district's local funds must pay for transportation costs not covered by state funding. TEA reimburses Texas school districts for student transportation based upon funding rules established by the Texas Legislature. The state does not reimburse school districts for transporting students who live within a two-mile radius of the school unless hazardous walking conditions, such as a major highway without a crossing signal, lie between the student's home and school.

The formula used to reimburse school districts for regular home-to-school transportation services for regular home-to-school transportation services is based on "linear density"- the average number of eligible regular students transported daily divided by the daily route miles driven for those students. TEA uses this calculation to assign each school district to one of seven groups eligible for a different maximum per-mile reimbursements. TEA evaluates these group assignments every two years and assigns groups and funding by recalculating the linear density with data from the first of the previous two school years. All special education transportation trips also are eligible for state reimbursement, to a maximum of $1.08 per mile.

Pursuant to Section 42.155 of the Texas Education Code, the legislative appropriation for regular program transportation for the 1999-2000 and the 2000-2001 school years was calculated as shown in **Exhibit 4-14**.

Exhibit 4-14
Linear Density Allotment
1999-2000 and 2000-2001

Linear Density Grouping	Allotment Per Mile
2.40 and above	$1.43

1.65 to 2.40	$1.25
1.15 to 1.65	$1.11
.90 to 1.15	$0.97
.65 to .90	$0.88
.40 to .65	$0.79
Up to .40	$0.68

Source: Handbook on School Transportation Allotments, revised May 2001, TEA.

SPISD's linear density dropped by nearly 20 percent from 1999-2000 to 2000-01. Though the number of miles driven increased by 1,189 miles, or 5.2 percent, annual ridership fell by 15.5 percent. This drop in linear density will result in a decrease in state funding of about $2,646 ($0.11 per mile decrease in reimbursement x 24,057 miles for 2000-01) for 2002-03.

Exhibit 4-15 compares SPISD linear density with those of its peer districts for 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

Exhibit 4-15
Linear Density Data
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
1999-2000 and 2000-01

School District	Annual Ridership		Annual Mileage		Linear Density	
	1999-2000	2000-01	1999-2000	2000-01	1999-2000	2000-01
Benavides	22,500	21,600	82,908	74,160	0.271	0.291
San Perlita	**10,440**	**8,820**	**22,868**	**24,057**	**0.457**	**0.367**
Lasara	25,380	21,060	32,040	32,040	0.792	0.657
Monte Alto	54,360	40,500	41,118	43,160	1.322	0.938

Source: School Transportation Route Services Status Reports, 2000-01, TEA.

Linear density is adversely affected when buses operate below capacity. Rural areas such as San Perlita, however, often are very sparsely

populated; buses must travel greater distances to transport a fewer number of students.

Exhibit 4-16 compares SPISD's expenses per mile for regular and special education transportation with those of its peer districts and the state. Cost per mile is calculated by dividing the district's total annual transportation operating cost by its total number of miles driven. SPISD's expenses per mile for regular transportation were lower than the state average but higher than the peer districts' figures in every year.

Exhibit 4-16
Transportation Operation Costs Per Mile
SPISD vs. Peer Districts
1997-98 through 1999-2000

District	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000	
	Regular	Special	Regular	Special	Regular	Special
San Perlita	**$1.599**	**$0.000**	**$1.608**	**$0.000**	**$2.002**	**$0.000**
Benavides	$0.930	$0.762	$1.031	$0.599	$1.019	$0.641
Lasara	$0.692	$0.698	$0.907	$0.893	$0.848	$1.372
Monte Alto	$1.186	$1.159	$1.122	$1.234	$1.609	$1.479
State	$1.816	$1.802	$1.912	$1.977	$2.045	$2.198

Source: School Transportation Operation Reports, 1998-99 through 2000-01, TEA.

Exhibit 4-17 shows operating costs for the SPISD transportation function from 1996-97 through 1999-2000. Total expenditures increased by 48.8 percent over the period. Salaries and benefits fell by 11.4 percent while debt service and capital outlay expenditures increased substantially, due to the lease-purchase of a new bus in 1999-2000.

Exhibit 4-17
SPISD Transportation Operating Costs by Category
1996-97 through 1999-2000

Category	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000
Salaries & Benefits	$19,500	$20,510	$17,678	$17,270
Purchased & Contracted	$4,259	$4,377	$8,205	$4,590

Services				
Supplies & Materials	$17,845	$13,537	$15,470	$16,356
Other Operating Expenses*	$0	$0	$2,517	$11,186
Debt Service	$12,433	$12,433	$12,433	$27,380
Capital Outlay	$44,273	$44,273	$44,273	$69,535
Total Operation Costs	**$98,310**	**$95,130**	**$100,576**	**$146,317**

Source: School Transportation Operation Reports, 1996-97 through 1999-2000, TEA.

The SPISD vehicle fleet includes a truck, a passenger van and seven buses. Two of the buses are inoperable and are parked outside of the Transportation Department's bus barn. The other five are used to provide transportation of students to and from school, on field trips and extracurricular activities such as athletic events.

The Transportation supervisor is also the Maintenance supervisor and also serves as the district's fleet mechanic. SPISD transports 56 students on three daily bus routes. One driver covers the special education route to and from the Wil-Cam Special Education Cooperative in Raymondville while another driver drives a local regular route. Both drivers perform maintenance work during the school day. In addition, each of the drivers and the Transportation supervisor drive extracurricular routes.

FINDING

SPISD provides transportation to and from school for 56 students during 2001-02. Of that number, 48 students are transported from the neighboring town of Port Mansfield, which lies within the SPISD attendance boundaries. Two of the district's teachers, a husband-and-wife team who live in Port Mansfield and make the daily commute, have taken on the bus route; one acts as bus driver and the other as a monitor. The teachers are licensed to drive commercial vehicles and have participated in state-required training courses provided by the Region 1. They are paid an hourly rate above their normal salary. In addition, the bus used to transport the children from Port Mansfield is parked overnight at the town's fire department making this a win-win situation for both the district and the teachers. The district has employed two reliable and properly trained drivers and the teachers are able to access extra income for their services.

COMMENDATION

SPISD has saved the district the salary of a bus driver by using two of its teachers as drivers on a daily regular route.

FINDING

SPISD does not receive reimbursement from TEA for its special education program mileage. SPISD transports two special education students to and from Raymondville daily for participation in the WIL-CAM cooperative. The cooperative does not provide a special education bus or reimburse participating school districts for their transportation expenses.

TSPR received transportation documentation from TEA for 1996-97 through 2000-01 listing SPISD's total ridership and mileage for regular education, special education and the Career and Technology program. The district claimed special education mileage in only one of those five years, 1999-2000. In that year, the district received $8,497 for its special education students.

As the reimbursement for special program miles is $1.08 per mile versus $0.68 for regular transportation, SPISD could receive additional state funding simply by claiming the special education route miles.

Recommendation 37:

Report eligible special education program mileage to increase state reimbursements.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Transportation supervisor submits reports to the superintendent to differentiate special education route miles from regular education routes.	August 2002 - Ongoing
2.	The superintendent reports to TEA separate figures for special education route and regular education route miles driven.	August 2002 - Ongoing
3.	TEA reimburses SPISD at the special program transportation allotment rate.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The maximum mileage rate for special program transportation is $1.08 per mile. The district makes two round trips each day for a total of 48 daily miles. The fiscal impact below was calculated by multiplying the number of daily miles by the number of school days ($1.08 reimbursement x 48 miles a day x 180 days= $9,331. SPISD would not receive the additional

funding until 2003-04, as district reimbursement is based on mileage reported from the first of the previous two years.

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Report eligible special education program mileage to increase state reimbursementfunding.	$0	$9,331	$9,331	$9,331	$9,331

FINDING

San Perlita ISD has no documented bus replacement plan. The district operates and maintains a fleet of five buses at its transportation facility while another two buses sit inoperable and unused in the yard. Excluding the inoperable buses, SPISD's bus fleet by is shown by age in **Exhibit 4-18.**

Exhibit 4-18
RISD Bus Fleet By Age
November 2001

Vehicle Age	Number of Buses	
	Regular	Special
Less than five years	1	0
Five to 10 years	2	1
Older than 10 years	1	0
Total	**4**	**1**

Source: SPISD Central Administrative Office.

The average age for SPISD's regular transportation buses is 9.75 years, while the special education bus is six years old. SPISD has purchased one bus in the last five years. **Exhibit 4-19** shows the district's bus procurement pattern.

Exhibit 4-19
SPISD Bus Inventory by Model Year
November 2001

School Bus Model Year	Date Acquired	Number of Buses	
		Regular	Special
1985 GMC 34 Passenger	12/07/84	1	

1988 GMC 48 Passenger	11/28/88	1	
1993 Blue Bird 72 Passenger	7/12/93	1	
1995 GMC 12 Passenger	3/28/95		1
1999 International 78 Passenger	10/27/99	1	
Total Number of Buses		**4**	**1**
Average Bus Age		**9.75**	**6.0**

Source: SPISD Transportation Department.

Exhibit 4-20 shows each of SPISD's bus routes and the number of students transported each day compared to the capacity for each respective bus.

Exhibit 4-20
SPISD Ridership and Capacity by Bus
2001-02

School Bus Number	Route Type	Bus Capacity	Number of Students	Percent of Capacity Used Per Bus
8	Regular	78	48	61.5%
2	Regular	48	6	12.5%
6	Special	12	2	16.7%
Total SPISD Ridership		**138**	**56**	**40.6%**

Source: SPISD Transportation supervisor, November 2001.

Each of SPISD's buses appear to be running under capacity. In all, the district operates its routes at less than 41 percent of capacity, with two routes running below 17 percent of capacity.

Other districts use smaller vehicles for the daily transportation of students to and from school to cut their fuel expenditures. While bigger buses are convenient for transporting larger numbers of students to special events such as field trips, not all buses in a district's fleet need to be large.

Districts often use a fleet procurement plan to replace a certain number of buses . Criteria used to make this determination include fleet age, mileage, expenditures and wear and tear. Districts with good maintenance programs can extend bus life beyond the recommended 15-year cycle before

replacement is needed. Replacement plans help districts get maximum use from their buses. Regular purchase of smaller buses requires a smaller annual budget allocation as opposed to a large capital requirement every few years when a district purchases a larger bus.

Recommendation 38:

Develop a formal school bus replacement plan.

A vehicle replacement plan designed to maintain the appropriate fleet size and reduce potential hazards by replacing buses when they reach the end of their useful lives also would allow SPISD to stagger replacement costs.

SPISD should sell or scrap the two buses in its fleet that are inoperable and unused and implement a bus replacement plan based on an analysis of the age, condition, and capacity of its remaining fleet. This would help the district ensure that its buses wear evenly.

A 15-year bus replacement plan and a fleet of five operable buses would require SPISD to budget for the purchase of one bus every third year. In addition, the district should consider purchasing smaller buses, since its larger buses are under capacity. The bus replacement plan should remain flexible and anticipate changes in student enrollment.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Transportation supervisor determines a maximum age and mileage target for all district buses.	April 2002
2.	The Transportation supervisor creates a formal bus replacement plan and submits it to the superintendent for review and approval.	May 2002
3.	The superintendent submits the bus replacement plan to the school board for review and approval.	June 2002
4.	The school board approves the bus replacement plan.	June 2002
5.	The Transportation supervisor monitors the overall condition of bus fleet to include annual mileage, wear and tear, repair expenditures and age of individual buses.	June 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

The SPISD currently averages one bus purchase every three years. The district's last bus purchase was a 78-passenger model acquired in 1999 at a cost of $54,282. Selling the two unused buses or scrapping them for iron at approximately $500 each would raise $1,000 in 2002-03.

The purchase of smaller-capacity buses could save the district an approximate $18,000 every third year beginning with in 2002-03. The estimate assumes that the district would purchase a 23- or 24-passenger bus in 2002-03 at an average price of $33,000 and a 47-passenger bus in 2005-06 at an average price of $46,000. This would save the district about $21,282 in 2002-03 based on the purchase price for the 78-passenger bus ($54,282 - $33,000 = $21,282). In three years, when the district purchases its next bus, the district could save $8,282 ($54,282 - $46,000 = $8,282).

Recommendation	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Sell two unused buses.	$1,000	$0	$0	$0	$0
Develop a formal school bus replacement plan.	$21,282	$0	$0	$8,282	$0

FINDING

SPISD has no schedule for documenting vehicle inspections and repairs or tracking the cost of parts and labor for its vehicles.The district does not maintain daily log checks for each district vehicle, or require documentation of routine daily maintenance, such as checking air and oil levels.

Bus drivers and the Transportation supervisor each stated that routine maintenance such as oil and air filter changes is performed regularly, but they have no documentation to prove it. Many districts use formal checklists that are filled out daily by their bus drivers. This type of documentation can help protect districts against liability in the event of accident or other mishap. In addition, many districts track repair costs to help identify vehicles that have become too costly to maintain.

Recommendation 39:

Develop a schedule for the maintenance of the district's bus and vehicle fleet.

A schedule for the regular preventive maintenance of each vehicle in the district's fleet would help ensure that preventive maintenance is performed in a timely manner. This should prevent breakdowns. The tracking of repair costs would help identify vehicles that have become too costly to maintain.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Transportation supervisor develops a daily checklist and a	March 2002

	schedule for preventive maintenance actions and a record-keeping system.	
2.	Bus drivers complete daily vehicle checks and submit completed checklists to the Transportation supervisor.	April 2002 - Ongoing
3.	The Transportation supervisor reviews each daily checklist for action items and maintains the checklists, preventive maintenance schedule and all associated costs by vehicle.	April 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD provides its bus drivers with limited driver training opportunities. The district sends new drivers to the state-required 20-hour training course provided by Region 1 as well a required eight-hour refresher course every three years. The district itself provides no other training.

The Texas Administrative Code prescribes that bus driver certification courses include instruction in each of ten units:

- Introduction - 0.5 hour;
- The School Bus Driver's Image - 1.5 hours;
- Preventive Maintenance - 3.0 hours;
- Traffic Regulations and Driving Procedures - 1.5 hours;
- Defensive Driving - 3.0 hours;
- Safety and Emergency Procedures - 3.0 hours;
- First Aid - 1.5 hours;
- Procedures for Loading and Unloading Students - 3.0 hours;
- The Special Education/Handicapped Child - 1.5 hours; and
- Awareness of the Effects of Alcohol and Other Drugs - 1.5 hours.

Additional training such as emergency preparedness and CPR is beneficial but may be difficult to obtain in small districts such as SPISD.

Many districts use training materials from organizations such as the Texas Association for Pupil Transportation, the Texas Engineering Extension Service, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Texas Department of Transportation. Brochures, videos, conferences and other training vehicles may be available to the district at little or no cost.

Other materials that districts access for training can come from Internet sources. *School Transportation News* is a monthly news and feature magazine covering the issues surrounding the field of student

transportation. The online magazine (www.stnonline.com) provides ideas and noteworthy articles on such issues as school bus safety, special needs transportation, safety statistics and other vital industry news and information. The website also provides links to other school transportation-related organizations and agencies and contains a searchable archive of articles which can be downloaded from the Internet and shared with employees of the district's Transportation department.

Recommendation 40:

Provide expanded driver training opportunities for SPISD bus drivers.

The district should explore additional training options available from Region 1 as well as from state agencies and other organizations. Opportunities may also exist to coordinate training efforts and to develop a training curriculum with other school districts in Willacy County.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Transportation supervisor and superintendent research additional training opportunities for bus drivers	August 2002
2.	The Transportation supervisor provides training and materials to bus drivers and keeps them abreast of industry news and safety practices.	August 2002-Ongoing
3.	Bus drivers receive four to eight hours of annual training.	August 2002 - Ongoing
4.	The Transportation supervisor documents driver training in each bus driver's personnel file.	August 2002 - Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4
OPERATIONS

D. COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

The responsibilities of technology services operations in Texas school districts vary. Some offices support administrative workers only, while others support both administration and instruction, either through single or multiple departments.

Technology support services at SPISD are divided into two areas, instructional technology and administrative technology. The organizational structure for instructional technology is displayed in **Exhibit 4-21**.

Exhibit 4-21
SPISD Instructional Technology Organization
2001-02

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│      Superintendent         │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│         Elementary          │
│         Principal           │
│  Curriculum and Technology  │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```
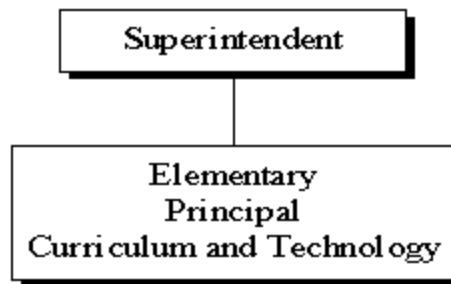
Source: SPISD Elementary Principal,
Curriculum and Technology.

FINDING

SPISD provides every family with a high school student in grades 9-12 with a personal computer and Internet access at home. Generally, if a family has more than three students in high school, it will receive a second computer. Students in this small community do not have access to a school library or public library after school; computers give them an opportunity to enhance their education by providing research tools and a network for direct communication with teachers.

Families of high school students were assigned a computer and provided Internet connection to assist them in their schooling for 2001-02. The computers and Internet connection allow students the opportunity to prepare for the information age by using the Internet to perform research for school assignments, practice technology skills and improve

presentation of schoolwork by using word processing programs. The computers and Internet access allow students and teachers the ability to communicate after school hours and discuss homework assignments and study materials for other projects. This is a great opportunity for students to take charge of their own learning by taking advantage of the equipment and services made available to them. It also is a great opportunity for entire families to become computer literate.

SPISD received a grant for computer equipment under the USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program. Valley Telephone Cooperative Inc. (VTCI), the school district's telecommunications provider provided the district with assistance in writing the grant and matched funds received from the USDA for a total of $138,000 of financial aid to the district. In addition, VTCI provided technical assistance and installed phone lines in the student's homes for the Internet connections.

This cooperation between SPISD, the federal government and VTCI has provided 57 computers and Internet access for families of high school students. The district also used the grant to purchase laptop computers for every high school teacher. The laptops allow teachers to communicate with students, work on assignments or projects and record grades from the school or home.

COMMENDATION

SPISD has enhanced its educational program by providing the families of high school students with a computer and Internet access at home and high school teachers with laptop computers.

FINDING

The district receives several types of state and federal grants related to technology including the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (TIF) grant, Technology Integration in Education (TIE) grant and a federal E-Rate discount.

The TIF grant helps schools develop ways to integrate the Internet into their school curriculum. To receive this grant, schools must submit an approved technology plan, create a technology task force, provide 10 percent in matching funds, purchase items from the TIF-suggested configuration list, participate in the TIF Tech training program and build a homepage on the Internet. The TIF grant provides for state-of-the-art links to local area networks (LANs) and wide area networks (WANs) so that improved instructional and technological resources become available to teachers and students.

The TIE grant is a funding source for integrating technology education into classrooms and libraries. TIE grants may also be used to acquire staff training in teaching technology. The federal E-Rate discount provides from 20 to 90 percent of the cost of purchasing telecommunications services, Internet access and internal connections. The level of discount is based upon the percentage of students eligible for participation in the federal free and reduced-price school lunch program. SPISD receives a 90 percent discount.

Exhibit 4-22 lists SPISD's grant amounts for the 1999-2000 and 2001-02 school years (not including the USDA and VTCI grants totaling $138,000).

Exhibit 4-22
Technology Grants Received by SPISD for 1999-2000 through 2001-02

Type of Grant	Grant Amounts by School Year		
	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Technology Integration in Education Grant	$0	$34,896	*
Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Grant	$0	$107,764	$0
E-Rate	$0	$0	$273,349
Total	**$0**	**$142,660**	**$273,349**

Source: SPISD Elementary Principal, Curriculum and Technology official and Region l personnel.
*TIE funding in 2000 for school years 2000 through the beginning of 2002.

These grants are being used to upgrade the connectivity and reliability of the district's current technology infrastructure, with high-speed access through fiber-optic cable. A technology infrastructure is the underlying system of cabling, phone lines, hubs, switches, routers and other devices that connect the variousschools and administrative offices of the school system through local area networks and a wide area network. A high-speed infrastructure allows users to access people and information throughout the district and beyond, helping them to do their jobs and aiding in student instruction.

A WAN generally provides users with such tools as e-mail as well as links to the Internet. WANs usually are designed to prevent persons outside the WAN from accessing information in the WAN without a password or personal identification number.

A key function of a WAN is to connect LANs throughout the district. A LAN typically connects all users within a single building to one local network. This tasktypically is accomplished by installing wires in ceilings throughout a school. The wires connect individual computers to one other through central computers called file servers; the rooms containing the file servers and termination points for all of the wires are called telecommunications closets. By connecting the LAN to a WAN, all LAN users gain access to others LANs in the district as well as to the Internet. A district that has every user connected to the network should have the infrastructure necessary to take full advantage of the present telecommunications capabilities and those that will be available in the near future.

The funding SPISD has obtained is being used for connectingclassrooms andthelibrary to theInternet; greatly increasing the speed of information transfer through the installation of fiber-optic cable; installing phone lines in each classroom; installing high-speed switches for the telecommunications closets in each school and district office; expanding computer training; and upgrading wireless Ethernet equipment from two megabits per second to 11 megabits per second. These enhancements will be completed at the end of the 2001-02 school year.

TEA has made short-term (1997-98), mid-term (1999-2002) and long-term (2003-10) technology recommendations to school districts. The short-term goal for technology equipment is a student-to-computer ratio of four to one; the mid-term goal is a student-to-computer ratio of three to one, while the long-term goal is one to one. SPISD is well within the mid-term goals and on its way toward achieving long-term goals.

Exhibit 4-23 displays the SPISD student to computer ratio.

Exhibit 4-23
SPISD Student to Computer Ratio

School	Total Number of Students	Number of Computers	Student to Computer Ratio
High School	70	32*	2.1:1
Middle School	46	25	1.8:1
Elementary	148	45	3.2:1

Library		15	
Totals	**264**	**117**	**2.2:1**

COMMENDATION

SPISD has used state and federal grants to improve its technological base and meet TEA-recommended student-to-computer ratios.

FINDING

The elementary principal/Curriculum and Technology official has introduced the use of Norton Ghostsoftware. This program is a high-performance computer utility for fast and safe system upgrading, backup and recovery of files. The software also writes disk images directly to many popular compact disk drives, making it easy to back up valuable data saved on the computer. These disk images are used by SPISD teachers and staff to quickly and easily restore program files. When a teacher or staff member has a problem with their computer "locking up" or not running correctly, they run the software to recover original programs on their computers.

The use of this software reduces computer downtime and allows teachers, staff and the elementary principal to spend more time in school and classroom activities.

COMMENDATION

SPISD uses software to help teachers and staff recover computer programs quickly and without assistance.

FINDING

SPISD has a cordless phone system for use by a counselor, two principals and the Maintenance supervisor. This is a cost-effective way for parents, administrators and others to contact school employees whose jobs take them out of their offices on a recurring basis.

The cordless phone system consists of an optional outdoor antenna (used by SPISD to increase the distance of the signal), a base unit and up to nine cordless phones. Once the antenna, base unit and cordless phones were purchased, the district had no recurring costs.

The cordless phone system also provides a signal that can penetrate up to 12 floors in an office building, 3,000 acres in an open field and 250,000 square feet in a warehouse. This long-range capability allows school employees to receive calls anywhere in the district office and school areas and return calls without returning to their offices. The ability to communicate while on the run saves travel time and improves communication within the district.

COMMENDATION

SPISD uses a cordless phone system to improve its communications.

FINDING

While the district has written a draft technology plan for the 2001-2004 school years, the plan still lacks some components to make it complete. The plan does not address SPISD's need for a complete inventory of its computers and software. It lacks a process for a library of software and reference materials for users or staff.

It is important to inventory software periodically to ensure that all copyrights and licenses are honored and to enforce acceptable use guidelines. Computer inventories are used to track and account for valuable hardware assets.

In addition, on-site interviews with SPISD teachers identified a need for desks in their classrooms on which to place computers.

Finally, the elementary principal offers training to teachers and staff every Thursday after school. The training is not well-attended. An effective technology plan addresses all the district's technology needs including computer furniture and methods for attracting or requiring all teachers to attend training.

Recommendation 41:

Finalize and implement the district technology plan.

A technology committee composed of teachers, administrators, department and school leadership representatives should review and refine the district's technology and technology training needs, set funding and

procedure priorities and make recommendations to district leadership as part of monitoring the detailed technology plan.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent reviews district draft technology plan and presents to board for review and approval.	May 2002
2.	The elementary principal/Curriculum and Technology official communicates the plan to the appropriate personnel.	June 2002
3.	The Technology committee monitors the progress of the plan and updates it as necessary.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

SPISD has no written comprehensive disaster recovery plan for its technology operations.

While the server maintaining the district's financial and student administration data is backed up monthly, and student data is backed up by Region 1during PEIMS snapshot periods, the district does not back up files on a regular basis. Failure to make regular backups can lead to the loss of important information should a fire or other disaster strike a school.

Disaster recovery plans help districts recover technological operations quickly should a disaster occur. Important student and administrative information can be saved for use after recovery.

SPISD must be prepared to answer the following questions related to disaster recovery:

- Do we know our areas of exposure?
- Does our staff understand how to recover from a disaster?
- Do we have a contingency plan?
- Do we have a business resumption plan?
- Do we have strategies for a quick recovery?
- Do we have on-going maintenance to ensure an accurate, up-to-date recovery program?

Recommendation 42:

Develop a disaster recovery plan and test it periodically.

Due to SPISD's size, the district may not need a full, comprehensive plan, but it should draw on the key elements of a disaster recovery plan to identify the essential elements needed for a district with fewer than 300 students.

A district recovery plan should provide adequate protection for the district's growing investment in technology.

Exhibit 4-24 lists some key elements of an effective disaster recovery plan, as published by the National Center for Education Statistics. The most important items are the reciprocal agreement with a neighboring school district and documentation of action plans in the event of an emergency.

Exhibit 4-24
Key Elements of a Disaster Recovery Plan

Step	Details
Establish a disaster recovery team.	Superintendent identifies a disaster recovery team including key decision makers, building management, users, key contractors and technical staff.
Determine key information needs.	- Develop a complete list of critical activities performed within the district. - Develop an estimate of the minimum space and equipment necessary for restoring essential operations. - Develop a realistic schedule for beginning initial operations after a disaster. - Develop a list of key personnel and their responsibilities.
Determine and maintain vital information.	- Develop an inventory of all technology assets, including: data, software, hardware, documentation and supplies. - Establish a reciprocal agreement with other schools to share equipment or lease equipment to allow the district to operate critical activities after a disaster. - Make plans to obtain hardware, software and other equipment to ensure critical operations are resumed quickly. - Establish procedures to obtain off-site back-up records. - Locate support resources that might be needed

	such as power supply, equipment repair, moving and cleaning organizations. • Make arrangements with vendors to provide priority delivery for emergency orders. • Identify data recovery specialists and establish agreements for emergency support.
Specify details within the plan.	• Identify individual roles and responsibilities by name and job title so everyone knows exactly what needs to be done. • Define actions to take before a disaster. • Define actions to take at the onset of a disaster to limit damage and loss. • Identify actions to take to restore critical functions. • Define actions to take to re-establish normal operations.
Test the plan.	• Test the plan on a regular basis and document results. • Analyze results to improve the plan.
Deal with damage appropriately.	• Should a disaster occur, document costs and videotape damage. • Be prepared to overcome losses until insurance settlement issues are resolved.
Consider other significant issues.	• Simplify the plan. • Have one individual responsible for the plan, but structure and communicate the plan so others are authorized and prepared to implement the plan as needed. • Regularly update the plan to include changes made to your system.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Safeguarding Your Technology." (Modified by TSPR).

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The elementary principal develops a disaster recovery plan with assistance from Region 1 and attempts to find a neighboring district to	May 2002

		secure a reciprocal agreement.	
2.	The elementary principal tests the disaster recovery plan, documents recovery results and implements the agreement.	June 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

Appendix A
PUBLIC FORUM AND FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS

As part of the review, the Texas School Performance Review held public forums in the San Perlita Independent School District's (SPISD's)Cafeteria. Parents, teachers, and community members wrote comments on the major topics of review, and in some cases, spoke with members of the review team. These comments illustrate community perceptions of San Perlita Independent School District and do not necessarily reflect the findings or opinions of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. The following is a summary of comments received by topic.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

- The superintendent did not start visiting campuses until after surveys were distributed.
- He is an ineffective leader.
- School board is not moving toward hiring a permanent superintendent. This is never on the agenda.
- High school principal listens to teachers. He is carrying duties of the superintendent.
- Teachers haven't received their annual budget yet. We spend out of our own pockets.
- Principal does walkthroughs. Teachers appreciate this and his feedback.
- Superintendent lacks the classroom experience it would take for him to be an effective educational leader.
- CIPs are not updated yearly.
- School board has to approve minor things like the volleyball girls changing uniforms.
- School board has too much power.
- School board members aren't well educated. They need to know their boundaries.
- Overall it is a wonderful school district with much potential.
- Communication is informal with weekly faculty meetings. Principal has an agenda and teachers have an opportunity to bring up issues.
- Rules are enforced inconsistently.
- Communication at the elementary school is good with the principal. If you have a concern he tries to find a solution.
- Good communication should start at the highest level. Currently we learn of meetings through word of mouth. They should use

intercom rather than saying, "tell other girls regarding meeting." There needs to be a better way of communicating.

- Portables have no phones and problems with the intercom. The office is very slow to answer intercom - they rely on seeing the light go off.
- Communication is bad. I work at the middle school. If I go to the high school principal with a problem he sends me to the elementary school.
- Roles of different administrators are unclear to staff.
- Superintendent met with paraprofessionals twice (in May and September) to hear their concerns. Have yet to see a response or follow up.
- Superintendent plays favorites. Complaints are not held in confidence. If a parent complains about certain aides the superintendent tells the aide about the complaint.
- Kids feel intimidated.
- Not all board meetings are posted. Parents were told they need to notify school administration 30 days in advance to speak at school board meetings.
- Superintendent has never dropped by the AEP program. Does not communicate with kids or parents.
- Relatives of school board members get special treatment.
- School board meetings not well organized.
- In twelve years we've had six principals and four superintendents.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DELIVERY

- G&T - is there one? They don't test. Bilingual should not be Spanish only.
- I have a child being tested for ADHD and the school doesn't have the resources to help me in this situation. Do I have to spend more because our government will not fund programs?
- This school provides no summer classes for credit. Students who need to catch up fall behind in those credits necessary to graduate.
- The quality of teaching is not consistent across classes. Administration tolerates inconsistency.
- The most effective teachers are the ones most often "called on the carpet" and told they can't do what they want to do.
- A teacher is teaching 3 LEP classes and isn't getting the help he needs. Students are failing.
- Good teaching materials, plenty of textbooks.
- I use TEKS as a guide because there is no specific curriculum guide.
- Middle school gets all the educational materials we need. Last year we received software for a grading system.
- TAKS will require higher-level thinking skills than TAAS.

- Curriculum is vertically aligned.
- Conference time is generally spent trying to contact or meeting with parents. Little time for planning.
- Teachers do not have curriculum guides like Tex Star. Teachers develop their own lesson and use resources in textbooks and on the Internet for ideas.
- Math teacher uses connected math as a guide.
- Teachers get training they request and need.
- No consistency in AEP program. It is run by a substitute. Teachers are supposed to send work to students but some don't receive their work and fall behind.
- Parents concerned that Special Ed students are not learning and being promoted.
- Special Ed parents feel like their grievances are unheard.
- Kids were tested on the sixth or seventh week of school for ESL.
- Kids have a lot of emotional problems but cannot access counselor because she has too much to do with testing, etc.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

- P.E. teachers have never held a TEA license since they have been in this school for 3 years.
- I believe there should be more than one counselor for the entire school.
- I think the cafeteria needs another employee.
- Personnel hired should be more carefully screened.
- There is a lot of negativity.
- Substitutes no longer receive training on a regular basis. Up to two years ago the superintendent would mail training packets to substitutes.
- The district waits long periods of time before hiring a teacher and has the classroom run by a substitute.
- High turnover of substitutes.
- Teacher aides group together during lunch duty and are not watching the kids.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Community involvement is lacking.
- We have two open houses during the year, one per semester, and have poor attendance. Only parents of "good kids" attend.
- There is a lack of parental involvement in student education. Parents don't come to meet with teachers.
- Notices for PTO meetings go out on the day of the meeting.
- Parents come to school if their child is involved in an activity and for the annual carnival. It is difficult to get them to attend

parent/teacher conferences or to come visit with the teacher if a student is having problems in school. Teachers make efforts to contact parents, by phone if necessary.

- Would like to see parents take more responsibility for kids. It's as if they don't care.
- District is doing all it can to get parents involved. Work schedules make it difficult for parents to participate.
- We've tried giving food and door prizes and still can't get parents to come to the PTO meetings.
- Middle school does not have paraprofessionals to help in the classrooms and could use parent volunteers, but can't get them to come in.
- Have tried having parent coffees and a classroom designated as a parent room, but it hasn't worked.
- Low student motivation is reflective of lack of parent involvement.
- A lot of no-shows for scheduled parent conferences.

FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

- A/C's full blast with doors and windows open.
- Facilities need a facelift.
- There is a bad smell in classrooms next to the boys' restroom.
- In summer the halls are very hot.
- Why doesn't the district have money to fix facilities?
- Maintenance could be better.
- Would like more space for art class. There are 16 students in the class and not enough room.
- Special Ed shares a room with a divider.
- Wood shop has large space but lacks equipment.
- Buildings are kept clean and maintained.
- Middle school kids don't have lockers. Students have to carry their books around all day.
- If something doesn't work it gets fixed.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- We receive grant money for Pre-K and Kindergarten expansion.
- Beginning of all money frozen in October 2000.
- We miss out a lot on grants because no one is designated to write them.

PURCHASING

- Textbook purchases should be every 2 years and a trade for recycle.
- We get what we need.

- Teachers do get what they order; just don't know what the yearly budget is.

FOOD SERVICES

- The food is very good!
- Menu hasn't changed since 1991. Food is tasteless and bland.
- Students are served breakfast in the classroom, whether they want it or not. Most of the food ends up in the trash can. Teachers have asked why breakfast can't be served in the cafeteria.
- Too much starch. Food is monotonous.

TRANSPORTATION

- Last week a man boarded the bus in Port Mansfield and started to threaten the drivers. The drivers did not have the security code number to unlock the cell phone to call 911. They had to get off the bus to place the call. The good thing is the driver has a key to the restaurant they were at.
- I reside in Port Mansfield and believe a school zone (speed) sign should be put up on all streets like on a main street where people speed without caution.
- I happen to reside in Port Mansfield and on every busy street (main road) there should be a school zone sign on every stop for there are people speeding through there without a warning.
- Busses are running better than they used to.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Should a teacher aide have the authority to discipline, punish and refer students to the principal?
- Student discipline for elementary is not fair. For just a little fight among (mostly) boys the punishment is 2 days suspension - out of school. For middle school and high school they have in-school suspension.
- Security and safety of the children should be a top priority. There is no actual school security. Due to the County Sheriff's Department having very limited manpower, it is very difficult for the Sheriff's Department to be able to provide campus security.
- The principal would rather hug the student than discipline then when needed.
- Once a year local law enforcement come to the school for career week.
- Students sent to OCS and AEP are usually in the same room. Students are supposed to doing class work while in these

placements, yet are behind when they get back into the regular classroom.

- Teachers are all CPR trained and training is kept current.
- Teachers feel like emergency procedures are in place.
- Children are screamed at during lunch.
- Children in first through fourth grade were lined up against the brick wall for punishment.
- Teacher aides put down the kids. Parents brought it to the attention of administration.
- There was a threat to kids about shooting, but nobody told the teachers.

COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

- I don't think these children should have access to the Internet.
- Technology is great, but we have only one person to service all the computers. He needs an assistant.
- LCD projectors are wonderful.
- Poor library collection currently limits student ability to do research and develop research skills.
- Spanish teacher does not have computers or tables for computers in his classroom.
- Plenty of computers in high school to aid students in research.
- Would like a projector at the middle school to facilitate math class power point presentations. Currently has to borrow one from the high school. Also have a limited number of calculators.

Appendix B
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Total number of respondents: 14

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response
		40.0%	60.0%	0.0%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response
		0.0%	0.0%	93.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%

3.	How long have you been employed by San Perlita ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
		33.3%	26.7%	0.0%	6.7%	33.3%	0.0%

4.	Are you a(n):	Administrator	Clerical Staffer	Support Staffer	No Response
		13.3%	6.7%	73.3%	6.7%

5.	How long have you been employed in this capacity by San Perlita ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
		33.3%	26.7%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. District Organization and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	13.3%	33.3%	33.3%	13.3%	6.7%
2.	School board members	13.3%	46.7%	26.7%	0.0%	13.3%

	listen to the opinions and desires of others.					
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	6.7%	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%	13.3%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	20.0%	53.3%	6.7%	13.3%	6.7%
5.	Central administration is efficient.	20.0%	53.3%	6.7%	6.7%	13.3%
6.	Central administration supports the educational process.	26.7%	53.3%	13.3%	0.0%	6.7%
7.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	20.0%	53.3%	6.7%	13.3%	6.7%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	26.7%	60.0%	6.7%	6.7%	0.0%
9.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%
10.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	20.0%	20.0%	33.3%	26.7%	0.0%
11.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	13.3%	20.0%	46.7%	20.0%	0.0%
12.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	6.7%	66.7%	13.3%	13.3%	0.0%

	b. Writing	6.7%	60.0%	13.3%	20.0%	0.0%
	c. Mathematics	13.3%	66.7%	13.3%	6.7%	0.0%
	d. Science	13.3%	60.0%	13.3%	13.3%	0.0%
	e. English or Language Arts	6.7%	60.0%	13.3%	20.0%	0.0%
	f. Computer Instruction	6.7%	60.0%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%
	g. Social Studies (history or geography)	13.3%	53.3%	13.3%	20.0%	0.0%
	h. Fine Arts	26.7%	46.7%	13.3%	13.3%	0.0%
	i. Physical Education	13.3%	53.3%	13.3%	20.0%	0.0%
	j. Business Education	13.3%	46.7%	13.3%	26.7%	0.0%
	k. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	6.7%	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%	13.3%
	l. Foreign Language	6.7%	46.7%	20.0%	13.3%	13.3%
13.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	6.7%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	13.3%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0.0%	46.7%	20.0%	26.7%	6.7%
	c. Special Education	6.7%	66.7%	20.0%	0.0%	6.7%
	d. Head Start and Even Start programs	0.0%	13.3%	73.3%	0.0%	13.3%
	e. Dyslexia program	0.0%	20.0%	46.7%	13.3%	20.0%
	f. Student mentoring program	0.0%	20.0%	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%
	g. Advanced placement program	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	26.7%	13.3%
	h. Literacy program	0.0%	20.0%	46.7%	13.3%	20.0%
	i. Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0.0%	13.3%	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%
	i. Summer school	6.7%	60.0%	26.7%	6.7%	0.0%

	programs					
	k. Alternative education programs	6.7%	33.3%	26.7%	26.7%	6.7%
	l. Bilingual/English as a Second Language program	6.7%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	13.3%
	m. Career counseling program	6.7%	26.7%	40.0%	13.3%	13.3%
	n. College counseling program	13.3%	26.7%	33.3%	13.3%	13.3%
	o. Counseling the parents of students	13.3%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%	13.3%
	p. Drop out prevention program	13.3%	20.0%	20.0%	33.3%	13.3%
14.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	6.7%	26.7%	40.0%	20.0%	6.7%
15.	Teacher turnover is low.	13.3%	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%	0.0%
16.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	6.7%	40.0%	13.3%	26.7%	13.3%
17.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	6.7%	26.7%	26.7%	20.0%	20.0%
18.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	6.7%	26.7%	26.7%	20.0%	20.0%
19.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	6.7%	20.0%	40.0%	13.3%	20.0%
20.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	13.3%	53.3%	0.0%	26.7%	6.7%
21.	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	6.7%	73.3%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
22.	Students have access, when needed, to a school	26.7%	53.3%	0.0%	6.7%	13.3%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	nurse.					
23.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	13.3%	46.7%	26.7%	13.3%	0.0%

C. Personnel

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	13.3%	33.3%	20.0%	26.7%	6.7%
25.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	13.3%	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%	6.7%
26.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0.0%	46.7%	26.7%	20.0%	6.7%
27.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	6.7%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	13.3%
28.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	6.7%	13.3%
29.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0.0%	46.7%	40.0%	6.7%	6.7%
30.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	13.3%	80.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
31.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	0.0%	26.7%	33.3%	26.7%	13.3%
32.	Employees who perform below the standards of expectation are	13.3%	6.7%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%

	counseled.					
33.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	13.3%	20.0%	40.0%	13.3%	13.3%
34.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	13.3%	13.3%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
35.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	13.3%	40.0%	13.3%	26.7%	6.7%
36.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	6.7%	26.7%	20.0%	26.7%	20.0%
37.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
38.	District facilities are open for community use.	0.0%	46.7%	20.0%	13.3%	20.0%

E. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	13.3%	6.7%	26.7%	40.0%	13.3%
40.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	20.0%	13.3%

41.	Schools are clean.	13.3%	73.3%	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%
42.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	13.3%	46.7%	6.7%	26.7%	6.7%
43.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	13.3%	40.0%	13.3%	20.0%	13.3%
44.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	13.3%	40.0%	6.7%	26.7%	13.3%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
45.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	13.3%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	6.7%
46.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	13.3%	26.7%	33.3%	20.0%	6.7%
47.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	13.3%	20.0%	53.3%	6.7%	6.7%
48.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	13.3%	13.3%	53.3%	13.3%	6.7%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	13.3%	33.3%	20.0%	33.3%	0.0%
50.	Purchasing acquires high- quality materials	13.3%	33.3%	40.0%	13.3%	0.0%

	and equipment at the lowest cost.					
51.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requester.	13.3%	40.0%	40.0%	6.7%	0.0%
52.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	13.3%	40.0%	26.7%	20.0%	0.0%
53.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	6.7%	60.0%	26.7%	6.7%	0.0%
54.	Textbooks are in good shape	6.7%	60.0%	20.0%	13.3%	0.0%
55.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources for students.	6.7%	53.3%	13.3%	6.7%	20.0%

H. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
56.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	20.0%	53.3%	6.7%	13.3%	6.7%
57.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	13.3%	33.3%	6.7%	20.0%	26.7%
58.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	26.7%	33.3%
59.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0.0%	6.7%	73.3%	6.7%	13.3%
60.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	6.7%	66.7%	13.3%	13.3%
61.	A good working arrangement exists	6.7%	20.0%	46.7%	13.3%	13.3%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	between local law enforcement and the district.					
62.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	13.3%	33.3%	26.7%	13.3%	13.3%

I. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	Students regularly use computers.	13.3%	66.7%	13.3%	0.0%	6.7%
64.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	20.0%	73.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
65.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	20.0%	46.7%	6.7%	20%	6.7%
66.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
67.	The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
68.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	13.3%	60.0%	13.3%	6.7%	6.7%
69.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	26.7%	60.0%	6.7%	0.0%	6.7%

Verbatim: District Administrative and Support Staff

- Some teachers do not teach what and how they are required to. It very well shows when TAAS comes around - educators, teachers do not care about their teaching they are only here to get their paycheck.

- Our school needs stronger administrators. Tired of the buddy system. We used to have great discipline in our school. Now it's all gone. Teachers cannot get along, especially in the high school. We need teachers that are here for the students not just for a paycheck.
- The paraeducators' moral is very low. There is no equality. Some have less years on the job, yet they have more privileges and say so to the administration. They are the ones who have been on the job longer. The principals are treated with no respect and they do nothing about the situation. The principals have preferences.
- I think the educational prospects here in our school are accurate and good.
- The educational performance is not so much the problem here in San Perlita as is the administrative one. He cannot or does not know how to lead our district. Does not care about the little people.

Appendix C
TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Total number of respondents: 14

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Answer
		28.6%	57.1%	14.3%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American		Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Answer
		42.9%	0.0%		35.7%	7.1%	0.0%	14.3%

3.	How long have you been employed by San Perlita ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	20+ Years	No Answer
		14.3%	28.6%	14.3	21.4%	21.4%	0.0%

4.	What grade(s) do you teach this year?	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third
		14.3%	14.3%	21.4%	21.4%	28.6%
		Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth
		28.6%	35.7%	35.7%	35.7%	28.6%
		Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth	
		35.7%	35.7%	35.7%	28.6%	

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. District Organization & Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings	14.3%	21.4%	57.1%	7.1%	0.0%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	14.3%	57.1%	7.1%	21.4%	0.0%

	Survey Questions					
3.	School board members work well with the superintendent.	14.3%	50.0%	35.7%	0.0%	0.0%
4.	The school board has a good image in the community.	14.3%	35.7%	28.6%	14.3%	7.1%
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	14.3%	21.4%	7.1%	50.0%	7.1%
6.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	14.3%	64.2%	0.0%	14.3%	7.1%
7.	Central administration is efficient.	21.4%	14.3%	0.0%	57.1%	7.1%
8.	Central administration supports the educational process	14.3%	35.7%	7.1%	42.8%	0.0%
9.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	14.3%	35.7%	21.4%	28.6%	0.0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	21.4%	64.2%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%
11.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	0.0%	85.7%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%
12.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	7.1%	35.7%	28.6%	21.4%	7.1%
13.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	7.1%	35.7%	28.6%	21.4%	7.1%

14.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	7.1%	42.8%	14.3%	35.7%	0.0%
15.	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	7.1%	50.0%	14.3%	28.6%	0.0%
16.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	7.1%	64.2%	7.1%	21.4%	0.0%
17.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	14.3%	64.2%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%
	b. Writing	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	c. Mathematics	35.7%	64.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	d. Science	14.3%	78.6%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
	e. English or Language Arts	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	f. Computer Instruction	21.4%	57.1%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%
	g. Social Studies (history or geography)	28.6%	64.2%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
	h. Fine Arts	35.7%	42.8%	0.0%	21.4%	0.0%
	i. Physical Education	21.4%	71.4%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
	j. Business Education	14.3%	50.0%	21.4%	14.3%	0.0%
	k. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	14.3%	28.6%	21.4%	35.7%	0.0%
	l. Foreign Language	14.3%	35.7%	28.6%	21.4%	0.0%
18.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	0.0%	85.7%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	7.1%	42.8%	7.1%	42.8%	0.0%

	c. Special Education	42.8%	35.7%	14.3%	7.1%	0.0%
	d. Head Start and Even Start programs	0.0%	14.3%	64.2%	21.4%	0.0%
	e. Dyslexia program	14.3%	28.6%	35.7%	21.4%	0.0%
	f. Student mentoring program	0.0%	0.0%	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%
	g. Advanced placement program	0.0%	28.6%	50.0%	21.4%	0.0%
	h. Literacy program	0.0%	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	0.0%
	i. Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0.0%	35.7%	50.0%	14.3%	0.0%
	j. Summer school programs	21.4%	64.2%	7.1%	7.1%	0.0%
	k. Alternative education programs	14.3%	21.4%	35.7%	28.6%	0.0%
	l. "English as a second language" program	14.3%	14.3%	7.1%	50.0%	14.3%
	m. Career counseling program	0.0%	42.8%	35.7%	21.4%	0.0%
	n. College counseling program	21.4%	35.7%	21.4%	21.4%	0.0%
	o. Counseling the parents of students	0.0%	50.0%	35.7%	14.3%	0.0%
	p. Drop out prevention program	0.0%	35.7%	57.1%	7.1%	0.0%
19.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	28.6%	50.0%	14.3%	7.1%	0.0%
20.	Teacher turnover is low.	21.4%	28.6%	7.1%	35.7%	7.1%
21.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	7.1%	42.8%	14.3%	35.7%	0.0%
22.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	7.1%	35.7%	21.4%	35.7%	0.0%
23.	Teachers are rewarded	7.1%	21.4%	7.1%	42.8%	21.4%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	for superior performance.					
24.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	14.3%	35.7%	14.3%	14.3%	21.4%
25.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	14.3%	78.6%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
26.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	14.3%	64.2%	0.0%	21.4%	0.0%
27.	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	42.8%	50.0%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%
28.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	42.8%	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

C. Personnel

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
29.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	14.3%	35.7%	0.0%	42.8%	7.1%
30.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0.0%	42.8%	14.3%	35.7%	7.1%
31.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	7.1%	50.0%	7.1%	28.6%	7.1%
32.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0.0%	50.0%	28.6%	14.3%	7.1%
33.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0.0%	42.8%	35.7%	14.3%	7.1%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
34.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	21.4%	42.8%	21.4%	7.1%	7.1%
35.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	42.8%	57.1%	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.	0.0%	7.1%	21.4%	50.0%	21.4%
37.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	7.1%	21.4%	35.7%	21.4%	14.3%
38.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	7.1%	42.8%	35.7%	14.3%	0.0%
39.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0.0%	21.4%	7.1%	28.6%	42.8%

D. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
40.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	14.3%	71.4%	0.0%	7.1%	7.1%
41.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0.0%	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	0.0%
42.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0.0%	21.4%	14.3%	57.1%	7.1%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
43.	District facilities are open for community use.	14.3%	64.2%	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%

E. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
44.	The district plans for facilities far enough into the future to support enrollment growth.	7.1%	35.7%	21.4%	28.6%	7.1%
45.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0.0%	28.6%	35.7%	28.6%	7.1%
46.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0.0%	21.4%	57.1%	14.3%	7.1%
47.	The quality of new construction is excellent.	0.0%	35.7%	50.0%	14.3%	0.0%
48.	Schools are clean.	14.3%	71.4%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%
49.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	7.1%	64.2%	7.1%	21.4%	0.0%
50.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0.0%	57.1%	7.1%	21.4%	14.3%
51.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	7.1%	78.6%	0.0%	7.1%	7.1%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
52.	Site-based budgeting is	14.3%	14.3%	21.4%	35.7%	14.3%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.					
53.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	14.3%	28.6%	42.8%	7.1%	7.1%
54.	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	21.4%	28.6%	21.4%	28.6%	0.0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
55.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	7.1%	50.0%	0.0%	35.7%	7.1%
56.	Purchasing acquires high quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	7.1%	57.1%	14.3%	21.4%	0.0%
57.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	14.3%	42.8%	21.4%	21.4%	0.0%
58.	Vendors are selected competitively.	21.4%	42.8%	35.7%	0.0%	0.0%
59.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	28.6%	42.8%	14.3%	7.1%	7.1%
60.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	28.6%	57.1%	7.1%	7.1%	0.0%
61.	Textbooks are in good shape	28.6%	50.0%	14.3%	7.1%	0.0%
62.	The school library meets student needs for	0.0%	50.0%	14.3%	14.3%	21.4%

books and other resources.					

H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
63.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	7.1%	50.0%	14.3%	28.6%	0.0%
64.	Food is served warm.	14.3%	64.2%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%
65.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of the day.	21.4%	57.1%	14.3%	7.1%	0.0%
66.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	28.6%	64.2%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
67.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	21.4%	50.0%	0.0%	21.4%	7.1%
68.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	28.6%	57.1%	7.1%	7.1%	0.0%
69.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	14.3%	64.2%	14.3%	7.1%	0.0%

I. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
70.	School disturbances are infrequent.	28.6%	71.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
71.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	35.7%	64.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
72.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0.0%	42.8%	7.1%	50.0%	0.0%
73.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0.0%	42.8%	7.1%	50.0%	0.0%
74.	Security personnel have a good working	0.0%	21.4%	78.6%	0.0%	0.0%

	Survey Questions					
	relationship with principals and teachers.					
75.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	7.1%	85.7%	7.1%	0.0%
76.	A good working arrangement exists between local law enforcement and the district.	0.0%	71.4%	21.4%	7.1%	0.0%
77.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	7.1%	64.2%	7.1%	21.4%	0.0%
78.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	21.4%	28.6%	21.4%	21.4%	7.1%

J. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
79.	Students regularly use computers.	42.8%	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
80.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	28.6%	50.0%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%
81.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	14.3%	64.2%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%
82.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	21.4%	64.2%	0.0%	7.1%	7.1%
83.	The district meets student needs in classes in computer fundamentals.	28.6%	35.7%	21.4%	14.3%	0.0%
84.	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer	7.1%	42.8%	28.6%	21.4%	0.0%

	skills.					
85.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	35.7%	42.8%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%

Verbatim: Teachers

- San Perlita is a good school. We've got good teachers and students. Our problems lie with the administration. They are not good instructional leaders. We've had too many administrators leave and new ones coming in. They come here to get some experience and then they move on in a year or two.
- We have had five different superintendents in the past 20 years. They are uncertified when they are hired and as soon as they get their certification (PASS THE TEST) they leave for other positions.
- The principals seem to be afraid of parents and confrontations so parents seem to rule especially those who have misbehaving students. I would appreciate strong leadership skills in administrators. If they don't have these skills they should not be allowed to lead the district.
- Some teachers are committed, but the majority is not. Teachers affect students in their development towards having positive and negative aspects towards education. What one teacher builds up, three others tear down!
- The school board seems to be lacking the understanding that our district is sorely lacking a well-rounded superintendent. There seems to be no push in that direction since October 2000 when the interim superintendent (our former business manager) was hired for the position of interim superintendent. Our interim superintendent seems to lack both leadership and people skills. He is rarely seen on any campus doing walk-throughs or simply making his presence known. He rarely arrives to work before any of his employees - oftentimes arriving at 9:00 a.m. or later. He rarely attends faculty meetings - not difficult to accomplish with a district as tiny as ours. When he does show up at meetings, and he speaks, he can hardly be heard. Everyone in this district also knows he has his favorites and confides only in them; yet we (as the majority of teachers here) are powerless to stop any injustices occurring due to the fact that it seems no one listens (school board/interim superintendent) and/or cares.
- Through a USDA grant and a local telephone company (Valley Telephone Company) our high school students have a computer in their home. Computers are provided by the grant. The telephone

company then pays for a DSL hookup to the Internet for each family.

- We badly need a qualified superintendent who has people skills and will be a good leader. We can't go through the years with only an interim superintendent who has no idea of what the job takes. School board doesn't see that, only us employees.
- San Perlita ISD lacks building facilities. We need additional rooms to accommodate growth.
- This district needs more communication between superintendent, principal and teachers. Also, teachers are told one thing and yet another thing will be done. The administration is not allowing for the district to excel.
- San Perlita ISD is a good district with few minor problems. Consistency in discipline of students is one of them.
- Playground equipment on the school grounds but is not a district project (not set up by school employees) is not safe.
- Better support from administration for teachers.
- Better access to the Internet. Ordering and receiving technology equipment purchased with the grant funding (money has already been received) takes months.
- It is hard to know what the administration looks for because of inconsistency.
- We are a small district and some questions really do not apply. We have a wonderful community of working families who would like to do more to help their children. Many of our students go to large colleges and are educationally ready, but not mature enough for the large classes and professors who are not as concerned for the individual student.

Appendix D
PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Total number of respondents: 41

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1.	Gender (Optional)	No Response	Male	Female
		9.8%	26.8%	63.4%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	No Response	Anglo	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
		17.1%	31.7%	0.0%	51.2%	0.0%	0.0%

3.	How long have you lived in San Perlita ISD	No response	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11 Years or More
		4.9%	36.6%	14.6%	43.9%

4.	What grade level(s) does your child(ren) attend?	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5
		4.9%	9.8%	19.5%	9.8%	12.2%	14.6%	9.8%
		6	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
		17.1%	17.1%	17.1%	7.3%	4.9%	12.2%	14.6%

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. District Organization and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	17.1%	34.1%	24.4%	14.6%	9.8%
2.	School board members listen to the opinions and desires of others.	12.2%	26.8%	26.8%	21.9%	12.2%
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective	19.5%	39.0%	21.9%	19.5%	0.0%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	instructional leader.					
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	19.5%	46.3%	24.4%	9.8%	0.0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	The district provides a high quality of services.	9.8%	43.4%	17.1%	27.3%	2.4%
6.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	7.3%	51.2%	24.4%	14.6%	0.0%
7.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	7.3%	36.6%	34.1%	17.1%	4.9%
8.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	12.2%	19.5%	39.0%	21.9%	7.3%
9.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	12.2%	63.4%	9.8%	14.6%	0.0%
	b. Writing	9.8%	65.9%	9.8%	14.6%	0.0%
	c. Mathematics	14.6%	63.4%	7.3%	12.2%	2.4%
	d. Science	17.1%	66.3%	11.7%	4.9%	0.0%
	e. English or Language Arts	12.2%	68.3%	9.8%	9.8%	0.0%
	f. Computer Instruction	14.6%	56.1%	19.5%	7.3%	2.4%
	g. Social Studies (history or geography)	12.2%	75.6%	7.3%	4.9%	0.0%
	h. Fine Arts	12.2%	58.5%	14.6%	7.3%	7.3%
	i. Physical Education	11.8%	60.9%	7.3%	11.8%	7.3%

	j. Business Education	9.8%	53.7%	21.2%	7.3%	7.3%
	k. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	11.8%	34.1%	27.7%	14.6%	11.8%
	l. Foreign Language	9.8%	39.0%	26.9%	12.2%	9.8%
10.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	14.6%	36.6%	19.5%	19.5%	7.3%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	19.5%	41.5%	9.8%	24.4%	4.9%
	c. Special Education	21.9%	41.5%	14.6%	17.1%	4.9%
	d. Head Start and Even Start programs	12.2%	21.6%	49.2%	14.6%	2.4%
	e. Dyslexia program	12.2%	7.3%	46.3%	24.4%	9.8%
	f. Student mentoring program	4.9%	24.4%	36.6%	26.8%	7.3%
	g. Advanced placement program	12.2%	12.2%	46.8%	19.0%	9.8%
	h. Literacy program	12.2%	21.9%	36.6%	24.4%	4.9%
	i. Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	9.8%	12.2%	41.9%	17.1%	19.0%
	j. Summer school programs	19.5%	39.0%	19.5%	9.8%	12.2%
	k. Alternative education programs	12.2%	36.6%	24.4%	14.6%	9.8%
	l. "English as a Second Language" program	14.6%	21.9%	41.5%	14.6%	7.3%
	m. Career counseling program	17.1%	36.6%	24.4%	19.5%	2.4%
	n. College counseling program	14.6%	39.0%	26.8%	17.1%	2.4%
	o. Counseling the parents of students	14.6%	34.1%	21.9%	19.5%	7.3%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	p. Drop out prevention program	4.9%	17.1%	48.8%	21.9%	7.3%
11.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	24.4%	29.3%	12.2%	19.5%	12.2%
12.	Teacher turnover is low.	12.2%	29.3%	41.5%	12.2%	2.4%
13.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	17.1%	26.8%	24.4%	9.8%	21.9%
14.	A substitute teacher rarely teaches my child.	4.9%	53.7%	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
15.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	9.8%	56.1%	14.6%	12.2%	2.4%
16.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	14.6%	58.5%	9.8%	12.2%	2.4%
17.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	24.4%	60.9%	2.4%	9.,8%	0.0%
18.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	14.6%	53.7%	14.6%	12.2%	2.4%
19.	The district provides a high quality education.	21.9%	39.0%	7.3%	29.3%	2.4%
20.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	19.5%	21.9%	17.1%	36.6%	4.9%

C. Community Involvement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	12.2%	36.6%	12.2%	34.1%	2.4%
22.	District facilities are open for community	12.2%	41.5%	26.8%	12.2%	4.9%

	Survey Questions					
	use.					
23.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	7.3%	36.6%	17.1%	29.3%	9.8%

D. Facilities Use and Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	9.8%	19.5%	31.7%	34.1%	4.9%
25.	Schools are clean.	21.9%	68.3%	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%
26.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	21.9%	53.7%	21.9%	2.4%	0.0%
27.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	21.9%	58.5%	17.1%	2.4%	0.0%
28.	The district uses very few portable buildings.	19.5%	63.4%	7.3%	9.8%	0.0%
29.	Emergency maintenance is handled expeditiously.	19.5%	39.0%	31.7%	9.8%	0.0%

E. Asset and Risk Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
30.	My property tax bill is reasonable for the educational services delivered.	17.1%	46.3%	14.6%	14.6%	7.3%
31.	Board members and administrators do a good job explaining the use of tax dollars.	17.1%	24.4%	24.4%	21.9%	12.2%

F. Financial Management

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
32.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	7.3%	21.9%	43.9%	24.4%	2.4%
33.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal management techniques.	7.3%	17.1%	63.4%	12.2%	0.0%
34.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	9.8%	21.9%	53.7%	14.6%	0.0%
35.	Financial reports are made available to community members when asked.	9.8%	17.1%	58.5%	12.2%	2.4%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	12.2%	68.3%	9.8%	9.8%	0.0%
37.	Textbooks are in good shape	12.2%	44.3%	14.6%	26.5%	2.4%
38.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	14.6%	43.9%	9.8%	21.9%	9.8%

H. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39.	My child regularly	14.6%	21.9%	14.6%	34.1%	9.8%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	purchases his/her meal from the cafeteria.					
40.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	29.3%	58.5%	7.3%	4.9%	0.0%
41.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	12.2%	31.7%	17.1%	24.4%	14.6%
42.	Food is served warm.	9.8%	63.4%	12.2%	12.2%	2.4%
43.	Students have enough time to eat.	7.3%	48.8%	14.6%	19.5%	7.3%
44.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of the day.	12.2%	60.9%	9.8%	9.8%	4.9%
45.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	9.8%	56.1%	19.5%	4.9%	7.3%
46.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	7.3%	56.1%	14.6%	14.6%	4.9%
47.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	12.2%	65.9%	9.8%	7.3%	2.4%
48.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	17.1%	63.4%	12.2%	2.4%	2.4%

I. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49.	My child regularly rides the bus.	14.6%	17.1%	26.8%	24.4%	17.1%
50.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus	12.2%	21.9%	48.8%	12.2%	2.4%
51.	The length of the student's bus ride is reasonable.	4.9%	26.8%	51.2%	12.2%	0.0%
52.	The drop-off zone at	19.5%	53.7%	21.9%	0.0%	0.0%

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	the school is safe.					
53.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	7.3%	24.4%	58.5%	2.4%	2.4%
54.	My child regularly rides the bus.	14.6%	17.1%	26.8%	24.4%	17.1%
55.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus	12.2%	21.9%	48.8%	12.2%	2.4%
56.	The length of the student's bus ride is reasonable.	4.9%	26.8%	51.2%	12.2%	0.0%
57.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	19.5%	53.7%	21.9%	0.0%	0.0%
58.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	7.3%	24.4%	58.5%	2.4%	2.4%
59.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	9.8%	29.3%	51.2%	4.9%	0.0%
60.	Buses arrive and depart on time.	9.8%	36.6%	41.5%	7.3%	2.4%
61.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	14.6%	48.8%	26.8%	4.9%	0.0%
62.	Buses seldom break down.	12.2%	34.1%	31.7%	14.6%	4.9%
63.	Buses are clean.	20.1%	42.3%	13.0%	24.6%	0.0%
64.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	14.6%	31.7%	31.7%	7.3%	12.2%
65.	The district has a simple method to request buses for special events.	12.2%	46.3%	34.1%	4.9%	0.0%

J. Safety and Security

Survey Questions	Strongly	Agree	No	Disagree	Strongly

		Agree		Opinion		Disagree
66.	Students feel safe and secure at school.	14.6%	70.7%	4.9%	4.9%	2.4%
67.	School disturbances are infrequent.	12.2%	73.2%	4.9%	4.9%	2.4%
68.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	24.4%	60.9%	7.3%	7.3%	0.0%
69.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	9.8%	34.1%	14.6%	29.3%	12.2%
70.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	9.8%	48.8%	17.1%	21.9%	2.4%
71.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	7.3%	43.9%	41.5%	4.9%	2.4%
72.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	7.3%	41.5%	41.5%	4.9%	2.4%
73.	A good working arrangement exists between local law enforcement and the district.	2.4%	51.2%	34.1%	9.8%	2.4%
74.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	9.8%	43.9%	12.2%	19.5%	12.2%
75.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	4.9%	53.7%	21.9%	12.2%	7.3%

K. Computers and Technology

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
76. Teachers know how to teach computer science and other technology-related courses.	7.3%	39.0%	29.3%	19.5%	2.4%
77. Computers are new	14.6%	63.4%	17.1%	4.9%	0.0%

	enough to be useful to teach students.					
78.	The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	9.8%	68.3%	12.2%	7.3%	2.4%
79.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	14.6%	36.6%	29.3%	14.6%	4.9%
80.	Students have easy access to the Internet.	26.8%	56.1%	17.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Verbatim: Parents

- I feel my children are getting a reasonably good education in the basics. I don't feel they are being taught that this is the USA at times and they seem to be more intent on Mexican holidays and culture and even diet and language. English should be the first language not a second. It's time for us to practice the American culture and holidays and language and we could save a lot of money by concentrating on that.
- Our school district does the best they can to provide for students due to the poor resources we have in the surrounding areas. I'm very pleased and satisfied that everyone at the ISD works in unity and there is no friction to where it would affect our children. It's a small school, but well recommended.
- They need to find more teachers with more new and fresh ideas to reach some of the kids. A lot of teacher aides don't have enough teacher education. I am very concerned with the fact that the food served is not very appealing to the children. They spend 8 hours in school, 3 out of 5 days my children don't eat at school due to the food. It just doesn't look good or taste good. Thank you for being concerned.
- I am worried that my children will be behind and not ready for college courses.
- I have five children and they have all attended San Perlita School and I as a parent am proud, satisfied, and pleased with the education my children have received at San Perlita ISD.
- In the past few years it has been having some problems. We would be more than happy to be involved more in the school but we are the kind of parents who work from sun up until sun down. Have very little time to do anything else and that time is spent together as a family. We know of a few families who will be leaving the

district because of its' failure to give students the attention they need. I don't know if it is the reason because we are so small that our district is not heard. I feel that as small as the school is they should not have a problem taking care of each and every individual student. Apparently they are. I have faith that they will get it right, but in the meantime the students suffer. Thank you.

- Some substitutes try their best in teaching and some don't bother. The food sometimes is not cooked right it doesn't taste good. I don't believe they should serve pizza in the morning for breakfast.
- First of all, the coach should play everybody the same if they go to all the practices not just his favorite ones. Only certain people or kids are allowed to dribble or play basketball games. Kids should not be treated like they are in the Army. All children should be treated the same. There is not one child that is better than another.
- The thing that I do not like is that if your child leaves to a doctor's appointment or leaves in case of an emergency that they have to get a doctor's excuse. School finishes at 3:30. Sometimes the kids get out at 2:30 or 3:00 and they need an excuse. That is ridiculous. Thanks for your time.
- I believe that San Perlita ISD needs more certified teachers plus coaches and nurses. I feel that students are not promptly disciplined correctly.
- The staff does not wear clothing that is respectable. Some staff members wear very tight clothing revealing too much.
- Teachers do not treat students properly. They yell plus are very rude and at the end of they school day they are not ready at 3:30 p.m. and don't let them out in time. But again, not all teachers do wrong some are excellent teachers.
- Had a very hard-working and good-hearted teacher last year but she is not here this year. I think she was one of the best teachers we had. This teacher had my son wanting to go to school. Thank you.
- I am very happy about the performance that our school shows for education. For our students sometimes we look for good things to happen at our school as far as the education of our students. Thank you.
- The only thing that I'm aware of is that they should have bilingual classes.
- San Perlita has had one or more uncertified teacher full time but they have been good instructors. The ISD does not have adequate staff for Gifted and Talented or Accelerated Readers. San Perlita does not recognize learning-disabled or special- needs children. A student can go through the entire K-12 district and still graduate without speaking Spanish or a second language.
- I think this ISD is an excellent place for children to get an education.

- Nothing is improving. Building is old and musty. A lot of students and or teachers miss school days due to colds, viruses, allergies. Parent/teacher relationship never is accomplished. Lack of interest sometimes more from parent side, but still within some teachers as well. Not enough funds for educational tools, not enough space for the children. Some rooms have 22 or more students in a room that fits just 15 comfortably. Teachers don't try to improve because their hands are tied. It all begins from the higher up and things there are being ignored.
- Something more could be done for Gifted and Talented.
- I think that the school focuses too much on the TAAS test. They should focus more on teaching the basics. The TAAS test rates the teachers not the students. If they don't pass it's the teacher's fault not the student's.
- Because the school is small the atmosphere is very conducive to learning, feeling secure, and cooperative relationships are established between administrators/teachers and students/teachers and administrators-teachers to parents. However, small has its downside. Lack of a variety of services like band, choir, football or alternatives such as music or soccer. The people are nice, educated, trained and willing to meet parents with issues.
- The math for grade 7 is hard. A lot of the students say it is like college math.
- Facilities are lacking. New/modern classrooms are needed.
- San Perlita School is a great school to send my daughters. The only thing that I disagree is about school uniforms. Teachers say it saves parents money, but it does not. I have to buy uniforms for school, plus I still have to buy them clothes for the weekends and for mass on Sundays. I only wish our school was like it used to be where children could wear what they feel more comfortable with.

Appendix E
STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Total number of respondents: 29

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1.	Gender (Optional)	No Response	Male	Female
		3.5%	37.9%	58.6%

2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	No Response	Anglo	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Other
		3.6%	10.3%	3.4%	72.4%	0.0%	10.3%

3.	What is your classification?	No Response	Junior	Senior
		0.0%	55.2%	44.8%

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	6.9%	20.7%	51.7%	17.2%	3.4%
2.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	3.4%	31.0%	37.9%	24.1%	3.4%
3.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:					
	a. Reading	10.3%	48.3%	24.1%	13.8%	3.4%
	b. Writing	24.1%	44.8%	24.1%	3.4%	3.4%
	d. Mathematics	17.2%	58.6%	13.8%	3.4%	6.9%
	e. Science	6.9%	51.7%	20.7%	13.8%	6.9%
	f. English or Language Arts	20.7%	48.3%	17.2%	10.3%	3.4%
	g. Computer Instruction	0.0%	41.4%	27.6%	17.2%	13.8%
	h. Social Studies (history or geography)	10.3%	51.7%	17.2%	10.3%	10.3%
	i. Fine Arts	27.6%	48.3%	17.2%	3.4%	3.4%
	j. Physical Education	17.2%	44.8%	27.6%	3.4%	6.9%

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	k. Business Education	6.9%	37.9%	27.6%	17.2%	10.3%
	l. Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	6.9%	13.8%	48.3%	20.7%	10.3%
	m. Foreign Language	6.9%	55.2%	24.1%	10.3%	3.4%
4.	The district has effective special programs for the following:					
	a. Library Service	24.1%	44.8%	27.6%	0.0%	3.4%
	b. Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	10.3%	24.1%	38.0%	13.8%	13.8%
	c. Special Education	10.3%	31.0%	34.5%	20.7%	3.4%
	d. Student mentoring program	6.9%	10.3%	55.2%	13.8%	13.8%
	e. Advanced placement program	10.3%	20.7%	51.7%	6.9%	10.3%
	f. Career counseling program	6.9%	20.7%	34.5%	24.1%	13.8%
	g. College counseling program	3.4%	20.7%	41.4%	17.2%	17.2%
5.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	24.1%	41.4%	13.8%	17.2%	3.4%
6.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	3.4%	41.4%	24.1%	27.6%	3.4%
7.	The district provides a high quality education.	10.3%	24.1%	37.9%	24.1%	3.4%
8.	The district has high quality teachers.	3.4%	20.7%	41.4%	17.2%	17.2%

B. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9.	Schools are clean.	10.3%	31.0%	27.6%	27.6%	3.4%
10.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	6.9%	51.7%	31.0%	3.4%	6.9%
11.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	3.4%	27.6%	37.9%	24.1%	6.9%
12.	Emergency maintenance is handled timely.	6.9%	51.7%	31.0%	10.3%	0.0%

C. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

13.	There are enough textbooks in all my classes.	6.9%	20.7%	37.9%	17.2%	17.2%
14.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	6.9%	55.2%	31.0%	0.0%	6.9%
15.	Textbooks are in good shape	0.0%	24.1%	27.6%	37.9%	10.3%
16.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	34.5%	27.6%	17.2%	10.3%	10.3%

D. Food Services

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17.	The school breakfast program is available to all children.	31.0%	37.9%	20.7%	6.9%	3.4%
18.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0.0%	10.3%	31.0%	17.2%	41.4%
19.	Food is served warm.	3.4%	24.1%	20.7%	27.6%	24.1%
20.	Students have enough time to eat.	3.4%	44.8%	10.3%	20.7%	20.7%
21.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of the day.	13.8%	65.5%	13.8%	0.0%	6.9%
22.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	10.3%	34.5%	20.7%	17.2%	17.2%
23.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	3.4%	44.8%	34.5%	13.8%	3.4%
24.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	13.8%	44.8%	34.5%	0.0%	6.9%
25.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	6.9%	51.7%	24.1%	10.3%	6.9%

E. Transportation

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26.	I regularly ride the bus.	6.9%	10.3%	37.9%	27.6%	17.2%
27.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus	6.9%	17.2%	72.4%	3.4%	0.0%
28.	The length of my bus ride is reasonable.	3.4%	17.2%	68.9%	6.9%	3.4%
29.	The drop-off zone at the school	3.4%	37.9%	55.2%	3.4%	0.0%

	Survey Questions					
	is safe.					
30.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	3.4%	10.3%	79.3%	3.4%	3.4%
31.	The bus stop is within walking distance from our home.	6.9%	6.9%	72.4%	6.9%	6.9%
32.	Buses arrive and leave on time.	6.9%	20.7%	68.9%	0.0%	3.4%
33.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	6.9%	31.0%	58.6%	0.0%	3.4%
34.	Buses seldom break down.	13.8%	10.3%	68.9%	3.4%	3.4%
35.	Buses are clean.	3.4%	6.9%	65.5%	17.2%	6.9%
36.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	3.4%	20.7%	58.6%	10.3%	6.9%

F. Safety and Security

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
37.	I feel safe and secure at school.	13.8%	41.4%	20.7%	20.7%	3.4%
38.	School disturbances are infrequent.	10.3%	24.1%	51.7%	6.9%	6.9%
39.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	31.0%	41.4%	24.1%	3.4%	0.0%
40.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	10.3%	13.8%	41.4%	13.8%	20.7%
41.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	17.2%	10.3%	37.9%	31.0%	3.4%
42.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	3.4%	17.2%	62.1%	0.0%	17.2%
43.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0.0%	27.6%	58.6%	3.4%	10.3%
44.	A good working arrangement exists between local law enforcement and the district.	0.0%	31.0%	58.6%	6.9%	3.4%
45.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	6.9%	34.5%	41.4%	6.9%	10.3%
46.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	6.9%	20.7%	55.2%	3.4%	13.8%

G. Computers and Technology

	Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
47.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	17.2%	41.4%	17.2%	10.3%	13.8%
48.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	6.9%	24.1%	37.9%	13.8%	17.2%
49.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	27.6%	20.7%	31.0%	10.3%	10.3%
50.	The district offers enough classes in computer fundamentals.	10.3%	24.1%	34.5%	20.7%	10.3%
51.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	17.2%	20.7%	27.6%	13.8%	20.7%
52.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	27.6%	27.6%	20.7%	6.9%	17.2%

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Verbatim: Students

- I feel that this school needs a lot more to it because there are too many problems. For example the teachers are very nosy and butt into the students lives.
- Our counselor is not very good at all because she takes her time to do things.
- Our principal needs to treat all students the same.
- Staff in the high school needs to be cleaner and dress professionally.
- As for our teachers, we need new ones that have a better degree and just didn't pass out worksheets and sit behind their desks.
- I personally think our school education isn't any good since the early 90s'. We used to have one of the best educational performances in the Valley and now it isn't as strong as it used to be. I also think our whole school is coming down. This school was very disciplined in every aspect but now no one even cares.
- Our school board and superintendent both aren't any good as they used to be. Teachers used to care about students and now they don't. Our middle school is going down dramatically, which I personally think this school is going down in every aspect. But I will be emailing you all more about our school.
- I think that the educational performance of the school needs to improve because we need better teachers, better food in the cafeteria and more sports. Also we need to have better schools and more students in our schools.

- We need better teachers and better types of food and more types of sports.
- What I think mostly everything is OK except for cafeteria food. I think they could do better. Another thing is the computer education. We need a teacher that is a computer expert and we should have more access to the Internet not only for research once in awhile.
- We need better vocational classes and teachers.
- This school needs better electives, vocational classes and a better world history teacher.
- There is a large bee population constantly seen in the elementary bathrooms and around our trash cans.
- The middle school bathrooms strongly smell of gasoline and the H.S. bathroom's pipes are very old, the water smelling like sulfur.
- Bees in elementary classrooms. Computer in Art room still has no Internet and no computers in Spanish room. Art budget has still not been given to teacher. Reading ability should be improved through phonetics at a young age - some twelfth grade students still cannot read well.
- No G.T. program offered.
- Takes 2 years for a book to be purchased upon student request. Library hardly orders books reasonably asked for by students.
- There is also no college prep course available for students. Via Net room and adjacent room empty.
- No music teacher was hired this year; some students purchased their own instruments = TALENT LOST.
- Teachers acquired AP certification over summer, and then classes were not offered. TAAS is stressed, but higher education isn't.
- Example of lunch menu: Corn Dog, Corn Bread, Corn on the Cob, Chili - cold and not healthy.
- Students punished excessively for small wrongdoings; punished minutely for large problems.
- Overall student effort is small because they believe a good set of grades is not necessary, and so they do the smallest amount of work in order to get by. Motivation given by teachers, but students do not understand.
- They need better food for breakfast, and a wider variety of choice. Other than that, the school is a clean and safe place to be in.
- The food is the only thing that needs to be better, most of the time it is cold. Plus it tastes ugly like it's no good.
- I hate the fact teachers don't get along. When that happens it affects us as students.