

March 5, 2003

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

Fellow Texans:

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


In August 2001, I released the results of my review of the district's operations. This review offered 39 recommendations that collectively could save GCISD taxpayers a net of \$196,859 by 2005-06. The review also noted a number of GCISD's exemplary programs and model services provided by district administrators, teachers, and staff.

In December 2002, we returned to check on the district's progress implementing recommendations. Over the last year, GCISD has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, 38 of the recommendations, or nearly 98 percent. The district has spent a net of \$64,675 to date but expects savings to grow to \$50,525 over five years.

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

Thanks for all that you do for Texas.

Sincerely,



Carole Keeton Strayhorn
Texas Comptroller

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

Introduction

In March 2001, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn began reviewing the Grape Creek Independent School District (GCISD) as part of a six-district project that also included reviews of the neighboring Wall, Veribest, Water Valley, Christoval and San Angelo districts. Comptroller Strayhorn issued a final report in August 2001 detailing 39 recommendations that could result in net savings of more than \$196,000 over the next five years for GCISD. The Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) staff returned in December 2002 to assess the district's progress in implementing the recommendations.

Since 1991, TSPR has recommended more than 7,000 ways to save taxpayers more than \$700 million over a five-year period in more than 80 public school districts throughout Texas. TSPR also conducts follow-up reviews of districts that have had at least one year to implement its recommendations. These 56 subsequent reviews show that more than 90 percent of TSPR's combined proposals have been acted upon, saving taxpayers nearly \$125 million, with the full savings estimated to grow in the future.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review

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

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

Recognizing that only about 51 cents of every education dollar is spent on instruction, Comptroller Strayhorn's goal is to drive more of every education dollar directly into the classroom. In addition, no longer are

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

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

- ensure students and teachers receive the support and resources necessary to succeed;
- identify innovative options to address core management challenges;
- ensure administrative activities are performed efficiently, without duplication and in a manner that spurs education;
- develop strategies to ensure the districts' processes and programs are continuously assessed and improved;
- understand the links among the districts' functional areas and determine ways to provide a seamless system of services;
- challenge any process, procedure, program or policy that impedes instruction and recommend ways to reduce or eliminate obstacles; and
- put goods and services to the "Yellow Pages test"- government should do no job if there is a business in the Yellow Pages that can do that job better and at a lower cost.

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

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

TSPR in the Grape Creek Independent School District

The Comptroller's Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) began work in Tom Green County on March 1, 2001, at the request of state Representative Rob Junell.

The Comptroller contracted with Gibson Consulting Group Inc., an Austin-based consulting firm, to assist with the review. The team interviewed district employees, school board members, students and parents, and then held a public forum at the Grape Creek High School cafetorium on March 29, 2001 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The review team conducted small focus-group sessions with teachers, principals and board members. The Comptroller's office also received letters and phone calls from community members.

A total of 278 respondents answered surveys, including 45 campus and central administrators and support staff, five principals and assistant principals, 53 teachers, 126 parents and 49 students.

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

During its more than six-month review, TSPR developed recommendations to improve operations and save taxpayers more than \$238,699 by 2005-06. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach \$196,859 by 2005-06.

GCISD selected Celina, Hutto, Shallowater and Troy ISDs as peer districts for comparisons based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. TSPR also compared GCISD to district averages in TEA's Region 1 Education Service Center XV (Region 15) Education Service Center, to which GCISD belongs, and to the state as a whole.

Grape Creek ISD in Profile

Grape Creek ISD is located in Tom Green County, about 12 miles northwest of San Angelo. The district added its high school in 1996-97 and graduated its first senior class in May 2000. In addition to the new high school, GCISD added a pre-Kindergarten program in 1998-99.

In 2001-02, GCISD served 1,180 students. Of these, 75.2 percent were Anglo, 23.8 percent Hispanic and .7 percent African American. Almost 53 percent (52.8 percent) of GCISD's students were classified as economically disadvantaged.

In 2001-02, two GCISD schools-one elementary school and its one high school-received a *Recognized* rating, while one of its middle schools received an *Academically Acceptable* rating from the TEA. The district overall received an *Academically Acceptable* rating.

In 2001-02, 90.1 percent of all students passed the reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test; 94.3 percent passed the math portion of the test; 89.5 percent passed the writing portion; and 85.6 percent of students passed all tests taken.

In 2001-02, the district employed a staff of 163 employees, with teachers accounting for 98, or more than 60 percent, of GCISD staffing. The district had expenditures of \$7,383,804 in 2001-02. That same year, 17 percent of GCISD's budgeted revenues were generated through local taxes; 7 percent came from other local and intermediate sources; 76 percent came from the state; and less than 1 percent came from the federal government.

In 2001-02, GCISD budgeted 54 cents of every tax dollar on classroom instruction compared to the state average of 52 cents.

Over the last year, significant changes have occurred in the district.

GCISD has formed a new "Special Populations" Cooperative with Miles ISD. This new cooperative includes Bilingual/ESL, Title I, Gifted and Talented, Compensatory Education, Career/Technology and Special Education programs. GCISD is both the fiscal agent and a member. Member districts provide all educational services for the benefit of their eligible students in all state and federally funded special populations programs.

The management board is comprised of each member district's superintendents and business managers, as well as one community member from each district. The management board has authority to act as

necessary to ensure that the cooperative's intent and purposes are achieved.

GCISD has undergone an extensive facility assessment, and it is also in the process of meeting with the community and facilities improvement committee to develop the appropriate process for enhancing the districts facilities.

While work continues in the district, both GCISD staff and TSPR team members have a sense of steady progress. Twenty-six recommendations have been implemented; 12 are in various stages of progress; and one has been reviewed but not yet implemented. (See **Appendix A** for details on the recommendations' status.)

Grape Creek ISD Report Card

Chapter	Total	Complete	In Progress	Not Implemented	Rejected	Percent Complete/ In Progress	Grades
District Organization and Management	3	2	1	0	0	67%/33%	Satisfactory
Educational Service Delivery	8	7	1	0	0	88%/12%	Excellent
Financial Management	9	4	4	1	0	44%/44%	Satisfactory
Operations	19	13	6	0	0	68%/32%	Satisfactory
Overall Grade	39	26	12	1	0	67%/31%	Satisfactory

Excellent = More than 80% complete

Satisfactory = 80% to 100% complete or in progress

Needs Work = Less than 80% complete or in progress

Exemplary Programs and Practices

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

- ***The superintendent communicates effectively with the board.*** The board credits the superintendent for its improved understanding of the financial status of the district as well as an overall improvement in the board's function. At least three days before board meetings, the superintendent provides information packets to board members containing pertinent information regarding the district's financial status, management issues and program information. The superintendent meets individually with board members as needed, and frequently calls and e-mails board members to solicit responses to any questions or concerns.

Since the review, the GCISD superintendent continues to improve communication by phoning or meeting with each board member individually each month.

- ***District leadership teams and site-based committees contribute to policy- and decision-making.*** GCISD's superintendent uses the district leadership team to assist in establishing administrative procedures at the district and campus levels. The district also uses its site-based decision-making (SBDM) committees to involve professional staff, parents and community members in the creation of educational plans, goals, performance objectives and classroom instructional initiatives. In addition to the four SBDM committees (district; elementary, which includes the primary and intermediate schools; middle school; and high school) four complementary leadership teams provide input to the board and staff on initiatives that affect their respective schools.

Since the review, GCISD has implemented more formal district and school-based leadership teams that are separate from the district and school SBDM committees. The district has formally hired four master teachers and 16 lead teachers to work with the district and school- level administrators in the district's four schools. The district pays an approved stipend for each position to compensate the master and lead teachers for extra leadership

responsibilities and duties. Each school has a master teacher and lead teacher for every grade level. The district also assigned a lead teacher specifically for special populations to each school at the elementary, middle school and high school levels. These teachers serve with the school administrator(s) as the school leadership team, which meets regularly in a decision-making capacity.

- ***GCISD has controlled its staffing level, focusing its primary efforts on classroom instruction.*** Understanding that the vast majority of all district expenditures are for staffing, the district has kept administrative staffing levels low, dedicating its very limited resources for teachers and other student-specific personnel. In 1998-99, the district initiated periodic reviews of all staffing and began assessing teaching and administrative requirements on each campus. As a result, the district eliminated several administrative positions, filled others at lower salaries and reduced the number of auxiliary staff by contracting for maintenance services. Furthermore, from 1997-98 through 2000-01, the district increased its teaching staff by 12 positions and its educational aides by 5.3 full-time equivalents.

GCISD continues to monitor staffing levels for teachers, aides and administrative positions in accordance with the TEA's Schools First guidelines.

- ***The Grape Creek Education Foundation has secured thousands of dollars in donations.*** The mission of the Grape Creek Education Foundation, formed in August 1999, is to enhance the GCISD educational environment. A 12-member board seeks and secures grants, endowments and donations for the enhancement of educational opportunities for persons of all ages in GCISD. Funds can be disbursed to meet physical or professional development needs, extracurricular programs or special project sponsorships. This can include the purchase of equipment, technology, books, curriculum, furniture and facilities as well as support for programs by supplying stipends, money for instructional substitutes/aides, and expenses for field trips and training.

Since the review, GCEF has continued to provide funds for grant opportunities to aid in the instruction of GCISD students.

- ***The Small Schools Cooperative provides special education services to GCISD students.*** The most valuable services mentioned by staff include the availability of expert diagnosticians, therapists and psychologists, training materials and literature related to various special education topics, and periodic updates to

current state and federal regulations and laws. The Small Schools Cooperative also works closely with Region 15 to provide services to member districts. Community feedback indicated that the special education program in GCISD is respected.

Since the review, GCISD has withdrawn from the Small Schools Cooperative and formed a new Special Populations Cooperative with Miles ISD. This new arrangement encompasses all special populations, not just special education.

- ***GCISD provides outstanding health services to students and staff.*** GCISD has used innovative preventive practices to improve the quality of health services delivered to students and staff. The nurse maintains a medical card for every student and school staff member. The nurse notes the reason for a visit on each student's medical card, which allows the nurse to track medical issues for all students and detect patterns requiring additional parental or medical attention. In the event of a major medical emergency, or a school security lock-down, the nurse can quickly access important medical information including blood type, previous heart attack, known allergies to medications and other important information, and can quickly assist emergency medical personnel.

Health services continue to be a major emphasis in the district, and nurses continue to provide services to students and their families.

TSPR Key Recommendations

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

District Organization and Management

Recommendation 1: - Expand the annual strategic plan to a five-year strategic plan and link the plan to the budget and other district planning documents. According to administrators, this plan changed the way the district does business because they now have one plan to begin the school year with. The plan, however, remains a work in progress, because the plan is modified to meet current needs each year. This keeps the vision alive from year to year, but allows for annual updates.

Educational Service Delivery

Recommendation 4: - Review the PEIMS school data submission process, establish written guidelines and redefine the job responsibilities of PEIMS school data operators. Principals said that with the addition of a PEIMS coordinator, they are receiving regular updates that have helped them to better understand the PEIMS school data and how it impacts their funding flows. Another principal said that he is now aware of reports that can be extracted from PEIMS, which he now uses for trend analysis. Also, by providing principals with a list of special population students, they are now able to verify that each one is correctly identified as well as ensure that programs are being delivered appropriately. For the first time in 2002, GCISD's PEIMS school submissions were commended by TEA for zero Personal Identification errors, which are unique numbers assigned to each student for annual tracking purposes.

Financial Management

Recommendation 15: - Develop written, detailed budgeting procedures that can be integrated with a comprehensive district financial manual. Administrators said that they had not understood all of the accounting codes and categories. As a person who works with grants said, this information has now become her little bible. Also, with the on-line budgets, this has also helped principals to better understand and control their budgets more effectively.

Recommendation 17: - Establish a committee of staff and administrators to assess the state employee health insurance plan and help determine the district's course of action. In response to this Recommendation and Recommendation 3 for tracking, which recommends tracking the reasons employees leave the district, the district created an employee benefits committee to discuss what was important to employees. During the discussion, benefits came out as a major issue. The Texas Association of School Boards did a comprehensive benefits and salary study that resulted in a significant change in salaries and benefits. Consequently, turnover rates among teachers have declined, with the exception of a complete turnover in the coaching staff. The superintendent said this recommendation had a positive impact because the salary schedule and benefits realignment have made working conditions better. In the end, the recommendation improved staff satisfaction with their jobs.

Operations

Recommendation 22: - Conduct a facilities study and incorporate results into a long-range facilities master plan. The district hired

consultants from the Texas Association of Superintendents and Administrators and Chapman, Harvey Architects, Inc. to assist in preparing a comprehensive facilities master plan. The superintendent commented that without this plan, "the district would be throwing darts at a board." The district now has a focus that will lead it, and help it focus on what needs to happen. The plan also made the community more aware of the district's needs. Previously, community members were invited to conduct walkthroughs of the facilities, but they did not seem to fully understand the conditions at the schools.

What Still Needs to be Done?

GCISD has made steady progress in implementing TSPR recommendations. The district has implemented 26 recommendations; 12 are in various stages of progress; and one has been reviewed but not yet implemented. With 98 percent of all of the recommendations implemented or in progress, clearly GCISD is a district that has taken the Comptroller's recommendations seriously, allowing it to make phenomenal progress since the initial review 18 months ago. The attitude of staff and administration was positive, and even when the district did not feel the recommendation could be implemented, they addressed the spirit of the recommendation and made changes that addressed the identified problem. As a result, they have achieved the same or better results. TSPR applauds the district for its efforts.

In the future, TSPR encourages the district to continue its aggressive course of action. TSPR urges the district to continue empowering its employees to challenge the status quo, and continue implementing new and better ideas that will make this one of the finest districts of its size in the state. These are heady goals, but within the grasp of forward-thinking individuals. With that in mind, TSPR offers the following suggestion for the future.

Operating Procedures

GCISD is in the midst of developing an Administrative Operating Procedures Manual, which they estimate will be complete by May 2003. This issue is discussed centrally in Recommendation 2, but is a theme brought up in various aspects of the district's operations. TSPR encourages the district to use this opportunity to rethink some of the district's practices and procedures, and to streamline its operations past even those ideas and suggestions made by the performance review. And, when those procedures are formally approved, TSPR urges the district to regularly review and update those procedures so that the manual remains a living document. In years past, GCISD's board and administrative turnovers resulted in significant challenges for the district. Having well-documented policies

and procedures protects the institutional memory of the people who do the day-to-day work, aids in the training of new personnel and promotes an atmosphere of continuous improvement - something which differentiates the mediocre districts from the great ones!

GCISD's Ideas for Improving the Texas School Performance Review

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

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

Grape Creek ISD administrators and board members made the following observations:

In all, GCISD administrators and staff were very complimentary of the performance review and the professionalism of the staff. The superintendent said that the review team provided a good sounding board, and throughout the process they learned from the review. For example, gathering information for the review ended up being a learning experience for the district. Understanding what the district had and did not have gave staff ideas for new initiatives that they might not have otherwise considered.

One area of concern voiced by the superintendent was that in working with the board it would have been helpful if the recommendations were ranked by priority. In all, he said there needs to be more information given about what the Comptroller felt was the most important things for them to address immediately. However, TSPR has been reluctant to establish priorities for a district when issuing a review, since TSPR's approach is that the recommendations are not mandates, but simply suggestions for change. In light of that, in the Executive Summary of the original report, TSPR does highlight the key recommendations identified as most critical

to the district in meeting its current challenges. TSPR understands, though, that this may not have been made clear to the district at the time that the report was released, and the team will need to give more emphasis to that section in the report in the future.

GCISD administrators said they felt the meals per labor hour standards used in the report were a little unfair, and that TSPR needed to find a better scale that takes into account some extenuating circumstances, such as the lack of some basic equipment that makes preparation time more difficult. It should be noted that the standards being used do have a range of acceptable hours that can be adjusted based upon the extenuating circumstance described. As a result of the administrators' observations, TSPR will give greater care to selecting the range within the standard that better meets the existing conditions in the district's operation.

TSPR gave the superintendent a choice of having everyone in the progress report meeting come in to meet with the TSPR staff or having certain individuals come one at a time. He elected for everyone on the district's management team to stay in the meeting for the duration, and he felt that having everyone hear what was happening in other areas of the district's operations was a helpful process. The superintendent saw it is a learning environment, and he encouraged TSPR to adopt this method as the preferred method when visiting the districts. TSPR also felt having everyone in the room for the entire meeting was beneficial, not only for the district, but also for TSPR staff. During the session, a great deal of information was exchanged that had little to do with the progress report preparation, but it helped TSPR staff to understand better some of the current challenges facing the district as well others similar in size to GCISD.

Appendix A

Status of Recommendations and Savings

Rec #	Recommendation	Implementation Status	TSPR's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Actual Savings (Costs) To Date	GCISD's Projected Five-Year Savings (Costs)	Comments
Chapter 1 District Organization and Management						
1	Expand the annual strategic plan to a five-year strategic plan, and link the plan to the budget and other district planning documents. p. 26	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	In August 2002, the board adopted a 2002-07 district improvement plan. During the summer of each year, GCISD organizes groups of parents, students, administrators and community members. Once these groups are assembled, they begin the planning process by incorporating community visions. This information is passed on to the campuses and departments for inclusion in their plans. The district's site-based decision-making committee has rolled all of this into the district's strategic plan.
2	Develop an administrative manual for key functional areas, and train all staff in their application. p. 28	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	Administrators are reviewing the administrative procedures, and plan on completing and publishing a manual by May 2003. In reviewing these procedures, the district made several staffing changes, such as the creation of a PEIMS school coordinator position, as mentioned in Recommendation #4.

3	Include reason for separation as part of the formal exit interview process and track the results. p. 34	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	During 2001-02, the district adopted the TASB Personnel Services Exit Interview Form that includes reason(s) for separation. In 2002-03, the district modified the form to more adequately meet their needs, and is currently building a database to track this information. The district created an employee benefits committee to discuss employee concerns. As a result, the committee discovered that employee benefits were a major issue. TASB conducted a comprehensive benefits and salary study, which resulted in a significant change in salaries and benefits. Consequently, turnover rates among teachers have declined. The only unrelated exception was a complete turnover in the coaching staff.
Chapter 1 Total			\$0	\$0	\$0	

Chapter 2 Educational Service Delivery

4	Review the PEIMS school data submission process, establish written guidelines and redefine the job responsibilities of PEIMS school data operators. p. 47	Complete	\$0	(\$27,300)	(\$136,500)	In 2002, GCISD created a district Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) school coordinator position that coordinates and trains all campus-based PEIMS school personnel in the district. For the first time in 2002, GCISD's PEIMS school submissions were commended by the Texas Education Agency for zero student identification errors.
5	Identify students currently below the Texas Learning Index value of 85 for special preparation efforts and performance incentives. p. 49	Complete	\$0	(\$8,500)	(\$8,500)	The district implemented a comprehensive assessment system that includes benchmark testing, tutorials and data disaggregation programs for tracking student performance data. GCISD is using benchmarks to assess students each quarter. The district is also making adjustments to the curriculum in an effort to serve its students better. These improvements have gained importance in anticipation of the third- grade social-promotion laws that become effective with the 2003 TAKS tests. All schools have available compensatory education programs from the Special Populations Cooperative. These programs assist students scoring below the 85 index in all testing areas. The Transportation Department has made arrangements for students to participate in tutorials. The Food Service Department is providing snacks for the afternoon tutorials. Primarily, expenditures

						<p>have been reallocated so that there was no need for additional funds, but there was a one-time cost for the purchase of software and a scanner for the benchmark testing. This long-range planning process helped the district identify future programmatic needs. This data is being used to identify weaknesses to ensure that all goals are met.</p>
6	<p>Supplement distance learning opportunities and share teachers that can teach advanced courses with neighboring districts. p. 50</p>	Complete	(\$11,340)	(\$13,692)	(\$13,692)	<p>The district offers dual enrollment classes via distance education through Howard College-West Texas Training Center. In 2001-02, the district was short one Spanish teacher. To compensate for this absence, the district entered into an agreement with Junction ISD for a distance learning class. The district had to pay tuition to Howard College and shared the cost of the teacher with Junction ISD. For 2003-04, GCISD has hired a Spanish teacher to fill the vacancy. Novice ISD has approached the district and asked for a distance education Spanish class for their students.</p>
7	<p>Establish a vertical alignment between middle school and high school mathematics. p. 51</p>	In Progress	\$0	(\$2,283)	(\$2,283)	<p>The district has implemented a comprehensive alignment for all core subject areas including mathematics for grades K-12. On August 15, 2002, the middle school and high school staff met to begin vertically aligning the core subjects between the two schools. The school leadership team was also involved in the process. A one-time cost was charged for the services of a curriculum specialist to consult on the alignment. The original</p>

						cost was \$25,000, but Region 15 had contributed in the bulk of this, leaving the district's obligation only \$2,283.
8	Ensure that the goals and objectives of gifted and talented education established in the District Improvement Plan are implemented. p. 61	Complete	(\$6,000)	(\$43,000)	(\$215,000)	In 2002-03, the high school established a gifted and talented Humanities class and advanced placement courses in all core subjects in grades 6-12. The district hired a full-time teacher for the gifted and talented (GT) class. They also use an additional regular class-room teacher-one class per day-to serve both inter-mediate and primary grades. All gifted, AP and Pre-AP teachers are attending GT workshops and summer institutes to fulfill the state's requirements.
9	Expand the career and technology program by establishing more relationships with area colleges and trade schools and by sharing teachers and courses with neighboring districts. p. 65	Complete	\$0	(\$18,300)	(\$91,500)	GCISD added an At-Risk/Career & Technology counselor position. The cost recognizes only a local portion of the expense. The remainder of the cost was paid for by a combination of grants, allotments and compensatory education funding. The high school added dual credit courses with Howard College and Angelo State University (ASU), which also includes the ASU "Up and Coming Scholar Program." The middle school offers a course titled "Job Fair," which allows students to consider and investigate future careers.
10	Incorporate performance measures for at-risk students into district and campus improvement plans. p. 68	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	As a result of its strategic planning methodologies incorporated under Recommendation #1, GCISD revised its entire planning

						<p>process. The district adopted a Compensatory Education Program. According to the superintendent, these changes have made the greatest impact on the educational service delivery to at-risk students. The district improvement plan now includes performance standards, and as a result of re-examining the compensatory programs, the district decided to add an at-risk counselor position. The Special Populations Cooperative has also been expanded to include special programs for at-risk students, which means that the cooperative is addressing all special needs students and the compliance-related programs.</p>
11	<p>Develop a community-wide safety committee that includes members from law enforcement, fire safety, health care, social services and the community to share information, skills and resources related to school and public safety. p. 73</p>	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	<p>The district formed a crisis management and planning committee that will update the crisis management plan for the 2002-03 school year. In cooperation with local law enforcement groups, certain members of the committee and the administration will be attending specialized training. For example, near the middle school campus, a person was seen carrying a gun. The campus immediately went into a lock-down procedure. During this process, the district discovered that there were some weaknesses in their communication system. As a result, every member of the district leadership team has an emergency communication device to use during a potential crisis, linking school authorities with each other and with law</p>

						enforcement.
	Chapter 2 Total		(\$17,340)	(\$113,075)	(\$467,475)	

Chapter 3 Financial Management

12	Develop and implement detailed, comprehensive, written procedures for cash receipts, cash disbursements, accounts payable and payroll. p. 83	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	This recommendation will be completed with the District Administrative Manual mentioned in Recommendation #2.
13	Store blank check stock in a locked cabinet or a locked office at all times and limit access to individuals with check-writing authority. p. 84	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The day after the review was released, the district began storing checks in a locked vault. This vault remains locked at all times.
14	Develop and implement documented records retention guidelines. p. 86	Complete	\$0	(\$600)	(\$1,000)	The district submitted its plan to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in October 2002. A consultant assisted the district in developing their plan. The training was completed in September 2002 for district and school employees.
15	Develop written, detailed budgeting procedures that can be integrated with a comprehensive district financial manual. p. 87	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district conducted budget training in April 2002 for all school principals and department supervisors. The training included a Power Point presentation, discussions of the budget calendar, and an explanation about how the coding systems work. This will be continued each year, but the initial procedures have been distributed.
16	Allocate utilities, maintenance and janitorial costs to applicable departments and campuses. p. 88	Not Implemented	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district has had difficulty implementing this recommendation because the district contracts for janitorial services, and the utility costs aren't broken out by building. The district is concerned that the costs to implement this step might currently outweigh the benefits. However, administrators said they will review this issue again next year.
17	Establish a committee of staff and administrators to assess the state employee	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	During the spring semester of each year, the district forms a benefits committee made up of district

	health insurance plan and help determine the district's course of action. p. 91					employees from all areas of the district's operation. The district chose the TRS Care plan, added life insurance, and now provides an option for long-term disability. This committee makes a recommendation to the school board for the upcoming budget year. This committee is now exploring the need for child care for staff and students.
18	Develop a fiscal plan of action to replenish the general operating fund balance to optimum levels. p. 93	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	As of 2001-02, the district's fund balance has reached optimum levels. The board is considering the adoption of a formal written plan to promote continual maintenance of the fund balance at optimum levels (as stipulated in the TEA's School FIRST system, which is a financial rating and accountability system becoming effective in 2004). The district is also considering an investment plan that will keep the fund balance earning interest at market rates.
19	Develop written fixed asset policies and procedures and distribute them to staff members involved in the accounting and management of fixed assets. p. 94	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	The senior director of Business and Finance is currently working with an external auditor to develop policies and procedures to ensure proper accounting of fixed assets. When the administrative manual is completed, this procedure will be included.
20	Form a committee of superintendents, Regional Education Service Center representatives and representatives from the Texas Education Agency to explore the opportunities for shared financial services. p. 97	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	GCISD participates in Regional Purchasing Coops through Region 15, and they are currently exploring a food service coop with the Region 15 for the upcoming 2003-04 school year.
	Chapter 3 Total		\$0	(\$600)	(\$1,000)	

Chapter 4 Operations

21	Establish performance measures and a monitoring plan for the custodial services contract. p. 104	Complete	\$0	\$28,000	\$140,000	In July 2002, the janitorial contract was revised to remove certain unnecessary items—for example, dusting teachers' desks, thus encouraging employees to be more responsible for the cleanliness of their own workplace. This reduced the staff hours required under the contract, and reduced the contract amount by \$28,000 this year. The contractor conducts daily walk-throughs. The contractor has a tiered level of management that also supervises the work. The district also implemented e-mail access to the contractor so that communication could be improved. Overall, the campus employees seem more pleased with the cleanliness of the schools.
22	Conduct a facilities study and incorporate results into a long-range facilities master plan. p. 105	Complete	(\$8,000)	(\$39,000)	(\$39,000)	In 2002, the district hired consultants from the Texas Association of Superintendents and Administrators and Chapman, Harvey Architects, Inc. to help construct a comprehensive facility master plan. This plan contains a number of components, including how the QZABs mentioned in Recommendation #23 might be used, as well as some of the energy management issues in Recommendation #25.
23	Pursue Qualified Zone Academy Bond funding for	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	The Facility Improvement Committee and board met on

	renovation of the elementary/intermediate school. p. 108					October 12, 2002 to determine strategy in pursuing financing for school buildings. The district is working with financial and legal specialists to assist them in applying for these funds.
24	Implement an automated system to manage work orders, and develop priority codes. p. 110	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	GCISD implemented an e-mail work-order system in 2002 that allows faculty members to send requests to the maintenance department. Once the work is complete, the department sends an e-mail back to the originating person to ensure that they are satisfied. Maintenance is currently reviewing an Internet-based system and developing priority codes. Overall, the principals said that work is being done more quickly and they are more satisfied with the process.
25	Update energy audit and participate in the State Energy Conservation Office energy conservation loan program. p. 111	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	In 2002, the district entered into an interlocal agreement with the General Land Office to take advantage of large-group buying power for the purchase of electricity. GCISD is currently working with SECO to reevaluate the analysis that was completed in 1997-98.
26	Create signs that direct visitors to the parking lot, student loading and unloading zones, school entrance and main offices for each campus. p. 112	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	As of the beginning of the 2002-03 school year, signs have been placed throughout the district, including parking lot signs for middle school, intermediate and primary schools. As part of the five-year master planning process, the district is looking at the traffic patterns in and around

						the schools, and is evaluating how to better regulate the traffic and ensure child safety. Administrators said they are holding off on any major work on intermediate and primary schools until the Facility Improvement Process is complete. However, they are applying for grants through the Texas Department of Transportation to upgrade the street signs around the schools.
27	Evaluate the job description for the director of Technology and Operations and prioritize primary functions in conjunction with the technology plan. p. 117	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	Effective with the 2001-02 school year, the director of Technology is no longer responsible for Operations. These responsibilities were delegated to the supervisor of Maintenance.
28	Require the Technology Task Force to update GCISD's technology plan and tie it to the district strategic plan. p. 118	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The technology plan has been included in the five-year strategic planning process.
29	Upgrade four of GCISD's five servers with a hard disk system that supplements tape backups. p. 120	Complete	(\$3,500)	(\$4,500)	(\$4,500)	The district replaced hard drives in all its servers during the spring 2002.
30	Store backup tapes at an off-site location to ensure the integrity of the disaster recovery process. p. 121	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The elementary schools' servers back-up the high school and administrative servers nightly, and vice versa. The district also sends a weekly back-up to Region 15 for student and financial data. There is no additional cost to the district for backing up this information at Region 15.
31	Develop a transportation operations and maintenance handbook. p. 124	In Progress	\$0	\$0	\$0	In September 2002, the department completed the Transportation Operations

						Manual and is waiting on board approval. The department is now working on the Maintenance Manual.
32	Adopt a fleet procurement plan to replace one bus annually based on miles operated, years of service and cost of maintenance. p. 126	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	A fleet procurement plan has been included in the district's strategic plan. The plan is for the district to replace one bus the first year, two buses the following year, and so forth.
33	Aggressively seek to identify all students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. p. 131	Complete	\$55,568	\$0	\$100,000	The district is now using a Direct Certification process. Also, the elementary school had an application drive in 2002-03, and the Food Service Department had a district-wide application drive. Currently the district's count of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals is about 40 to 50 students above 2001-02. This should result in an increase of approximately \$600 in compensatory education and Title I funds per student, or conservatively about \$25,000 per year.
34	Develop strategies to increase breakfast participation at both campuses. p. 133	Complete	\$14,430	\$0	\$0	Starting with the 2001-02 school year, the Food Service Department implemented the complimentary breakfast program for all students Pre-K-12. Everyone eats free, but federal dollars are sufficient to offset all additional costs. The district did not add any additional staffing.
35	Increase employee productivity and reduce associated payroll costs. p. 137	Complete	\$168,701	\$4,500	\$22,500	The meals per labor hour has increased due to the complimentary breakfast program. Through attrition, the district was able to hire a part-time employee to replace

						a full-time position. The salary study, however, showed that salaries were very low in the food service area in comparison to local competitors.
36	Establish an equipment replacement plan based on priority. p. 138	Complete	(\$10,000)	\$0	\$0	As part of Facilities Improvement Plan mentioned in Recommendations #22 and #25, the consultant assessed major equipment and created a detailed item list describing the date of purchase, condition and similar details. As new construction or renovations are done, these items will be included in the projects. This will help the district assess when major equipment is due to be replaced.
37	Conduct surveys of students, parents and faculty about food quality, quantity, price, variety, nutrition and other areas of food operations and implement corrective action where needed. p. 139	Complete	\$0	\$0	\$0	The district partnered with an Angelo State University Graduate Level Marketing class to conduct a survey of students, teachers and parents to gain valuable feedback for the Food Services Department. Also, beginning in January 2003, the Nutrition Department is joining the Student Health Advisory Committee to provide nutritional education for parents and students. This issue that has been brought to the district's attention because of child diabetes issues.
38	Develop and implement a plan to recognize cafeteria staff who obtain certification. p. 141	In Progress	(\$3,000)	\$0	\$0	GCISD adopted the TASB pay scale, and beginning in 2003-04, the business office plans to tie annual raises to certification.
39	Compile and distribute	Complete	\$0	\$60,000	\$300,000	The senior director of

	<p>accurate, detailed and useful school-specific financial and performance reports to cafeteria managers on a quarterly basis. p. 142</p>					<p>Business and Finance gives monthly profit and loss statements to director of Food Services and the board. The director of Food Services then meets with cafeteria managers. There are several initiatives to reduce costs, such as eliminating waste by changing the way food is served; using disposable utensils; and going to lighter more durable serving dishes. As a result, the food service fund is nearing self-sufficiency.</p>
	Chapter 4 Total		\$214,199	\$49,000	\$519,000	
	Grand Total		\$196,859	(\$64,675)	\$50,525	