

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

July 26, 2001

The Honorable Rick Perry
The Honorable William R. Ratliff
The Honorable James E. "Pete" Laney
Members of the 77th Legislature
Commissioner James E. Nelson

Fellow Texans:

I am pleased to present our performance review of the La Pryor Independent School District (LPISD).

This review is intended to help La Pryor 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 WCL Enterprises.

We have made a number of recommendations to improve LPISD's efficiency. We also have highlighted a number of "best practices" in district operations-model programs and services provided by the district's administrators, teachers and staff. This report outlines 41 detailed recommendations that could save La Pryor ISD more than \$472,840 over the next five years, while reinvesting more than \$178,740 to improve educational services and other operations. Net savings are estimated to reach \$294,100 savings that the district can redirect to the classroom.

We are grateful for the cooperation of LPISD's board, staff, parents and community members. We commend them for their dedication to improving the educational opportunities for our most precious resource in LPISD-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/lapryor/>>.

Sincerely,



Carole Keeton Rylander
Texas Comptroller

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary Overview
Summary of Recommendations (Exhibit 5)

In November 2000, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander began a review of the La Pryor Independent School District (LPISD) as part of a three-district project that also included reviews of the neighboring Eagle Pass and Crystal City school districts. These three districts are located geographically near each other in Maverick and Zavala County. Based upon more than seven months of work, this report identifies LPISD's exemplary programs and suggests concrete ways to improve district operations. If fully implemented, the Comptroller's 41 recommendations could result in net savings of \$294,100 over the next five years.

Improving the Texas School Performance Review

Soon after taking office in January 1999, Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander consulted school district officials, parents and teachers from across Texas and carefully examined past reviews and progress reports to make the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) more valuable to the state's school districts. With the perspective of 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 51 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 Website at www.window.state.tx.us.

TSPR in La Pryor ISD

As the review began in November 2000, LPISD was deeply embroiled in controversy. Following a period of uncertainty during which the former superintendent left the district, the board hired the current superintendent, Eddie Ramirez, in January 2001. Data that the review team had collected from the former superintendent and business manager had to be reverified. And, because the position of business manager was vacant, the review team had to return to the district to complete the data gathering and finalize the review.

The Comptroller contracted with WCL Enterprises, a Houston-based firm, to assist with the review. The team interviewed district employees, school board members, parents, business leaders and community members and held a public forum on Thursday, November 9, at the La Pryor High School from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. To obtain additional comments, the review team conducted small focus group sessions with teachers, principals, employees, students, parents and community members. The Comptroller's office also received letters and phone calls from a wide array of parents, teachers and community members.

A total of 65 respondents answered surveys. Six campus and central administrators and support staff, 11 teachers and 48 students completed written surveys. Details from the surveys appear in **Appendices A through C**.

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).

LPISD selected peer districts for comparisons based on similarities in student enrollment, student performance and community and student demographics. The districts chosen were Cotulla, Carrizo Springs, Devine, Pearsall and Charlotte.

During its more than seven-month review, TSPR developed recommendations to improve operations and save taxpayers more than \$472,840 by 2005-06. Cumulative net savings from all recommendations (savings minus recommended investments or expenditures) would reach \$294,100 by 2005-06.

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 WCL Enterprises wish to express their appreciation to the LPISD Board of Trustees, the former superintendent and business manager, Superintendent Eddie Ramirez, district employees, students, parents and community residents who helped during the review.

La Pryor ISD

LPISD is located in Zavala County, about 20 miles southwest of the City of Uvalde. The county seat is in Crystal City. The county's population is largely Hispanic, making up over 90 percent of county residents, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Southwest Texas Junior College and an extension of Sul Ross State University are located in nearby Uvalde, Texas. The public school enrollment of the county is approximately 2,600 students. The largest employers are educational services and the county government. Ranching, farming and oil and gas production are also key components of the county's economy.

La Pryor ISD's facilities are located within the same land area in separate buildings. These facilities include the elementary school, middle/high school, administrative offices and various academic and support facilities. Enrollment for 2000-01 totaled 439 students, a decline of 4.5 percent over the last five years. About 84 percent of the student body of the district is considered economically disadvantaged.

In 2000-01, the district served a population of just over 439 students: 6.6 percent are Anglo and 93.2 percent Hispanic. **Exhibit 1** details the

demographic characteristics of the LPISD, its peer school districts, Region 20 and the state.

Exhibit 1
Demographics of LPISD, Peer Districts,
Region 20 and State Student Populations
2000-01

	Enrollment	African American	Anglo	Hispanic	Other	Economically Disadvantage
La Pryor	439	0.0%	6.6%	93.2%	0.2%	83.8%
Charlotte	487	0.0%	16.6%	83.2%	0.2%	78.0%
Cotulla	1,294	0.1%	11.7%	88.0%	0.2%	76.4%
Devine	1,884	0.8%	50.2%	48.5%	0.5%	46.2%
Pearsall	2,273	0.6%	11.3%	87.9%	0.2%	75.1%
Carrizo Springs	2,467	0.7%	8.6%	90.0%	0.7%	75.8%
Region 20	325,851	7.0%	27.3%	64.3%	1.40%	61.5%
State	4,071,433	14.0%	42.0%	41.0%	3.0%	49.2%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

The district's annual budget is \$3.6 million for 2000-01. For 2000-01, compared to its peer districts, LPISD has the highest property tax rate and lowest taxable property value per pupil (**Exhibit 2**).

Exhibit 2
LPISD Adopted Tax Rate and Taxable Property Value
Compared to Peer Districts and State
2000-01

District	Adopted Tax Rate	Taxable Property Value/Pupil
La Pryor	\$1.58	\$62,968
Pearsall	\$1.44	\$91,090
Charlotte	\$1.45	\$89,183
Devine	\$1.42	\$86,526
Carrizo Springs	\$1.50	\$89,074

Cotulla	\$1.56	\$109,821
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Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

The percentage of LPISD students passing TAAS was lowest among all its peer districts and below the regional and state averages in reading, writing, mathematics and all tests taken (**Exhibit 3**).

Exhibit 3
Percent of LPISD, Region 20 and State
Students Passing TAAS, All Levels
1999-2000

Entity	Reading	Writing	Math	All Tests
Charlotte	88.5%	83.1%	90.9%	79.5%
Devine	87.2%	85.0%	89.5%	79.3%
Pearsall	83.7%	88.9%	84.2%	75.5%
Carrizo Springs	77.1%	83.1%	77.5%	66.9%
Cotulla	74.3%	82.6%	71.0%	60.9%
La Pryor	65.4%	67.8%	60.9%	49.7%
Region 20	85.9%	87.1%	85.3%	77.1%
State	87.4%	88.2%	87.4%	79.9%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

In the last five years, student performance has improved only slightly, and the key reasons cited by district staff are high turnover of lead administrators and teachers, hostility and personal infighting among board members, hostility of board members toward administration and teachers and hostility and personal resentment between administrative staff members. Since 1995-96, LPISD has had eight different superintendents.

LPISD is consequently facing some major challenges including:

- restoring stability to the board and administration;
- improving student performance; and
- regaining control of the district's finances.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Restore Stability to the Board and Administration

Use board self-assessment guide. Since 1995 the district has been faced with low student performance, high administrator and teacher turnover and in-house turmoil. The board must set aside differences and send a clear signal of strong leadership, which includes setting standards for themselves to ensure that each action constructively addresses the educational needs of the students.

Improve Student Performance

Develop a program to reduce teacher turnover. One in every three LPISD teachers, on average, leaves the district each year. The average since 1995-96 of 33.8 percent is more than double the state and regional averages. Teacher retention is a key element in student achievement. Poor administrative support, lower than average salaries and a poor overall school environment are a few of the reasons cited for the turnover. LPISD should develop a plan for recruiting and retaining good teachers, beginning with a salary increase for all beginning teachers to make their salaries more competitive.

Develop curriculum guides and a curriculum management system.

While the elementary principal has worked to create curriculum guides and institute a focus on curriculum, the secondary levels continue to use a less formal approach, and coordination between the programs to ease student transition is minimal. By extending formal curriculum development through the secondary level and involving teachers from upper and lower grades in the process, the district can address the transitional issues and improve overall student performance.

Regain control of district finances

Maximize Medicaid reimbursements. LPISD has higher than average expenditures for providing services to students with disabilities. The federal government reimburses some of these expenditures through Medicaid, and while LPISD participates in the School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program, which is a Medicaid reimbursement program, the district does not participate in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC) program. Until recently, smaller districts were unable to participate for a variety of reasons, but now it is possible for them to join a consortium and jointly seek reimbursement. As a result, LPISD could potentially receive \$6,800 per year in additional revenues for services that are already being provided at district expense.

Develop a strategy to implement the corrective financial action plan.

LPISD's 2000 financial and compliance audit cited numerous financial compliance issues and internal control weaknesses. The auditors also issued a qualified opinion on the district's federal program administrative

compliance activities. Uncorrected, the district is at risk of losing federal dollars and will find it difficult to secure additional federal funding in the future.

Comply with state purchasing laws and guidelines. The district issued purchase orders in fiscal 2000 for athletic supplies that resulted in total purchases for this expenditure category exceeding the annual limit of \$10,000. No formal quotes or bids were issued for sporting goods and LPISD did not use the cooperative purchasing contracts offered by Region 20. The district must create and distribute procedures to ensure compliance with all state laws and guidelines.

Develop a budget calendar to guide budget preparation. The 2000 audit report indicated significant deficiencies in the budgeting process. LPISD's does not have a formal budget calendar identifying the timetable for the budget review and adoption process or a budget manual for the use of district administrators. Such a calendar is an important planning tool because it establishes specific tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines.

Participate in the State Power Program. LPISD spent more than \$92,000 on utility bills during the 1998-99 school year, the last year for which information is available. By participating in the State Power Program, an energy program offered by the General Land Office, LPISD can save more than \$3,600 per year on their utility bills.

Increase federal reimbursements and reduce paperwork in food services. LPISD is not participating in the Provision 2 Special Assistance Program of the Federal School Lunch Program. Under the Special Assistance Provision 2, all students can eat free. This provision reduces application burdens and simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures. It allows schools to establish claiming percentages and to serve all meals at no charge for a 4-year period. Both Crystal City and Eagle Pass are currently operating under this provision. In addition, LPISD could increase federal reimbursements by \$15,000 per year.

Exemplary Programs and Practices

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

- ***Employee handbook provides useful information.*** LPISD has an employee handbook that summarizes key district policies and

procedures, including: school calendar, reassignments and transfers, outside employment, performance evaluation, staff development, alcohol and drug testing, payroll deductions, travel expense reimbursement, employee benefits, leave and absences, complaints and grievances, purchasing procedures and emergency situations.

- ***LPISD actively engages parents.*** LPISD, through a federal grant, has initiated a variety of programs that promote parental involvement and provide needed services to families. The district holds monthly parent meetings to provide parent training, encourages parents to spend time reading with their children through the Milk and Cookies Program held each Wednesday evening, opens computer labs for individual parent use during school hours each day and implementing the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program that provides an early intervention and prevention program for elementary school children who are at risk for substance abuse, school failure and juvenile delinquency in adolescence.
- ***At-risk students receive special services.*** LPISD is addressing the needs of students at risk of dropping out through a wide variety of programs including tutorials, summer camp, CD-Rom programs in language arts and math, an optional extended year program and individualized instruction for students with dyslexia.
- ***Districtwide dual language program serves Limited English Proficient(LEP) students.*** In 1996, LPISD received \$2.2 million to be used over a five-year period to implement a comprehensive dual language program. The district converted an existing woodshop area into a computer lab and equipped the computer lab with 11 computers and each classroom in the district with two to three computers. The lab is used for both elementary and secondary instruction and is available for parent and community use one night per week and daily when students are not scheduled in the lab.
- ***Students get college credit for high school courses.*** LPISD participates in a TechPrep partnership with Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) that leads students toward associate or baccalaureate degree programs and helps students prepare for high skill, high wage jobs in at least one field of engineering technology, applied science, health, or business. Students in the business and agriculture areas of the programs receive high school credit toward graduation, as well as college credit at SWTJC toward an Associates degree.

Savings and Investment Requirements

Many TSPR's recommendations would result in savings and increased revenue that could be used to improve classroom instruction. The savings

identified in this report are conservative and should be considered minimum. Proposed investments of additional funds usually are related to increased efficiencies or savings or improved productivity and effectiveness.

TSPR recommended 41 ways to save LPISD more than \$472,840 in gross savings over a five-year period. Reinvestment opportunities will cost the district \$178,740 during the same period. Full implementation of all recommendations in this report could produce net savings of \$294,100 by 2005-06 (**Exhibit 4**).

Exhibit 4
Summary of Net Savings
TSPR Review of La Pryor Independent School District

Year	Total
2001-02 Initial Annual Net Savings	\$76,452
2002-03 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$56,462
2003-04 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$55,962
2004-05 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$56,462
2005-06 Additional Annual Net Savings	\$56,462
One Time Net (Costs)/Savings	(\$7,700)
TOTAL SAVINGS PROJECTED FOR 2001-2006	\$294,100

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exhibit 5 Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	5-Year (Costs) or Savings	One Time (Costs) or Savings
Chapter 1 - District Organization and Management							
1	Develop a set of board operating standards that will restore student achievement as the key priority of the district. p. 23	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2	Update the district's strategic plan to reflect the current board and administrative vision for the district and link the plan to the District and Campus Improvement Plans as well as the budget. p. 26	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
3	Increase beginning teacher salaries to be competitive with neighboring districts and	\$0	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$138,000)

	develop a program to reduce teacher turnover. p. 31							
4	Develop a Parent/Volunteer Involvement Program. p. 35	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Chapter 1 Totals	\$0	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$138,000)	\$0

Chapter 2 - Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measures

5	Develop formal curriculum guides for secondary courses and update guides. p. 46	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$24,000)	\$0
6	Develop a comprehensive curriculum plan to direct curriculum management, evaluation and instructional delivery. p. 47	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$2,700)
7	Examine current staffing levels and develop and implement allocation formulas for the coming school year. p. 50	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$282,210	\$0
8	Develop structured staff development that directly supports district goals and objectives. p. 52	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

9	Evaluate the continued need for the educational consultant on the Title VII project and discontinue the contract as soon as practical. p. 60	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
10	Explore methods to expand career and technology courses. p. 62	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
11	Comply with the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students and adopt a five-year plan for the Gifted and Talented Program. p. 65	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
12	Participate in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming program. p. 70	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$34,350	\$0
13	Investigate grant availability from all sources to improve the district's security operations. p. 74	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Chapter 2 Totals	\$57,312	\$57,312	\$57,312	\$57,312	\$57,312	\$292,560	(\$2,700)
Chapter 3 - Financial Management								
14	Develop and implement a	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	system to ensure that the detailed financial corrective action plan is followed through. p. 85							
15	Prepare monthly financial statements on a routine basis for use in managing the district's finances. p. 86	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
16	Improve preparation for the annual audit to achieve cost savings. p. 88	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$30,000	\$0
17	Establish a procedure to ensure compliance with all state and local purchasing laws and policies. p. 89	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
18	Develop a process and system of internal controls to ensure the accuracy of PEIMS data submissions. p. 90	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
19	Create and distribute a districtwide purchasing procedures manual. p. 91	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
20	Use TEA provided	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	spreadsheet software to track potential changes in state funding throughout the fiscal year. p. 94							
21	Develop a budget calendar and manual for LPISD administrators and board members to use in the annual budget process. p. 96	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
22	Establish a committee of staff and administrators to assess the state employee health insurance plan and help determine the district's course of action. p. 101	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
23	Invest excess cash in higher interest yielding instruments. p. 105	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$75,000	\$0
24	Develop an investment report in compliance with Public Funds Investment Act requirements. p. 106	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Chapter 3 Totals	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$105,000	\$0

Chapter 4 - Operations

25	Develop a schedule of regular and preventive maintenance for each facility and all major equipment. p. 112	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
26	Participate in the State Power Program to reduce the district's utility bills. p. 114	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$18,400	\$0
27	Develop written job descriptions and evaluations that measure quality of work and productivity. p. 118	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
28	Increase participation in lunch and breakfast programs by eliminating barriers and implementing new programs. p. 119	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
29	Apply for Provision 2 Special Assistance Program of the Federal School Lunch Program to increase federal reimbursements	\$0	\$8,220	\$8,220	\$8,220	\$8,220	\$32,880	\$0

	and decrease application burdens. p. 120							
30	Purchase a Point of Sale system to maintain financial accountability. p. 121	\$0	\$0	(\$500)	\$0	\$0	(\$500)	(\$5,000)
31	Prepare a plan to systematically repair the cafeteria and replace kitchen equipment. p. 123	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$25,000)	\$0
32	Consider purchasing prepared meals from a neighboring school district to improve quality, reduce renovation costs and decrease labor costs. p. 124	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
33	Comply with all state and federal laws and LPISD board policy on drug and alcohol testing of bus drivers. p. 133	(\$540)	(\$250)	(\$250)	(\$250)	(\$250)	(\$1,540)	\$0
34	Perform behind-the-wheel evaluations of all bus drivers at least once a year. p. 134	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
35	Develop a checklist of	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	documents that should be in each bus driver's personnel folder and audit each driver's file for compliance at least once per semester. p. 135							
36	Comply with Federal laws covering overtime compensation. p. 135	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
37	Replace gasoline buses with diesel buses during the normal purchasing cycle. p. 137	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
38	Create a formal Technology Committee of teachers, principals and directors to support the technology plan. p. 139	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
39	Update and revise the LPISD technology plan to include milestones and specific task responsibilities. p. 142	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
40	Use the State Board for Educator Certification	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

	draft technology standards as a guideline for establishing LPISD's technology requirements for teachers. p. 144							
41	Identify and recruit internal staff interested in supporting the technology coordinator with minor technical issues such as printer problems, software initialization and login problems. p. 146	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Chapter 4 Totals	\$3,680	\$11,900	\$11,400	\$11,900	\$11,900	\$50,780	(\$5,000)
	Savings	\$87,992	\$96,212	\$96,212	\$96,212	\$96,212	\$472,840	\$0
	Costs	(\$11,540)	(\$39,750)	(\$40,250)	(\$39,750)	(\$39,750)	(\$171,040)	(\$7,700)
	Total	\$76,452	\$56,462	\$55,962	\$56,462	\$56,462	\$301,800	(\$7,700)

Total Savings	\$472,840
Total Costs	(\$178,740)
Net	\$294,100

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the organization and management of the La Pryor Independent School District (LPISD) in four subsections:

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

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

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

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

BACKGROUND

LPISD is located in Zavala County, about 20 miles southwest of the City of Uvalde. The county seat is in the City of Crystal City. The county's population is largely Hispanic, making up over 90 percent of county residents, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Southwest Texas Junior College and Sul Ross State University are located in nearby Uvalde, Texas. The public school enrollment of the county is approximately 2,600 students. The largest employers are educational services and the county government. Ranching, farming and oil and gas production are also key components of the county's economy.

LPISD's schools are located on one campus. An elementary school, a middle school and a high school include students from pre-K through grade 12. Enrollment for 1999-2000 totaled 458 students. Over 86 percent of the student body of the district is considered economically disadvantaged. The district is served by the Texas Education Agency's

(TEA) Regional Education Service Center XX (Region 20) in San Antonio.

For this review, LPISD selected peer districts for comparison based upon similarities in size, location, enrollment and property value. The districts chosen were Cotulla, Carrizo Springs, Devine, Pearsall and Charlotte. Their enrollment and accreditation status is presented in **Exhibit 1-1**.

Exhibit 1-1
LPISD and Peer District Enrollments and Accreditation Status
2000-01

District	Enrollment	Accreditation Status
La Pryor	439	Academically acceptable
Charlotte	487	Recognized
Cotulla	1,294	Academically acceptable
Devine	1,889	Academically acceptable
Pearsall	2,273	Recognized
Carrizo Springs	2,467	Academically acceptable

Source: TEA, Public Education Information Management System, (PEIMS) 2000-01.

LPISD had budgeted revenues of over \$3.6 million in 1999-2000, the last full year for which audited financial statements are available. For budgeted revenue in 2000-01, LPISD had the lowest amount in total dollars among its peers. In revenue per student, LPISD was second highest of its peer group (**Exhibit 1-2**).

Exhibit 1-2
LPISD Budgeted Revenues Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Total Revenue	Revenue/Student
La Pryor	\$3,618,907	\$8,244
Charlotte	\$4,030,869	\$8,277
Cotulla	\$9,438,059	\$7,294
Devine	\$10,992,775	\$5,835

Pearsall	\$14,043,206	\$6,178
Carrizo Springs	\$17,893,689	\$7,253

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

LPISD's total operating expenditures for 2000-01 were more than \$3.6 million. Compared to its peer group, LPISD had the lowest operating expenditures in total dollars. LPISD had the second highest operating expenditures per student of the group (**Exhibit 1-3**).

Exhibit 1-3
LPISD Budgeted Operating Expenditures
Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Total Operating Expenditures	Total Operating Expenditures Per Student
La Pryor	\$3,674,368	\$8,370
Charlotte	\$4,328,379	\$8,888
Cotulla	\$10,045,130	\$7,763
Devine	\$11,444,835	\$6,075
Pearsall	\$14,572,888	\$6,411
Carrizo Springs	\$17,921,096	\$7,264

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

In 2000-01, Texas school districts received an average of 49.8 percent of their revenue from local sources, 42.4 percent from state sources and 3.3 percent from federal sources. LPISD and its peer districts all had a lower percent of local revenue and a higher percent of state revenue than the state average (**Exhibit 1-4**).

Exhibit 1-4
LPISD, Region 20, State and Peer District Revenue Sources
Percent of Total Revenues
2000-01

District	Local Revenue	State Revenue	Federal Revenue	Other
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La Pryor	11.4%	83.3%	4.0%	1.3%
Charlotte	14.8%	75.8%	3.8%	5.6%
Carrizo Springs	18.2%	72.1%	7.1%	2.6%
Pearsall	22.2%	69.6%	5.3%	2.9%
Devine	22.5%	70.5%	3.0%	4.0%
Cotulla	22.8%	70.0%	3.9%	3.3%
Region 20	36.9%	54.2%	5.0%	3.9%
State	49.8%	42.4%	3.3%	4.4%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

LPISD spends 53.9 percent of its revenue on instruction, the highest when compared to peer districts, and more than the state average of 51.3 percent (Exhibit 1-5).

Exhibit 1-5
LPISD, Region 20, State and Peer District Expenditures for
Instruction
Percent of Total Expenditures
2000-01

Distric	Total Expenditures	Expenditures for Instruction	Instruction Percent of Total Expenditures
La Pryor	\$3,674,368	\$1,979,195	53.9%
Charlotte	\$4,328,379	\$2,110,749	48.8%
Cotulla	\$10,045,130	\$5,130,596	51.1%
Devine	\$11,444,835	\$6,075,828	53.1%
Pearsall	\$14,572,888	\$7,674,350	52.7%
Carrizo Springs	\$17,921,096	\$9,182,459	51.2%
State	\$27,056,013,935	\$13,871,475,883	51.3%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. GOVERNANCE

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

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

- govern and oversee the management of the public schools in the district;
- adopt such rules, regulations and bylaws as the board may deem proper;
- approve a district-developed plan for site-based decision making and provide for its implementation;
- levy and collect taxes and issue bonds;
- select tax officials, as appropriate to the district's need;
- prepare, adopt and file a budget for the next succeeding fiscal year and file a report of disbursements and receipts for the preceding fiscal year;
- have district fiscal accounts audited at district expense by a Texas certified or public accountant holding a permit from the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy following the close of each fiscal year;
- publish an annual report describing the district's educational performance, including campus performance objectives and the progress of each campus toward achieving those objectives;
- receive bequests and donations or other money coming legally into its hands in the name of the district;
- select a depository for district funds;
- order elections, canvass the returns, declare results and issue certificates of election as required by law;
- dispose of property no longer necessary for the operation of the district;
- acquire and hold real and personal property in the name of the district; and
- hold all powers and duties not specifically delegated by statute to the Texas Education Agency or the State Board of Education.

The LPISD board consists of seven members elected at-large for three-year terms. Elections are held in May of each year. **Exhibit 1-6** is a list of current board members.

**Exhibit 1-6
LPISD Board of Trustees
2000-01**

Name	Title	Term Expires	Occupation
Marcel Valdez	President	2003	County agent
Dwight H. McHazlett	Vice president	2003	Teacher
Onesimo Perez, Jr.	Secretary	2004	Produce manager (H.E.B.)
Jerry Quijano	Member	2003	Grocery stocker (H.E.B.)
Ricardo Lopez	Member	2002	Self-employed
Jesse Lopez	Member	2002	Self-employed
Alejandro C. Perez	Member	2004	Teacher

Source: LPISD office of the superintendent.

Eddie Majera, who had been on the board for 10 years, did not run for re-election, but was on the board at the time of the review. Mr. Alejandro C. Perez filled his position during the May 2001 elections.

FINDING

Turmoil in the district has diverted focus from student achievement. In the past ten years there have been six individuals who have served as the district's superintendent (**Exhibit 1-7**). Superintendent turnover can be costly, especially at times when a former superintendent is still under contract while another is serving in that capacity.

**Exhibit 1-7
La Pryor Superintendents
1990 through 2001**

Superintendent Name	Year
Rodolfo Espinoza	1990-91 to 1993-94
Rudy Lopez	1994-95
Roberto Lopez	1995-96 to 1997-98

Braulio Ruelas	1998-99 through 2000
Newell Wools (interim)	End of 1999-2000
Eddie Ramirez	2000-2001

Source: LPISD office of the superintendent.

In the last five years, student performance has improved only slightly, and the key reasons cited by district staff are high turnover of lead administrators and teachers, hostility and personal infighting among board members, hostility of board members toward administration and teachers and hostility and personal resentment between administrative staff members.

The current superintendent was hired in January 2001, the current middle/high school principal is in his first year with the district and the elementary school principal is in her second year with the district. According to the elementary school campus improvement plan for 2000-01, "a major cause of low (student) performance could be attributed to a large turnover in staff every year and major problems in retaining administrative leadership at the district and campus levels. The school district has had a new superintendent and new principals every year or two in the last decade."

LPISD's strategic plan, developed in 1998, begins with a series of belief statements two of which cite the importance of instructional leaders (i.e., superintendent, principals and teachers): "Instructional leaders set direction to excellence" and "Instructional leaders drive exemplary expectations." The district's mission statement also highlights the importance of continuity of instructional leadership: LPISD "will attract and retain strong instructional leaders..." Finally, the plan states "student achievement shall be the focus of all decisions."

District staff told the review team that the board had been too involved in the district supervision and administrative details under previous superintendents. Among the concerns cited by district staff were disruptive school board meetings, lack of unity and teamwork among board members, high staff turnover, circumvention of board-staff lines of authority, public statements of disrespect by board members of each other and of staff and micromanagement by the board.

Staff members also cited a continuing atmosphere of distrust by the board for key staff and a "hostile environment" resulting from board "power struggles" that has caused many staff to get discouraged and leave LPISD or give up on following through on district and campus initiatives. Staff members felt that board decisions were made based upon personal feelings

toward staff members rather than objective performance standards and student achievement.

Effective in January 2001, the TEA assigned a monitor to the district to work with the board and superintendent to ensure that the line between policy formulation and administration was clearly delineated.

The Navarro ISD in Guadalupe County established its own code of conduct to self-regulate the actions of the board (**Exhibit 1-8**). Each board member signs the code of conduct and the board has its own set of standard operating procedures that outline how meetings will be conducted and the like.

Exhibit 1-8
Navarro ISD Board of Trustees
Code of Conduct

As members of the Navarro Independent School District Board of Trustees, we realize that to be the most effective advocates for children, we, as a Board, must function as a team and at all times treat each other and the people we serve with the utmost courtesy, dignity, respect and professionalism. Should we, for whatever reason, fail to follow these guidelines, we ask that our fellow Board members call it to our attention. When that happens we pledge to accept the feedback without anger or finger pointing, and to renew our efforts to follow this code of conduct. We shall promote the best interests of the school district as a whole, and, to that end, we shall adhere to the following educational and ethical standards.

Governance

- Bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures, upholding and enforcing all laws, State
- Board of Education rules, court orders pertaining to schools and district policies and procedures.
- Make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of all children in the District, regardless of ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing. These decisions will place the needs of children above the wants of adults.
- Recognize that the Board must make decisions as a whole and make no personal promise or take private action that may compromise the Board. All action should take place in an official Board meeting.
- Focus Board action on policymaking, goal setting, planning, and evaluation and insist on regular and impartial evaluation of all staff.
- Vote to appoint the best-qualified personnel available after consideration of recommendations by the Superintendent.
- Delegate authority for the administration of the school to the

Superintendent. Board members will not engage in micromanagement.

Conduct

- Hold confidential all matters that, if disclosed, may have an impact on the District. Respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law, including closed session agenda items.
- Attend all regularly scheduled Board meetings, arrive on time, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.
- Make policy decisions only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings, render all decisions based on the available facts, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special groups.
- Refrain from using our Board position for personal or partisan gain.
- Disagree in an agreeable manner. We will not hold grudges or question another Board member's vote on an issue, but will respect other views and opinions.
- Be firm, fair, just and impartial in all decisions and actions.

Communication

- Encourage the free expression of opinion by all Board members. Make a good faith effort to understand and to accommodate the views of others.
- Seek communication between the Board and students, staff, and all elements of the community.
- Communicate to fellow Board members and the Superintendent, at appropriate times, expression of public concerns.
- The Board President shall make sure that persons addressing the board follow established guidelines.

Board Preparation

- Become informed about current educational issues and seek continuing education opportunities such as those sponsored by state and national school board associations.
- Disseminate pertinent information gained at training workshops and conventions with the Superintendent and fellow Board members.
- We will remember always that our first and greatest concern must be the overall welfare of all the students attending our schools.

We hereby pledge to abide by this Code of Conduct:

_____ Board Member _____ Board Member

_____ Board Member _____ Board Member

_____ Board Member _____	_____ Board Member
_____ Board Member	
Witnessed: _____ Date: _____	
Adopted into local policy on: _____	

Source: Navarro ISD website
 <<http://www.esc13.net/navarro/district/code.html>>.

The National School Board Association (NSBA) published *The Key Work of School Boards* in 2000 as a guidebook "intended as a support for school boards to focus their efforts on understanding and achieving the elements of their key work." The intent of the guidebook is to focus board members' efforts on improving student achievement, not in administering the day-to-day operations of a school district.

Based upon research and an evaluation of best practices of school boards in districts across the United States, the guidebook follows a framework of eight key action areas to which all successful boards have paid attention: vision, standards, assessment, accountability, resource alignment, climate, collaboration and continuous improvement.

Each action area is discussed in detail, includes a series of self-assessment statements that board members and key staff can use to determine a district's current level of attainment of that standard and defines the role of the board and superintendent in each area. **Exhibit 1-9** provides a summary of the focus for each key action area and examples of statements contained in the self-assessment for each area.

Exhibit 1-9
NSBA Action Areas for Successful School Boards

Action Area	Key Elements	Self-Assessment Statements
Vision	Create district and community consensus on achievement objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our vision is clearly articulated and known to all stakeholders in the community. • Our vision is the guiding force that sets the framework for how we operate as a district.

Standards	Establish clear standards for student performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our district has established student performance standards that clearly define what students are supposed to know and be able to do at each grade level.
Assessment	Ensure that assessments are tied to established standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have an assessment program that is based on our student performance standards.
Accountability	Measure the performance of all school staff members, administrators and the school board against student achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We use our student achievement data to make decisions and establish district priorities. • We tie evaluations of staff and board members to the data on student achievement.
Alignment	Include the community in the review of the district budget and management process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established priorities for improving student achievement that give everyone in the district clear focus.
Climate	Create a climate that supports the staff and the needs of all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We model the core values and beliefs of our shared vision in our work as a school board. • We provide a policy framework that is built on trust and mutual respect between the board and staff.
Collaborative relationships	Build collaborative relationships with community and business leaders and staff to develop a consensus for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As board members, we understand that collaboration begins with us. • We treat each other, the superintendent, staff.

		students, parents and community members with mutual respect.
Continuous improvement	Commit to continuous education and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have developed a working atmosphere that puts quality first among all other considerations.

Source: NSBA The Key Work of School Boards, 2000.

Recommendation 1:

Develop a set of board operating standards that will restore student achievement as the key priority of the district.

The board must set aside differences and send a clear signal of strong leadership, which includes setting standards for themselves to ensure that each action constructively addresses the educational needs of the students.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent accesses the information on the NSBA and Navarro ISD Web sites for consideration by the board.	August 2001
2.	The board sets workshop sessions at which board members, the superintendent and key district staff develop self-assessment standards and discuss the level of current attainment.	August - September 2001
3.	The board holds a public hearing to present its self-assessment and invites community input.	October 2001
4.	The board uses the self-assessment and community input to revise the district's vision statement, standards and systems to focus on student achievement and establishes a process to monitor and report on the board's achievement.	October - November 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

B. PLANNING

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

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

FINDING

LPISD established a strategic plan with specific objectives in May 1998, but the district has not updated the plan to reflect achievement of, or progress toward that plan. Current planning efforts focus on the District Improvement Plan (DIP), but there is no link between the district's strategic plan and the DIP for 2000-01.

The 1998 strategic plan included a series of belief statements, a mission statement, eight strategic parameters and 12 objectives and accompanying strategies to achieve them (**Exhibit 1-10**). The current superintendent was not involved in the preparation of this plan, the plan has not been updated and staff members were not aware of any district attempts to monitor implementation of the plan.

Exhibit 1-10
LPISD 1998 Strategic Plan

Element	Description
Belief statements	<p>We believe ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional leaders set direction to excellence. • Parent and community involvement and support achieve educational excellence. • Students exceed the challenges of a well-balanced curriculum. • Prudent financial planning guarantees quality

	<p>education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing professional development for all staff ensures student learning. Instructional leaders drive exemplary expectations.
Mission statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LPISD, a peaceful, small, rural, agricultural community, located in the southwest region of Texas, will attract and retain strong instructional leaders who will set direction in providing a quality learning environment, designed to ensure an exemplary education for children, students, and community who are fully committed to achieving educational excellence through sound fiscal management.
Strategic parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student achievement shall be the focus of all decisions. The district will not operate on a deficit budget. Instructional leaders will be held accountable. Instructional leaders shall communicate their expectations for excellence. All stakeholders will be treated fairly and with respect. All personnel will interact in a professional and courteous manner with parents, students and community. The district will communicate with all parents and the entire community. All committees will have parent and/or community input.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To have 100 percent of district personnel involved and committed to parent participation program/activities to ensure excellence. To increase commitment from our local business sponsors, presenters, etc., to help our community toward student success.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community input/support 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial management 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning with the 1998-99 school year, the attendance rate will increase and be maintained at 97 percent.

management	4. A balanced budget will be developed by August 1998. 5. By the fall of 2000, the district will overcome deficit spending.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional leadership 	6. By the fall of 1998, 100 percent of stakeholders will be informed of the district strategic plan and its projected impact on student performance. 7. By the fall of 1998, the district will identify and appropriate varied resources, both fiscal and non-fiscal, to ensure educational excellence for all children. 8. One hundred percent of our instructional leaders will be held accountable for increasing student achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic excellence 	9. By the fall of 1999, successful academic programs will be in place for exemplary student achievement. 10. By the year 2000, 95 percent of third grade students will be reading at or above third grade level. 11. By the year 2000, 90 percent of students will be participating in UIL/extracurricular activities. 12. By the year 2000, 90 percent of all test-takers (grades 3-8 and 10) will pass all portions of the TAAS exam.

Source: LPISD Strategic Plan, May 1998.

The DIP for 1998-99 identified specific strategies to implement each of the 12 objectives identified in the strategic plan. However, the middle/high school principal, who served temporarily as superintendent in December 2000 and January 2001, could not locate a DIP for 1999-2000. No information was provided to show the achievement of the objectives from either year of the DIPs provided.

Exhibit 1-11 presents the district goals for the 2000-01 school year as contained in the DIP. The DIP does not reference the objectives of the strategic plan, and no documents were provided by the district to demonstrate any monitoring and updating process associated with the strategic plan. Instead, key objectives of the strategic plan are changed in the goals for 2000-01. For example, instead of "90 percent of all test-takers (grades 3-8 and 10) will pass all portions of the TAAS exam" by 2000, the objective is 75 percent of all students by 2001 and 90 percent by 2003-04.

Exhibit 1-11
LPISD Goals for 2000-01 School Year

Goal	Description
------	-------------

1.	Establish and maintain instructional programs that achieve academic excellence for all students.
2.	Establish and maintain special programs to effectively address the needs of all students and meet state and federal compliance standards.
3.	The instructional leadership will insure the instructional program is aligned with the TEKS and the curriculum is supported by technology.
4.	Educational excellence will be achieved with the support of parents and community members.
5.	LPISD will provide a safe, healthy and positive environment, which meets the needs of all students.

Source: LPISD District Improvement Plan, 2000-01.

There is also no direct link between the DIP and the district's budget. Broad goals identified in the DIP are not reflected as budget items. For example, the goal that the district will "establish and maintain instructional programs that achieve academic excellence for all students" does not have a cost estimate associated with it that is then reflected in the budget. Instead, resources are broadly identified as "local funds," "SCE funds," or "Title VII cultural funds" with no specific amounts from any source. Principals also said that individual campus budgets are not tied to the campus improvement plans.

Clearly, the current board and the current superintendent have not had an opportunity to work together to develop a shared vision for the district.

Recommendation 2:

Update the district's strategic plan to reflect the current board and administrative vision for the district and link the plan to the District and Campus Improvement Plans as well as the budget.

Goals in the DIP and CIP should have total costs associated with implementing individual strategies reflected. Then, those total costs should be reflected in the budget so that there is linkage of the plan with the resource allocation. Further, the district should develop a process to monitor and update the district's plans.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and board members conduct a planning retreat to establish a shared vision for the district in the coming years.	August - September 2001
----	--	-------------------------

2.	The superintendents and principals develop a process to monitor and update the strategic plan, District Improvement Plan and each campus plan annually.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent reviews the process with the board.	October 2001
4.	The board approves the process and directs the superintendent to implement it.	November 2001
5.	The superintendent and the principals implement the process.	December 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

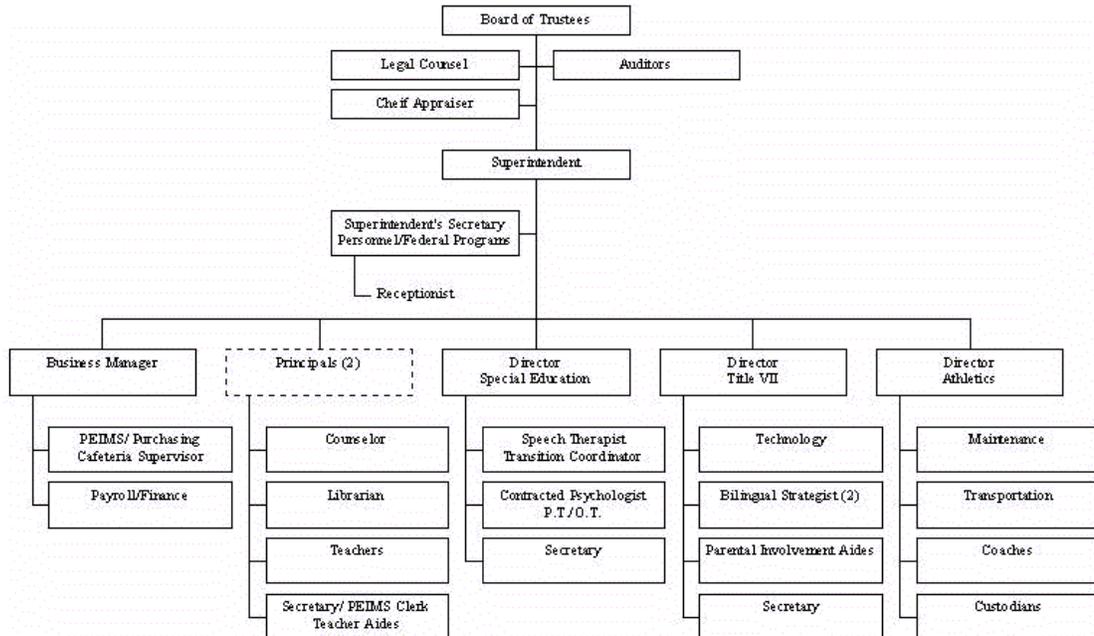
C. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL

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

- administrative responsibility for the planning, operation, supervision and evaluation of the educational programs, services and facilities of the district and for annual performance appraisals of the staff;
- administrative authority and responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all district personnel;
- termination or suspension of staff members or the non-renewal of staff members' term contracts;
- day-to-day management of district operations;
- preparation of district budgets;
- preparation of policy recommendations for the board and administration of the implementation of adopted policies;
- development of appropriate administrative regulations to implement board policies;
- leadership in attainment of student performance; and
- organization of the district's central administration.

Exhibit 1-12 shows the current LPISD organization.

Exhibit 1-12 LPISD Organization



Source: LPISD office of the superintendent, May 2001.

Under this organization structure, LPISD administrators perform the following duties:

- the superintendent is responsible for the effective execution of policies adopted by the local board. The superintendent manages the administration of all district operations, oversees the financial management of the district, serves as the chief instructional officer and assigns personnel responsibilities;
- the superintendent's secretary is responsible for personnel and federal programs;
- the elementary and middle school principals direct and manage the instructional program and supervise operations at the campus level. They provide instructional leadership to ensure high standards of service. They also direct the implementation of district policies and instructional programs and manage the operation of all campus activities;
- the director of Special Education is responsible for overseeing the services provided to students with special needs, such as transportation, additional classroom staffing and facilities modifications;
- the Title VII director is responsible for overseeing the district's Title VII program and a five-year, \$2.4 million grant; and

- the athletic director oversees the athletic functions of the district and the coaching staff as well as the maintenance, transportation and custodial functions of the district.

Exhibit 1-13 compares LPISD's staffing with the selected peer districts. LPISD has the second lowest percent of teachers among its peer districts and is well below the state and regional averages. It has the highest percent of professional support positions (e.g., counselors, nurses) and auxiliary personnel (e.g., cafeteria workers).

Exhibit 1-13
LPISD Staffing Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Teachers	Professional Support	Campus Administration	Central Administration	Educational Aides	Auxiliary Staff
Carrizo Springs	43.8%	4.7%	2.4%	1.9%	14.8%	32.5%
La Pryor	44.6%	7.6%	2.2%	2.2%	21.7%	21.7%
Pearsall	47.4%	6.4%	2.5%	0.8%	14.5%	28.4%
Charlotte	48.8%	2.4%	3.6%	4.8%	15.5%	25.0%
Cotulla	49.5%	6.1%	4.0%	2.5%	14.6%	23.2%
Devine	49.8%	5.6%	2.2%	1.1%	14.9%	26.4%
Region 20	48.2%	8.2%	2.3%	0.9%	11.0%	29.5%
State	50.6%	7.9%	2.4%	1.0%	10.3%	27.7%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

FINDING

LPISD has an employee handbook that summarizes key district policies and procedures, including: school calendar, reassignments and transfers, outside employment, performance evaluation, staff development, alcohol and drug testing, payroll deductions, travel expense reimbursement, employee benefits, leave and absences, complaints and grievances, purchasing procedures and emergency situations.

Policy numbers are provided in the text of the document so that employees needing additional information in a topic area can identify where to look in board policies.

Each year each employee must sign a statement showing receipt of a copy of the handbook. The administrative assistant to the superintendent maintains the signed receipts.

COMMENDATION

LPISD developed and maintains an employee handbook that provides useful information on district policies and procedures to all district employees.

FINDING

One in every three LPISD teachers, on average, leaves the district each year. High turnover among key district administrators and teachers contributed to a decline in student performance from 1995-96 through 1999-2000. The lack of stability in superintendents, principals and teachers was cited by staff members repeatedly in interviews.

Since 1995-96, student performance in LPISD has improved only slightly in reading and math and declined in writing (**Exhibit 1-14**). According to the 2000-01 District Improvement Plan (DIP), student achievement in LPISD, as reflected in scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), suffered in 1999-2000. Student performance in third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades declined in all three areas tested: reading, math and all tests (**Exhibit-1-15**).

**Exhibit 1-14
Percent of All LPISD Students Passing TAAS, All Levels
1995-96 through 1999-2000**

Subject	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Reading	56.6%	59.4%	65.2%	59.1%	65.4%
Writing	73.2%	67.6%	64.8%	80.8%	67.8%
Math	45.9%	52.0%	66.5%	60.8%	60.9%

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

**Exhibit 1-15
Percent of Sixth Grade LPISD Students Passing TAAS
1995-96 through 1999-2000**

Subject	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
Reading	54.50%	82.60%	64.00%	54.20%	51.70%
Math	59.10%	79.20%	66.70%	44.00%	50.00%
All Tests	45.50%	70.80%	56.00%	40.00%	41.40%

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

The District Improvement Plan (DIP) identifies five factors as key causes of the decline. The first two cited were significant frequent changes of administration and teacher turnover. In fact, teacher turnover in LPISD averaged 33.8 percent from 1995-96 through 1999-2000, more than double the state and regional averages (**Exhibit 1-16**).

Exhibit 1-16
LPISD, Region 20 and State Teacher Turnover
1995-96 through 1999-2000

Entity	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
La Pryor	30.2%	32.6%	31.9%	39.1%	35.1%
Region 20	12.6%	11.2%	11.8%	13.7%	13.3%
State	12.1%	12.6%	13.3%	15.5%	15.0%

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

Compared to its peer districts, LPISD's teacher turnover is the highest, more than double every district but one (**Exhibit 1-17**).

Exhibit 1-17
LPISD, Region 20, State and Peer District Teacher Turnover
1999-2000

Entity	1999-2000
Carrizo Springs	11.0%
Charlotte	11.4%
Devine	13.3%
Cotulla	16.1%
Pearsall	23.3%
La Pryor	35.1%

Region 20	13.3%
State	15.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

According to Dean Grant of the DeKalb County, Georgia, Schools in *Fast-Track Teacher Recruitment*, in the January 2001 issue of *School Administrator*, "the school principal is the person with the most influence on teacher retention."

Teacher retention is a key element in student achievement. According to education journals, research has found that new teachers improve dramatically during their first few years on the job. For that reason, experts say it is critical to retain teachers for at least five or six years so that they can reach their full potential.

"It doesn't really solve the problem to recruit thousands of new people into the occupation if, in a few short years, many of them leave," Richard M. Ingersoll, a sociologist at the University of Georgia, observes. "The data tell us that the vast majority of hiring that takes place in any given year is simply replacements for teachers who have just left."

LPISD's starting teacher salaries are the lowest of competing area districts (**Exhibit 1-18**).

Exhibit 1-18
LPISD Beginning Teacher Salaries Compared to Area Districts
2000-01

District	Beginning Salary	
	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree
La Pryor	\$24,540	\$24,540
Crystal City	\$25,533	\$26,533
Uvalde	\$26,000	\$26,500
Carrizo Springs	\$26,240	\$26,240
Del Rio	\$29,000	\$30,500
Laredo	\$29,000	\$29,000
San Antonio	\$32,000	\$33,400
Harlandale	\$32,500	\$33,250

Source: TSPR telephone survey, January 2001.

Salaries, however, are just one of the reasons teachers leave a school district. An *Education Week* Quality Counts analysis of data from a five-year federal study known as Baccalaureate and Beyond provides insights into the other reasons teachers stay or go. It shows that teachers leave schools that have discipline problems and ones where they perceive a poor overall school environment. Teachers get frustrated with schools with poor administrative support. Teachers who were dissatisfied with the school environment also were twice as likely to leave as teachers who were not. Attention to orienting, mentoring, and staff development for new teachers also contributes to stabilization of new staff.

Recommendation 3:

Increase beginning teacher salaries to be competitive with neighboring districts and develop a program to reduce teacher turnover.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent surveys surrounding districts to determine the starting pay for teachers in surrounding districts with which LPISD competes for teachers.	August 2001
2.	The superintendent and principals meet with teachers to identify issues that affect the current teaching environment in LPISD.	August - September 2001
3.	The superintendent and principals develop a plan to address each of the issues identified by the teachers.	September 2001
4.	The superintendent and principals review the plan with teachers and make appropriate modifications.	October 2001
5.	The superintendent presents the plan to the board for review and approval, which includes an overall increase in beginning pay for teachers.	November 2001
6.	The board approves the plan and authorizes its implementation, with pay increases becoming effective in the 2002-03 school year.	January 2002 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

There would be no additional costs to the district to develop a plan. LPISD currently employs approximately 39 teachers according to 1999-2000 data reported to TEA. If approximately 15 teachers are leaving the district each

year, and first year teachers were hired to fill all of those positions, a \$2,000 per year increase for starting teachers would result in annual expenditures of \$30,000 plus 15 percent benefits or a total of \$34,500.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Increase beginning teacher salaries to be competitive with neighboring districts and develop a program to reduce teacher turnover.	\$0	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)	(\$34,500)

Chapter 1

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

D. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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

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

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

FINDING

LPISD is in the fourth year of a five-year federal grant, Title VII. Title VII provides funds for small rural schools to design and implement a dual language program. Using Title VII funds, LPISD has provided opportunities for community and parental involvement in the schools.

LPISD publishes a monthly district Title VII newsletter, *Two Voices, Un Mundo* in English and in Spanish. LPISD includes general information about activities in each of the schools and information pertaining to the Title VII grant in the newsletter. The newsletter is distributed to parents via each student and several copies for community members are left at five local area businesses.

The director of Title VII holds monthly parent meetings to report grant progress and to provide parent training. Some of the meetings are scheduled in the afternoon and some in the evening. Parent training sessions include such topics as "How to Manage Rivalry between Siblings." In December, the topic was educational toys and games. All information is provided in English and in Spanish. Approximately eight to 20 parents regularly participate in these meetings.

LPISD encourages parents to spend time reading with their children through the Milk and Cookies Program. Each Wednesday evening, families are invited to come to the elementary school library to choose books to read and talk about with their children. The primary goal of the program is to provide parents and children an opportunity to spend quality time together without outside interferences. Before closing, the librarian serves milk and cookies to those in attendance.

The LPISD computer lab is open for individual parent use during school hours each day. Parents schedule time in the lab that does not conflict with student use. The LPISD computer technician also opens the computer lab for three hours one evening each week. The technician assists members of the community with the use of the computers. The director of Title VII said approximately 10 parents actively use the lab. Southwest Texas Junior College uses the lab to teach General Education Development (GED) classes for community adults.

Families and Schools Together (FAST), a program of Family Service Association of San Antonio, Inc. that is funded by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, provides an early intervention and prevention program for elementary school children who are at risk for substance abuse, school failure and juvenile delinquency in adolescence. Eight to twelve LPISD families participate in the eight-week program that takes place in the evening at La Pryor Elementary School. The elementary school personnel generate referrals to the program. All members of the child's family participate in the program.

A four-person team staffs FAST: a school representative, a mental health professional, a substance abuse counselor and a parent. FAST also relies on volunteers to help with meal preparation and to supervise the children's group activities. FAST provides parents with the support they need to be active advocates for their children. At the conclusion of the eight-week program, families join other FAST families in a monthly support group (FASTWORKS) for two years. The support group is organized by a parent liaison who coordinates the monthly activities. Through this group, parents continue to build a support network for each other.

The three goals of FAST are to build stronger families, to form better connections between parents and needed services offered by the school and by community agencies and to increase the child's classroom functioning. Formal evaluation of the National program demonstrates that graduation from FAST increases family cohesiveness and the parent's confidence in their parenting skills. Furthermore, the child's attention span, self-esteem and conduct improve on an average of 20 to 40 percent.

COMMENDATION

LPISD, through a Title VII grant, has initiated a variety of programs that promote parental and community involvement and provide needed services to families.

FINDING

LPISD schools have no organized volunteer programs. The high school principal said a few parents volunteered to help teachers by making material for them. He also indicated there is an athletic booster club for parents, but that it exists in name only.

LPISD superintendent said that the schools have allowed the activities fostered by the Title VII grant take the place of any parent involvement activities on the campus.

TSPR survey results indicate 27 percent of teachers and 67 percent of administrative and support staff disagreed with the statement that schools had plenty of volunteers. Eighteen percent of teachers and 17 percent of administrative and support staff strongly disagreed with the statement. Twenty-seven percent of teachers had no opinion and 27 percent agreed with the statement while zero percent of administrative and support staff agreed with the statement.

Parent and community involvement can occur in a variety of ways, such as: attending school events, working on school projects and assisting the school by volunteering in the offices, the library and the classroom. Parent involvement also means being involved with the child's learning by ensuring homework is completed and participating in parent/teacher conferences.

La Mesa Elementary School in Plainview ISD created a Parenting/Volunteer Center where parents go to get parenting tips, meet other parents and educators and help with making materials for classroom projects.

Bastrop ISD organized a program, Hand in Hand, which uses parents and community members as mentors to children who have been identified as at risk. The mentor meets with the student at school for 30 minutes weekly. The mentor serves as a guide, a friend, a listener and a tutor.

Santa Gertrudis ISD parents are afforded an opportunity to become involved in various ways. Each campus has a parent/teacher organization that meets monthly. The parent/teacher organization provides support in the academic endeavors of the district by donating funds that supply rewards for the students who meet their reading goals on the Accelerated Reading Program. Additionally, the club raises funds through a variety of

activities to support the district's scholarship fund. Club members also operate all concession stands for home game sports events and have donated their time to assist the district with small building projects and landscaping.

Recommendation 4:

Develop a Parent/Volunteer Involvement Program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The site-based decision-making committee (SBDM) creates and integrates a parent/community involvement plan into the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP).	August 2001
2.	The principals review the plan and solicit a volunteer coordinator for the program on their campus.	September 2001
3.	The volunteer coordinators at each campus write an article for the local newspaper and the Title VII newsletter describing the program and inviting parents and community members to become involved.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This chapter examines the educational service delivery and performance measures of the La Pryor Independent School District (LPISD) in the following areas:

- A. Student Performance and Instructional Delivery
- B. Compensatory Education
- C. Bilingual/English as a Second Language Program
- D. Career and Technology Education
- E. Gifted and Talented Education Program
- F. Special Student Populations
- G. Safety and Security

The key emphasis of any school system is educating children. Instructional programs and services are developed, evaluated and modified based upon the performance of students measured by standardized tests, achievement by students of learning objectives and the changing composition of the student population.

BACKGROUND

LPISD enrollment during the 1999-2000 school year was 439 students, of which 226 were elementary students and 213 were secondary students **Exhibit 2-1** shows the grade levels served and enrollments by school for 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-1
LPISD Campuses, Grade Levels, Enrollment
and Accountability Ratings
2000-01

Campus	Grade Levels	2000-01 Enrollment	1999-2000 Accountability Rating
La Pryor High School	9 - 12	123	Acceptable
La Pryor Middle School	6-8	90	Acceptable
La Pryor Elementary School	EE-5	226	Acceptable
District		439	Acceptable

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

The peer districts selected for comparison purposes are located in South Texas. La Pryor is the smallest district with an enrollment of 439 students. One of the districts is similar in size and the other districts range from three to five times larger.

The majority student population in all but one of the districts is Hispanic. Compared to the peer districts and the region and the state average, LPISD has the highest percent of economically disadvantaged students. LPISD's students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) enrollment is higher than four of the five peer districts and the regional and state average (**Exhibit 2-2**).

Exhibit 2-2
LPISD, Peer District, Region 20, and State Demographics
2000-01

Entity	Enrollment	African American	Anglo	Hispanic	Other	Economically Disadvantaged	LEP
La Pryor	439	0.0%	6.6%	93.2%	0.2%	83.8%	27.1%
Charlotte	487	0.0%	16.6%	83.2%	0.2%	78.0%	5.7%
Cotulla	1,294	0.1%	11.7%	88.0%	0.2%	76.4%	28.9%
Devine	1,884	0.8%	50.2%	48.5%	0.5%	46.2%	2.6%
Pearsall	2,273	0.6%	11.3%	87.9%	0.2%	75.1%	12.7%
Carrizo Springs	2,467	0.7%	8.6%	90.0%	0.7%	75.8%	17.1%
Region 20	325,851	7.0%	27.3%	64.3%	1.4%	61.8%	10.5%
State	4,071,433	14.0%	42.0%	41.0%	3.0%	49.2%	14.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1995-96, PEIMS 2000-01.

Among the peer districts, LPISD has the lowest per pupil property value and the lowest percent of students passing TAAS. (**Exhibit 2-3**).

Exhibit 2-3
LPISD Property Value per Pupil and Percent of Students
Passing TAAS compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Property Value	Rank	Percent Students	Rank
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	Per Pupil*		Passing TAAS	
Cotulla	\$109,821	1	60.7%	5
Pearsall	\$91,090	2	75.5%	3
Charlotte	\$89,186	3	79.5%	1
Carrizo Springs	\$89,074	4	66.9%	4
Devine	\$86,526	5	79.3%	2
La Pryor	\$62,968	6	49.7%	6
State	\$215,120		79.9%	

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

* Comptroller's Office 2000.

LPISD is spending below the regional and state averages and below all but one of its peer districts for regular education, career and technology education and gifted and talented education. LPISD expenditures for bilingual/ESL are below the regional and state averages and higher than all but one of its peer districts (**Exhibit 2-4**).

Exhibit 2-4
LPISD, Peer Districts, Region 20, and State
Instructional Program Expenditures as a Percent
of Budgeted Instructional Operating Expenditures
2000-01

Entity	Expenditure per Student	Regular Education	Special Education	Compensatory Education	Career and Technology Education	Bilingual/ESL Education	Gifted and Talented Education
Charlotte	\$8,888	77.8%	3.1%	14.7%	3.2%	0.2%	0.4%
La Pryor	\$8,370	66.3%	10.8%	16.3%	3.9%	2.2%	0.4%
Carrizo Springs	\$7,264	64.4%	9.9%	10.3%	6.1%	6.8%	2.5%
Cotulla	\$7,763	77.1%	9.0%	9.1%	3.0%	0.7%	1.2%
Pearsall	\$6,111	65.7%	9.8%	19.8%	4.1%	0.1%	0.4%
Devine	\$6,075	69.8%	11.7%	8.2%	6.8%	0.3%	1.6%

Region 20	N/A	69.5%	14.9%	6.2%	4.0%	3.5%	1.2%
State	\$6,645	70.0%	12.5%	6.6%	4.1%	4.3%	1.8%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-5 summarizes the special programs as a percent of the school's total population.

**Exhibit 2-5
LPISD Special Programs
2000-01**

Program	Enrollment	Percent of Total Enrollment
Bilingual/ESL	118	26.9%
Career and Technology	117	26.7%
Gifted and Talented	55	12.5%
Special Education	49	11.2%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY

Since 1993, Texas has rated and accredited districts and schools based upon specific performance measures including the reading, writing and math portions of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), dropout rates and attendance rates. Districts are evaluated each year and rated as Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable or Academically Unacceptable. Individual schools are rated as Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable or Low Performing. The accountability ratings and enrollment for La Pryor ISD and its peer districts are presented in **Exhibit 2-6**. La Pryor ISD and four of its peer districts were rated Academically Acceptable, and two districts received a Recognized rating.

Exhibit 2-6
LPISD and Peer District Enrollments
and Accountability Ratings
1999-2000

District	Enrollment	Accountability Rating
Carrizo Springs	2,532	Academically Acceptable
Pearsall	2,347	Recognized
Devine	1,899	Academically Acceptable
Cotulla	1,405	Academically Acceptable
Charlotte	499	Recognized
La Pryor	458	Academically Acceptable

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

The TAAS measures student performance. TAAS is administered in reading and mathematics in Grades 3-8 and 10; in reading and mathematics in Spanish in Grades 3 and 4; in writing in Grades 4,8 and 10 and in science and social studies in Grade 8. End-of-Course (EOC) examinations are administered in Algebra I, Biology, English II and U.S. History.

The percent of LPISD students passing the reading, mathematics increased slightly over the past five years, while the percent passing writing decreased over the same period (**Exhibit 2-7**).

Exhibit 2-7
Percent of All LPISD, Region 20 and State
Students Passing TAAS, All Levels
1995-96 through 1999-2000

Subject	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Points Changed
Reading	56.6%	59.4%	64.9%	59.1%	65.4%	8.8
Writing	73.2%	67.6%	65.7%	80.8%	67.8%	-5.4
Mathematics	45.9%	52.0%	66.4%	60.8%	60.9%	15.0
All Tests Taken	37.9%	43.9%	50.9%	46.5%	49.7%	11.8

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

The percent of LPISD students passing TAAS was lowest among all its peer districts and below the regional and state averages in reading, writing, mathematics and all tests taken (**Exhibit 2-8**).

Exhibit 2-8
Percent of LPISD, Region 20 and State
Students Passing TAAS, All Levels
1999-2000

Entity	Reading	Writing	Math	All Tests
Charlotte	88.5%	83.1%	90.9%	79.5%
Devine	87.2%	85.0%	89.5%	79.3%
Pearsall	83.7%	88.9%	84.2%	75.5%
Carrizo Springs	77.1%	83.1%	77.5%	66.9%
Cotulla	74.3%	82.6%	71.0%	60.7%
La Pryor	65.4%	67.8%	60.9%	49.7%
Region 20	85.9%	87.1%	85.3%	77.1%
State	87.4%	88.2%	87.4%	79.9%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

LPISD's mean scores on the SAT I were lower than all of its peer districts, the regional and state averages. An insufficient number of students took the ACT to be included in the data. The percent of students in LPISD taking advanced courses was higher than all its peer districts and the regional and state averages. (**Exhibit 2-9**).

Exhibit 2-9
LPISD, Peer Districts, Region 20 and State
Mean SAT I, ACT Scores, Percent of Students Tested
and Percent of Students taking Advanced Courses
1998-99

Entity	SAT I Score	ACT Score	Percent of Students Tested	Percent of Students Taking Advanced Courses
La Pryor	662	*	0.0%	19.5%
Devine	961	20.9	51.0%	14.7%
Cotulla	959	16.5	73.1%	16.9%
Carrizo Springs	896	17.0	57.3%	17.0%
Charlotte	*	17.1	47.4%	10.4%
Pearsall	959	17.3	50.9%	18.3%
Region 20	941	19.5	65.9%	16.4%
State	989	20.2	61.8%	17.5%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1998-99.

** Indicates no scores reported for fewer than five students.*

The La Pryor Elementary School principal is in her second year at the school and is bringing an instructional focus to the school. LPISD had no curriculum guides before 2000-01.

During May 2000, the LPISD elementary school principal conducted a workshop to train teachers in curriculum development. Topics included in the training were: planning interdisciplinary units, integrating Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) into the curriculum, reading frameworks with emphasis on literature, portfolio assessment and evaluation and use of technology. Eleven teachers received a stipend of \$50 per day for the workshop. These same teachers were each paid \$450 to work independently writing curriculum guides for each grade level.

Curriculum guides serve as work plans for teachers to use in their classrooms. These documents provide direction on student objectives, prerequisite skills, instructional materials and resources, strategies to achieve objectives and assessment methods.

The guides' objectives are aligned to TAAS and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Each guide includes:

- an outline of the themes and subtopics for the year;
- a literacy framework for reading and writing;
- a graphic illustration for integrating language arts and literature with other content areas;
- a conceptual framework of expected learning;
- key questions that span to all levels of Blooms Taxonomy
- TEKS skills and objectives;
- life skills and character development;
- multicultural connections and dual language strategies;
- multiple activities and active learning strategies;
- performance assessment activities with each unit
- a schedule of daily activities;
- materials and resources in English and Spanish.

The guides are prepared in loose-leaf notebooks, which allow updates.

The percent of elementary students passing TAAS increased in reading and math in most grade levels. Fourth grade writing scores are six points lower than they were in 1995-96. From 1998-99 to 1999-2000 scores in third and fifth grade increased in reading and math while fourth-grade scores declined in both areas (**Exhibit-2-10**).

Exhibit 2-10
Comparison of Percent of LPISD,
Elementary Students Passing TAAS
1998-99 through 1999-2000

Grade/Subject	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Change
3rd-Reading	57.9%	36.4%	68.4%	52.9%	64.5%	6.6
3rd-Math	42.1%	31.3%	57.9%	42.9%	46.7%	4.6
4th-Reading	46.2%	44.0%	48.1%	69.6%	63.3%	17.1
4th-Writing	75.0%	53.8%	50.0%	87.0%	68.8%	-6.2
4th-Math	38.5%	26.9%	42.3%	78.3%	59.4%	10.9

5th-Reading	63.2%	57.7%	52.4%	50.0%	66.7%	3.5
5th-Math	73.7%	66.7%	76.2%	71.4%	90.5%	13.0

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

From the year curriculum development began (1998-99) the same students moving from grade three to grade four showed gains in reading and math between 1999 and 2000. Students moving from grade four to grade five showed gains in math. (**Exhibit 2-11**)

Exhibit 2-11
Percent of Elementary Students in Same Class Passing TAAS
1998-99 through 1999-2000

	Grade 3 1999	Grade 4 2000	Points changed	Grade 4 1999	Grade 5 2000	Points Changed
Reading	52.9%	63.3%	10.4	69.6%	66.7%	-2.9
Math	42.9%	59.4%	16.5	78.3%	90.5%	12.2

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

COMMENDATION

An instructional and curriculum focus is affecting elementary student achievement.

FINDING

LPISD has no secondary curriculum guides. The teachers generally use the textbooks and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) objectives to guide instruction. Although textbooks have objectives and some additional resources listed, they are specific and do not offer a variety of strategies or assessment methods.

Student performance on standardized tests is an indicator of the success of a district's educational delivery system. The percent of LPISD secondary students in grades six, seven and eight passing all areas of TAAS has fluctuated from year to year and is far below the state average. From 1998-99 to 1999-2000, the percent of secondary students passing TAAS decreased in seven of twelve areas. (**Exhibit 2-12**).

Exhibit 2-12
Percent of LPISD Secondary School Students Passing TAAS
1995-96 through 1999-2000

Grade/Subject	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
6th-Reading	54.5%	82.6%	64.0%	54.2%	51.7%
6th-Math	59.1%	79.2%	66.7%	44.0%	50.0%
7th-Reading	70.0%	75.0%	66.7%	50.0%	66.7%
7th-Math	40.0%	62.5%	69.6%	58.0%	45.8%
8th-Reading	39.3%	78.6%	85.7%	57.7%	58.6%
8th-Writing	65.5%	78.6%	77.3%	64.0%	51.7%
8th-Math	35.7%	64.3%	81.0%	84.6%	65.5%
8th-Science	53.7%	89.7%	80.0%	84.6%	62.1%
8th-Social Studies	33.3%	42.9%	36.8%	24.0%	20.7%
10th-Reading	65.5%	43.8%	76.5%	84.6%	88.9%
10th-Writing	78.6%	70.6%	77.8%	92.0%	82.8%
10th-Math	42.9%	31.3%	77.8%	63.0%	75.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

Recommendation 5

Develop formal curriculum guides for secondary courses and update guides.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The secondary school principal selects a group of teachers representing key subject areas to serve on a curriculum committee.	October 2001
2.	The committee develops and recommends a process for curriculum development, a uniform format and evaluation procedures to determine curriculum effectiveness.	October 2001
3.	The committee, with assistance from Region 20, develops a comprehensive matrix for one or two curriculum areas, including a scope and sequence chart showing curricular emphasis subject by subject with a schedule for addressing all	November 2001

	subjects in grades 7-12.	
4.	The principal and secondary teachers review all LPISD courses to determine which guides should be developed and establish a timetable for completing all guides.	January 2002
5.	The principal instructs the curriculum committee to develop guides according to the timetable for guide completion.	June 2002
6.	The secondary teachers field test the initial guides and provide feedback to the curriculum committee.	August 2002 - May 2002
7.	The curriculum committee modifies the guide-writing process based on feedback.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

All secondary guides should be scheduled for development from 2001-02 to 2005-06. The district should develop six to eight guides per year. If the district followed the same process it used to develop elementary guides, each guide would cost approximately \$700 to produce. LPISD paid elementary teachers \$250 to attend five days of training led by the principal and then contracted with each teacher to complete a guide for \$450. The cost for eight guides would total \$5,600 ($\$700 \times 8 = \$5,600$).

Producing the guide in a loose-leaf binder would cost approximately \$50, the price of the binder, dividers and paper. Cost for eight guides would be \$400.

Total cost for LPISD for developing and producing eight curriculum guides each year would be \$6,000 ($\$5,600 + \$400 = \$6,000$).

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Develop formal curriculum guides for secondary courses and update guides according to the state revision cycle every five years.	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)	(\$6,000)

FINDING

The District Improvement Plan is developed annually. The 2000-01 plan includes a goal to "establish and maintain instructional programs that achieve academic excellence for all students." Strategies and activities listed to meet the goal are "An enrichment curriculum that includes: a study of languages other than English, cultural activities representative of

the community, technology applications and gifted and talented/advanced placement classes, Grades K-12." These strategies lack the necessary scope and depth to guide the district's decision-making process in curriculum to improve academic performance. The plan does not list any curriculum, materials or resources to be used.

Despite the effort at the elementary level, LPISD has no overall curriculum plan to provide direction and focus for all other instructional programs. Well-written curriculum plans set direction for instructional programs and establish common standards for what is to be taught and evaluated. Such standards ensure the consistency of the district's curriculum and provide a systematic basis for decision-making. For example, new elementary reading books were adopted for 2000-01. The elementary principal said that when she arrived at the elementary school, however, she found the books had never been unboxed. A strong curriculum plan could have prevented this situation from occurring.

An effective curriculum plan provides a road map for curriculum and instructional delivery. A plan typically delineates responsibilities for long-range planning, curriculum development, review and management, textbook adoption, alignment with TEKS, evaluation, staff training and reports to the board on program effectiveness and program budgeting.

Recommendation 6:

Develop a comprehensive curriculum plan to direct curriculum management, evaluation and instructional delivery.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts Region Education Service Center 20 to obtain sample curriculum management plans.	August 2001
2.	The superintendent appoints a committee of principals and selected teachers to review the samples and develop a plan for LPISD.	August 2001
3.	The superintendent reviews the proposed curriculum management plan and submits the plan to the board for approval.	January 2002
4.	The board approves the plan and the plan is implemented.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of this recommendation is based on LPISD's practice of paying elementary teachers a stipend of \$450 to develop elementary

curriculum guides. A stipend of \$450 for six teachers to develop a curriculum plan for LPISD would be a one-time cost of \$2,700.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Develop a comprehensive curriculum plan to direct curriculum management, evaluation and instructional delivery.	(\$2,700)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

FINDING

LPISD has the lowest student-to-teacher ratio among its peer districts, and its ratio is substantially lower than the regional and state average. (**Exhibit 2-13**)

**Exhibit 2-13
LPISD, Peer Districts, Region 20 and State
Student-to-Teacher Ratio
2000-01 Budget**

Entity	Student-to-Teacher Ratio
Devine	14.0
Cotulla	13.9
Carrizo Springs	13.6
Pearsall	13.3
Charlotte	11.7
La Pryor	11.3
Region 20	14.8
State	14.9

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

LPISD's per pupil instructional operating expenditure is above all but one of its peer districts and the regional and state average (**Exhibit 2-14**).

**Exhibit 2-14
LPISD, Peer Districts and State
Expenditures per Student
2000-01**

Entity	Expenditure per Student
Charlotte	\$8,888
La Pryor	\$8,370
Carrizo Springs	\$7,264
Cotulla	\$7,763
Pearsall	\$6,411
Devine	\$6,075
State	\$6,645

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

While it is not unusual for a small district to have lower class sizes and higher expenditures, LPISD is struggling to recruit and retain qualified teachers and has not regularly examined staffing patterns to determine how staff should be allocated.

Exhibit 2-15 compares LPISD's staffing with the selected peer districts. LPISD has the second lowest percent of teachers among its peer districts and is well below the state and regional averages. It has the highest percent of professional support positions (e.g., counselors, nurses) and auxiliary personnel (e.g., cafeteria workers).

Exhibit 2-15
LPISD Staffing Compared to Peer Districts
2000-01

District	Teachers	Professional Support	Campus Administration	Central Administration	Educational Aides	Auxiliary Staff
Carrizo Springs	43.8%	4.7%	2.4%	1.9%	14.8%	32.5%
La Pryor	44.6%	7.6%	2.2%	2.2%	21.7%	21.7%
Pearsall	47.4%	6.4%	2.5%	0.8%	14.5%	28.4%
Charlotte	48.8%	2.4%	3.6%	4.8%	15.5%	25.0%
Cotulla	49.5%	6.1%	4.0%	2.5%	14.6%	23.2%
Devine	49.8%	5.6%	2.2%	1.1%	14.9%	26.4%

State	50.6%	7.9%	2.4%	1.0%	10.3%	27.7%
Region 20	48.2%	8.2%	2.3%	0.9%	11.0%	29.5%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

With a large percent of the district's budget dedicated to staff, having appropriate staffing allocation formulas to equitably distribute resources is critical to effective management. LPISD's lower student-to-teacher ratios and higher expenditures per pupil do not appear to be a part of the district's overall strategy for improving student performance.

Recommendation 7:

Examine current staffing levels and develop and implement allocation formulas for the coming school year.

The principals and superintendent should work together to examine each teaching and auxiliary position in the district to determine what value is added to the programs of the district by each position. Class schedules should be examined to determine if there are low enrollment classes that could or should be consolidated or discontinued and whether there are opportunities to share staff with neighboring districts. Increasing the student to teacher ratio by one student per class could result in the elimination of up to 3 positions (439 students divided by a ratio of 12.3 to 1 = 36 teachers - LPISD currently has approximately 39 teaching positions); positions that LPISD is having great difficulty filling. Auxiliary staffing is discussed in other areas of this report, but should also be closely examined to determine appropriate staffing levels.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with the principals to examine each teaching and auxiliary position in the district to determine what value is added to the programs of the district by each position and to examine class schedules to see if there are low enrollment classes that can be consolidated or eliminated.	August - September 2001
2.	The superintendent and principals develop staffing allocation formulas for the new school year and make changes to staffing patterns as necessary.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent and the business manager closely monitor staffing and make adjustment to the staffing patterns to ensure that services remain at or above standards.	October 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

If the district is able to reduce staffing by even two positions, at a beginning teacher salary of \$24,540 plus benefits estimated at 15 percent per employee, the district could save \$56,442 annually ($\$24,450 \times 1.15 \text{ percent} - \$28,221 \times 2 \text{ positions} = \$56,442$). This money should be used to increase beginning teaching salaries to help to recruit and retain the high quality teachers for the remaining positions.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Examine current staffing levels and develop and implement allocation formulas for the coming school year.	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$56,442	\$56,442

FINDING

LPISD has no structured plan for staff development.

Expenditures for in-service training and other staff development include the costs of :

- Staff who prepare and/or conduct in-service training or staff development;
- Fees for outside consultants conducting in-service training or staff development;
- Travel to attend in-service or staff development meetings;
- Substitute pay for instructional staff attending staff development or in-service training;
- Staff development or in-service training provided by an education service center;
- Subject area or grade level department heads and related support staff; and
- Tuition and fees for instructional staff to attend college for additional hours of credit.

LPISD's annual expenditures for staff development vary from zero to \$117,457 over the past five years, displaying a lack of consistency in budgeting. (**Exhibit 2-16**).

Exhibit 2-16
LPISD Staff Development Expenditures
1996-97 through 2000-01

Year	Amount
1996-97	\$117,457
1997-98	\$35,343
1998-99	\$0
1999-00	\$0
2000-01	\$6,900

Source: LPISD audited financial statements 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

Exhibit 2-17 shows the training provided in the district in 2000-01. Training was presented by district staff and Region 20 consultants.

The LPISD District Improvement Plan speaks to staff development in a general way under goal three: "Opportunities for school staff to attend professional development workshops."

Exhibit 2-17
LPISD District-Level Staff Development
2000-01

Date	Subject	Participants
August 2000	Classroom Management	Elementary staff
	Improving Student Performance	Elementary staff
	Special Education updates	Secondary staff
	Dual language	Secondary staff
October 2000	The Universal Curriculum Design	Elementary staff
	Aligning Curriculum/TEKS	Secondary staff
December 2000	Using Technology in the Classroom	Elementary staff
	Improving Parent Involvement	Elementary staff
February 2001	Raising Student Performance	Elementary staff

Source: TSPR interviews with principals.

Many school districts develop staff training schedules and choices to support objectives set out in the district improvement plan. Districts also enlist the support of Site-Based Decision-Making Committees (SBDM) to recommend staff development offerings before the beginning of the school

year based upon input solicited from teachers, the technology coordinator and principals.

Recommendation 8:

Develop structured staff development that directly supports district goals and objectives.

Grade-level differences should be recognized and incorporated into the plan. In addition, the district should carefully evaluate what is available through Region 20 and work with the Region 20 staff to provide useful training to district employees. By making better use of Region 20, training can be provided within the district's current staff development budget. The district, however, must target specific types of courses that support the district's objectives and work more directly with Region 20 so training meets teachers' needs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent works with SBDM committees to solicit ideas/needs for staff development from teachers by grade level.	September 2001
2.	Principals supply the SBDM committees with recommended staff development needs based upon annual teacher evaluations.	September 2001
3.	The SBDM committees solicit information from Region 20 on probable course offerings and locations for the 2001-02 school year.	October 2001
4.	The SBDM committees review the recommendations from all sources and recommend a staff development plan to the principals and superintendent.	October 2001
5.	The principals schedule staff development days within the district and identify appropriate staff development opportunities offered through Region 20.	November 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

The costs for Region 20 training are usually nominal, and many training sessions are free to member districts, therefore implementing this recommendation can be accomplished with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

B. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

Compensatory education, as defined in Section 42.152 (c) of the Texas Education Code, is a program designed to improve the regular education program for students in at-risk situations. The purpose is to increase these student's achievement levels and to reduce the dropout rate. When configuring compensatory programs, districts must use student performance data from the state assessments and any other achievement tests administered by the district.

Based on this needs assessment, district and campus staff design the appropriate strategies and include them in the campus and/or district improvement plan. By law, the improvement plan must include the comprehensive needs assessment, measurable performance objectives, identified strategies for student improvement, identified resources and staff, specified timelines for monitoring each strategy and evaluation criteria. Each district is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the locally designed program. State compensatory funds are based upon the number of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in the district. This number is determined by averaging the best six months' enrollment in the national school lunch program of free- or reduced-price lunches for the preceding school year. The students served, however, need not be economically disadvantaged, but compensatory funds must be used for students in at-risk situations.

The criteria used to identify students in at-risk situations are defined in Section 29.081 of the Texas Education Code. Each student in grades 7-12 who is under 21 years of the age and who:

- was not advanced from one grade level to the next for two or more school years;
- has mathematics or reading skills that are two or more years below grade level;
- did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more courses during a semester, or is not maintaining such an average in two or more courses in the current semester, and is not expected to graduate within four years of the date the student begins ninth grade;
- did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39; or
- is pregnant or a parent.

The program also covers each student in pre-kindergarten through grade 6 who:

- did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered at the beginning of the school year;
- did not perform satisfactorily on assessment instrument administered under Subchapter B, Chapter 39;
- is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by Section 29.052;
- is sexually, physically, or psychologically abused; or
- engages in conduct described by Section 51.03(a), Family Code.

Moreover, students in any grade are identified as students in at-risk situations if they are not disabled and reside in a residential placement facility in a district in which the student's parent or legal guardian does not reside, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house or foster family group home.

Nearly eighty-seven percent of LPISD students are identified as being economically disadvantaged compared with the state average of 49 percent (**Exhibit 2-18**). The percent of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in LPISD is higher than the percent in each of its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-18
LPISD, Peer Districts, Region and State
Economically Disadvantaged Enrollment
2000-01

Entity	Number of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Percent of Enrollment
La Pryor	368	83.8%
Carrizo Springs	1,870	75.8%
Charlotte	380	78.0%
Pearsall	1,706	75.1%
Cotulla	989	76.4%
Devine	871	46.2%
Region 20	202,407	62.1%
State	2,003,121	49.2%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-19 shows the amount and the percent of the district expenditures budgeted for compensatory education in LPISD compared to its peer districts and the state and regional averages. LPISD's expenditures are third highest among its peers and more than double the regional and state averages.

Exhibit 2-19
LPISD, Peer Districts, Region and State
Compensatory Funding and Percent of District
Instructional Expenditures
2000-01

Entity	Amount of Compensatory Funding	Percent of District Expenditures
Pearsall	\$1,521,821	19.8%
Charlotte	\$309,487	14.7%
La Pryor	\$322,838	16.3%
Cotulla	\$465,728	9.1%
Carrizo Springs	\$947,959	10.3%
Devine	\$498,716	8.2%
Region 20	\$77,654,178	6.2%
State	\$909,308,662	6.6%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Federal funding entitlements (Title funds) are based upon the poverty level in the geographical area in which the school district is located. These funding programs were first authorized in 1965 as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which has been amended on several occasions and was last reauthorized in October 1994.

Title I, Part A, funding is for helping disadvantaged children at risk of failure to meet high standards. Part C is for the education of migrant students. Title I, Part A programs are designated as either schoolwide assistance, which means the funds can be used throughout the school to upgrade the entire educational program as long as the uses help meet the needs of the targeted students, or targeted assistance, which means that the funds are used for only a designated purpose, such as a computer lab, that

serves the targeted students only. To qualify as a schoolwide assistance campus, 50 percent of the student population must be identified as economically disadvantaged. All LPISD schools are eligible for schoolwide assistance programs.

Title II, Part B, is for Dwight D. Eisenhower professional development program. Program funds are used for staff development in all core subject areas with preference in math and science.

Title IV funds for safe and drug-free schools are used to support programs that prevent violence in and around schools; prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs; involve parents; and coordinate with related federal, state and community efforts and resources to promote safe and drug-free schools and communities.

Title VI funding is designed to promote innovative education program strategies.

Title funds are sent to districts via TEA. These funds are supplemental and must not replace regular education funding. Funds the district received in each of these programs in 2000-01 are identified in **Exhibit 2-20**.

Exhibit 2-20
LPISD Federal Program Funds
2000-01

Fund	2000-01
Title I, Part A	\$160,000
Title I, Migrant	\$38,669
Title II, Eisenhower	\$3,375
Title IV, Drug-Free	\$1,819
Title VI, Innovative	\$3,216
Title VI, Class-size reduction	\$24,000
Total	\$231,079

Source: LPISD Self Evaluation for District Effectiveness and Compliance Visit, September 2000.

LPISD has a shared-services agreement with Region 20 for the expenditure of Title II and Title IV funds. Region 20 receives the LPISD Title funds, combines the funds with funds from other districts and

provides staff development for all of the districts at no additional cost to the districts.

FINDING

Exhibit 2-21 shows LPISD'S compensatory education programs.

**Exhibit 2-21
LPISD Compensatory Education Programs
2000-01**

Program	Description	Campus Location
Creative Education Institute (CEI)	CEI is a comprehensive CD-ROM based program for students in language arts and math. The curriculum provides a rich development sequence within which individualized, prescriptive instruction can be provided.	All schools
Tutorials	Additional help is provided for students after school and on Saturday	All schools
Parent Liaisons	Parent or community liaisons provide a variety of services to the schools and the parents. They make home visits to follow up on attendance issues, provide transportation for meetings and provide parent training.	All schools
Summer camp (summer school)	The purpose of summer camp is to help students in the areas of reading and math and to reduce the retention rate at the elementary school. Academic classes are offered in the morning and camp in the afternoon using high school students as counselors.	Elementary School
Optional Extended Year (OEY)	The purpose of OEY is to provide students additional instructional time to master the state's content standards and student performance standards. Students served are those who are identified as not likely to be promoted to the next grade in the next school year because they do not meet district standards or policies for promotion.	All Schools
BESTT (Bridging the Educational Scene for	BESTT is a course offered at the high school for seniors who have expressed an interest in pursuing education as a major in college and	High School

Teachers of Tomorrow)	ultimately as a vocation.	
Dyslexia Lab	Students receive individualized instruction from a dyslexia specialist using the Orton-Gillingham process for multi-sensory instruction.	Elementary School
Building Bridges	Early childhood program for migrant students	Pre-school
Guidance /Counseling	Counseling is available to students at all schools.	All schools

Source: LPISD "information provided by principals on each campus."

COMMENDATION

LPISD has developed compensatory programs to meet students' needs.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

C. BILINGUAL/ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Bilingual education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are required by federal and state laws to provide educational access to students whose first language is not English. Bilingual education is required if 20 or more limited English proficient students are enrolled in one grade level. If fewer than 20 are enrolled in a grade level, an ESL program is implemented. Specifically, these programs are designed to help Limited English Proficient (LEP) students learn English.

Eight of the 14 Pre-K through grade 5 teachers are certified in bilingual education. These teachers serve 48 limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in a dual language program. In the secondary schools, three of the five language arts teachers are Bilingual/ESL-certified and serve 36 of 53 LEP students with ESL instruction. The ESL program's purpose is to provide an intensive second language program for older students and students in grades in which bilingual education is not available. Students in the ESL program are not served all day as they are in the bilingual program because the ESL students are in a transition to English. As a result, fewer teachers are needed in the ESL program. The number of LEP students in each school is shown in **Exhibit 2-22**.

Exhibit 2-22
LPISD Bilingual and ESL Students by Grade Level
2000-01

Grade Level	Number of LEP Students	Number of Students Served in Bilingual/ESL
Elementary school (grades K-5)	48	48
Middle school (grades 6-8)	29	16
High school (grades 9-12)	24	20
Total	101	84

Source: LPISD 2000-01 District Self-Evaluation for District Effectiveness and Compliance.

LPISD has a higher percent of bilingual/ESL students than any of its peer districts with the exception of Cotulla, which has the same percent. LPISD and all the peer districts, except Charlotte and Devine, have a higher percent of bilingual/ESL students than the regional and state averages (**Exhibit 2-23**).

Exhibit 2-23
LPISD, Peer District, Region 20 and State Students in Bilingual/ESL
Program
as a Percent of Total Enrollment
2000-01

Entity	Bilingual/ESL
Devine	2.2%
Charlotte	2.9%
Pearsall	10.4%
Carrizo Springs	13.8%
Cotulla	24.2%
La Pryor	26.9%
Region 20	8.7%
State	12.5%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Pre-K and kindergarten students are given the Pre-Language Assessment Survey (Pre-LAS) in Spanish and English and in grades one through 12 the LAS in English and Spanish to determine their progress in oral language. In grades 2-12 the LAS reading and writing tests are administered to measure progress in English.

Compared to its peer districts, LPISD spends the second highest percent of instructional operating expenditures on its bilingual/ESL education program (**Exhibit 2-24**). This percent is slightly lower than the regional average and the state average.

Exhibit 2-24
LPISD and Peer District
Bilingual/ESL Education Expenditures
2000-01 Budget

Entity	Bilingual/ESL	Percent
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	Expenditures	of Budget
Pearsall	\$9,572	0.1%
Charlotte	\$3,830	0.2%
Devine	\$16,145	0.3%
Cotulla	\$35,895	0.7%
La Pryor	\$43,553	2.2%
Carrizo Springs	\$624,059	6.8%
Region 20	\$39,863,394	3.5%
State	\$590,335,700	4.3%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

The bilingual/ESL program is designed to assist students who have limited English proficiency (LEP) transition gradually from speaking Spanish only to the point that they are proficient in English. Bilingual programs are designed for grades pre-K-3 or K-3 at which point the district's ESL program is designed to assist the transition, typically by grade six.

LPISD uses a dual English-Spanish model that provides specific instruction in both Spanish and English at all grade levels pre-K through fifth. Beginning in 1997-98, all middle school students must enroll in one Spanish course and all high school students must complete Spanish III and IV and Mexican Culture (in Spanish) before graduation. Each year, at least one content course is taught in Spanish at both the middle school and the high school.

Student performance on TAAS has improved with the implementation of the Dual Language model of instruction in both reading and math for students tracked from the year prior to implementation, which occurred in 1996-97. Student performance increased from 3.7 percent points to a high of 34.4 percent points.

The percent of same class students passing TAAS reading and math is shown in **Exhibit 2-25**.

Exhibit 2-25
Percent of Students in Same Class Passing TAAS
1995-96 through 1999-2000

Subject	Grade 3	Grade 7	Gain (Loss)	Grade 4	Grade 8	Gain (Loss)	Grade 6	Grade 10	Gain (Loss)
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	1996	2000		1996	2000		1996	2000	
Reading	57.9%	66.7%	6.8	46.2%	58.6%	12.4	54.5%	88.9%	34.4
Math	42.1%	45.8%	3.7	38.5%	65.5%	27.0	59.1%	75.0%	15.9

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

FINDING

In 1996, the LPISD elementary school principal, who now serves as the Title VII director, with the assistance of a bilingual consultant, applied for a Title VII grant to implement a districtwide dual English-Spanish proficiency language model of instruction. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title VII provides grants to improve, reform and upgrade programs and operations of an entire local education agency to better serve limited English proficient (LEP) students. Funds may be used for curriculum development, development of education standards for LEP students, improved assessment procedures, enhanced personnel policies, reform of student grade-promotion and graduation requirements, family education programs, instructional materials, educational technology and academic or career counseling.

LPISD received \$2,244,133 to be used over a five-year period. LPISD converted an existing woodshop area into a computer lab and several offices. The building is known as the Title VII building. LPISD equipped the computer lab with 11 computers and each classroom in the district with two to three computers. All computers have Internet access. The lab is used for both elementary and secondary instruction and is available for parent and community use one night per week and daily when students are not scheduled in the lab.

COMMENDATION

LPISD secured a grant to implement a comprehensive dual language program and also improved technology.

FINDING

The LPISD District Improvement Plan shows that \$31,200 is budgeted for a project consultant and an additional \$5,000 for project evaluation for the Title VII grant. LPISD does not have a list of services and the dates of services the consultant provided.

A contract dated July 1997 shows the project consultant would receive \$4,000 per month to accomplish the following duties:

- Create program timelines for implementation of tasks;
- Develop job descriptions for all project staff members;
- Design instructional staff development plans;
- Create calendars for program staff development;
- Provide instructional delivery of a two-way language design;
- Provide parental involvement activities and schedules;
- Provide two-way language program curriculum alignment;
- Implement and review of program evaluation;
- Provide instructional resources for personnel and materials;
- Cooperate and collaborate in professional presentations at professional conferences; and
- Implement project's technology component. The 2000-01 staff development plan does not include topics related to the two-way language program.

While initially, the consultant may have provided needed startup activities, at this point there is no indication that the contractor is being used regularly, and there is nothing in district records to show what value is being added to the project by this expenditure. According to district staff, this person is only available to work a few days each month and is not often in the district.

Recommendation 9:

Evaluate the continued need for the educational consultant on the Title VII project and discontinue the contract as soon as practical.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATIGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and Title VII director evaluate the need to continue the consultant contract.	August 2001
2.	The superintendent, the Title VII director and the consultant meet to discuss the continuation of the contract.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent prepares a plan for and initiates actions to conclude the contract.	As soon as Practical

FISCAL IMPACT

While these are grant funds and cannot be used for general operating expenditures, the current annual budget of \$31,200 for this consulting contract can be redirected to expand services designated in the original grant.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

D. CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Career and Technology Education (CATE) is a curriculum designed to provide students training in areas such as health sciences and technology, marketing, industrial technology, and trade and industrial occupations.

Approximately 15.7 percent of all high school students in LPISD are enrolled in a CATE course. Despite its high percent of economically disadvantaged students and the fact that only one-third of its high school graduates go on to college, LPISD ranks next to last among its peer districts in the percent of students enrolled in CATE programs. LPISD's CATE expenditures as a percent of total instructional expenditures is lower than the regional and state averages (**Exhibit 2-26**).

Exhibit 2-26
LPISD and Peer District Students Enrolled in CATE Programs
as a Percent of Total Enrollment
2000-01

Entity	CATE Students as a percent of Student Enrollment	CATE Expenditures as a percent of Instructional Expenditures
Cotulla	15.2%	3.0%
Charlotte	20.3%	3.2%
La Pryor	26.7%	3.9%
Pearsall	19.6%	4.1%
Carrizo Springs	28.1%	6.1%
Devine	21.0%	6.8%
Region 20	16.6%	4.0%
State	18.9%	4.1%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Middle school students receive career information through the counseling and guidance program, career day and the development of four-year graduation plans. To help students examine and choose career options, the

LPISD administers The Kuder Career Search inventory and the Career Alternatives Resources Evaluation System (CARES) to eighth grade students.

FINDING

LPISD participates in a TechPrep partnership with Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) located in Uvalde, Texas. TechPrep is a program that leads students toward associate or baccalaureate degree programs and helps students prepare for high skill, high wage jobs in at least one field of engineering technology, applied science, health, or business through a planned, sequential program of study.

LPISD has articulation agreements with SWTJC in two areas: business and agriculture. Students in either of the programs receive high school credit toward graduation as well as college credit at SWTJC toward an Associate's degree. Students must successfully earn credit in other courses at SWTJC before the articulated course credit is awarded.

COMMENDATION

LPISD is providing opportunities for students to take courses that will help them go to college.

FINDING

Career and Technology course offerings in LPISD are limited. Only two categories of courses are offered, agriculture and business. At the middle school, students may enroll in Keyboarding and Introduction to World Agriculture Science and Technology. High school students may choose from six agriculture courses and two business courses.

Santa Gertrudis ISD, a district that is smaller than LPISD, has made a strong commitment to career and technology education and offers a variety of courses. The district has developed three special work-oriented programs that match qualified seniors with an employer who offers an internship in their potential field of study and or career choice.

Brazos ISD, another small district, collaborates with a neighboring district to provide additional career and technology courses. The district pays tuition to the neighboring districts for students enrolled in their courses.

Recommendation 10:

Explore methods to expand career and technology courses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The high school principal contacts SWTJC to investigate the possibility of creating additional course offerings through articulation agreements, dual enrollment courses and Internet courses.	August - September 2001
2.	The high school principal contacts neighboring districts about forming a cooperative for additional course opportunities.	September 2001
3.	The principal includes additional CATE course offering for the Spring semester.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented within the existing budget.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

E. GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAM

State legislation passed in 1987 requires all Texas school districts to provide educational programs to serve the needs of gifted and talented students at all grades. Gifted and talented students are characterized as those students who demonstrate high levels of achievement, intellectual and academic ability, creativity, leadership skills and talent in the visual and performing arts.

In 1995, state law required the State Board of Education (SBOE) to "develop and periodically update a state plan of the education of gifted and talented students." The plan was designed "to measure the performance of districts in providing services to students identified as gifted and talented." The SBOE plan, adopted in 1996, provides direction on refining existing services and creating additional curricular options for gifted students.

The *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* identifies five program areas that serve as the basis for measuring how well districts provide services to gifted and talented students. The areas are student assessment, program design, curriculum and instructions, professional development and family-community involvement.

Districts are required to have a systematic process for identifying gifted and talented students. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) issues guidelines for identifying gifted and talented students to ensure all of these students receive a quality education. The identification process must include quantitative as well as qualitative evaluation tools. Funding through the Texas Foundation School Program is intended to provide gifted and talented programs for students from various cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Teachers, counselors, parents or other interested persons may nominate students for the gifted and talented program at any time. Anyone wishing to nominate a student contacts the campus principal or the student's teacher.

All students in kindergarten through grade five are screened by classroom teachers using a behavioral checklist. Special Education students are also given opportunity to participate in the program through alternative identification process.

A selection committee whose members have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students determine if the data meets the necessary criteria. If the student qualifies, the parents and students are notified in writing.

La Pryor ISD's gifted and talented program has 48 students in grades K-12, representing 10.5 percent of total enrollment. The percent of LPISD students enrolled in the gifted and talented program is higher than all its peers and the regional and state averages (**Exhibit 2-27**). The proportion of instructional expenditures budgeted for gifted and talented programs are second lowest among peer districts and lower than the regional and state averages.

Exhibit 2-27
Percent of Students and Budgeted Instructional Expenditures
for Gifted and Talented Program LPISD, Peers, Region 20 and State
1999-2000

Entity	G/T Student Enrollment	G/T Instructional Expenditures
Charlotte	7.4%	1.3%
Devine	7.6%	1.6%
Pearsall	8.2%	0.4%
Carrizo Springs	9.1%	2.5%
Cotulla	10.1%	1.2%
La Pryor	10.5%	0.5%
State	7.5%	1.9%
Region 20	8.4%	1.2%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

All 14 elementary teachers attended workshops at Region 20 to receive the 30 hours of required Training in Gifted and Talented education. The elementary principal and seven elementary teachers have more than 30 hours training. Teachers serving these students at the secondary schools, as well as administrators and counselors have met the training requirements.

FINDING

LPISD does not have a formal long-range plan in place for their gifted and talented program. The program in LPISD began in 1988-89 as a pullout program in grades two through six and remained a pullout program for three years. The next two years the program was integrated within the regular classroom.

In 1993-94 the program returned to a pullout program in K- 8. During the next two years, the program was within the regular classroom again, and the following two years it became a pullout program. Currently the kindergarten through fifth grade program is integrated with the classroom. Grades six through eight are served through the Language Arts Department. In high school, students are served through Advanced Placement courses.

Although the District Improvement Plan includes a strategy stating Gifted and Talented Programs will be implemented and reflect the use of technology and a differentiated curriculum, there is no program plan to follow. To avoid the instability of changing the program from year to year, the district should develop a five-year plan. Long-range planning and student evaluation are important components of a successful program.

The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students provides a long-range plan with viable targets that local school districts can strive to attain. Examples of "recognized" and "exemplary" performance are included in the plan. Districts following this plan offer additional challenges to this group of students.

Recommendation 11:

Comply with the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students and adopt a five-year plan for the Gifted and Talented Program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent appoints individuals who are representative of stakeholders in the gifted and talented program to serve on a committee and write the five-year plan.	August 2001
2.	The committee develops a five-year plan for Gifted and Talented Education and submits it to the superintendent for review and approval.	January 2002
3.	The superintendent reviews the plan, revises it if needed and submits it to the board for review and approval.	February 2002
4.	The board approves the five-year plan.	March

		2002
5.	The five-year plan for gifted and talented education is implemented.	August 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

F. SPECIAL STUDENT POPULATIONS

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require all public school districts that receive federal funds to establish central and campus processes to identify students with learning disabilities or special learning needs so that accommodations can be made to help them. This statute includes students in special education and students with dyslexia, attention deficit and/or hyperactivity disorders among others. It includes accommodations such as additional instruction in a particular subject through a resource teacher, additional time to complete assignments, and oral exams.

To meet the IDEA requirements, school districts complete a sequence of steps listed in **Exhibit 2-28**.

Exhibit 2-28 **Steps to Meet IDEA Requirements**

1.	Pre-referral intervention in regular education. When a student experiences academic problems in regular education, intervention can and should occur to remediate academic problems. Pre-referral intervention can be implemented by individual teachers or by committees or teams charged with the responsibility to provide remedial strategies. If the strategies initiated in regular education do not result in improved achievement, a referral is made to special education.
2.	Referral to special education for evaluation. Referring a student to special education means writing an official request, supported by documentation. Teachers, counselors, parents, administrators and the student can initiate a referral. Included in the referral information must be an explanation of steps that have been taken in regular education to try to remediate the student's problem before the referral.
3.	Comprehensive non-discriminatory evaluation. Once a student has been referred, the district must provide a comprehensive non-discriminatory evaluation, commonly referred to as an assessment, within a prescribed amount of time.
4.	Initial placement through a committee meeting. After the evaluation is complete, a meeting is held to discuss the results of the evaluation, decide if the student qualifies for special education services in one of the 13 federal

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

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

At each stage of the special education process and throughout a student's tenure in special education, state and federal guidelines must be followed. If there are disagreements or objections related to part of the process, students and their families have the right to due process. School districts do not have the burden of demonstrating that their special education services are the best possible; however, the education provided must meet the individual needs of each student.

Special education is an important issue in any school district because the costs of special education are high. The federal government funding for special education is usually less than 10 percent, with the rest of the costs paid from state and local funds.

LPISD's special education program has a variety of programs and services, which are summarized in **Exhibit 2-29**.

Exhibit 2-29
LPISD Special Education Programs

Program/Service	Description
Pre-referral Team	A team located on each campus looks at the total child and makes recommendations based on the referral.
Dyslexia	The dyslexia program is a provided through state compensatory education allocations and is coordinated with special education through the modifications outlined by the pre-referral team.
Diagnostics	The special education director is also the diagnostician and is responsible for testing and evaluation other than emotional disturbance evaluation.
Related services	The related services are provided by contracted occupational, physical and speech therapists. Counseling is provided by LPISD and by contracted counselors from Family Counseling located in Uvalde, Texas.
Homebound	Services are provided to students who are placed on homebound or health related services.

Source: LPISD director of Special Education and DEC Self-Evaluation document.

LPISD delivers these services to special education students through a variety of methods. Four special education teachers and three instructional aides serve LPISD special education students.

LPISD's special education student population is almost 11 percent of the total student population. This percent is less than the state and regional averages. (**Exhibit 2-30**).

Exhibit 2-30
LPISD, Peer District, Region 20 and State Students
in Special Education as a Percent of Total Enrollment
2000-01

Entity	Special Education Students as percent of Enrollment
Pearsall	10.4%

Carrizo Springs	10.5%
La Pryor	11.2%
Cotulla	11.8%
Devine	13.5%
Charlotte	14.6%
State	14.4%
Region 20	12.1%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-31 lists the types of disabilities and the number of students at each LPISD school with that disability.

Exhibit 2-31
Number of LPISD Special Education Students by
Type of Disability and by Campus
December 2000

Disability	Elementary	Middle School	High School	Total District
Learning Disability	3	9	12	24
Emotional Disturbance	3	3	5	11
Speech Impairment	9	1	0	10
Auditory Impairment	0	1	0	1
Mental Retardation	0	1	0	1
Autism	1	0	0	1
Other Health Impaired	1	1	0	2
Total	17	16	17	50
Percent of Total Enrollment	7.6%	17.8%	13.7%	11.5%

Source: LPISD director of Special Education.

One elementary and one middle school student are served in a self-contained setting, while all other students are mainstreamed and provided additional assistance from the special education teacher. All high school students are mainstreamed with assistance from the special education

teacher and aide in the resource room. LPISD contracts with the Regional Day School for Deaf in Uvalde for one student.

Overall expenditures for special education decreased by 4.9 percent from 1996-97 through 2000-01, yet, because the number of students served declined by -.2 percent, the per student expenditure decreased from \$4,506 in 1996-97 to \$4,369 in 2000-01, or by -3 percent (**Exhibit 2-32**).

Exhibit 2-32
LPISD Expenditures for the Special Education Program
1995-96 through 2000-01

Category	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Special education expenditures	\$225,286	\$182,195	\$198,509	\$249,524	\$214,104	-5 %
Special education students served	50	53	53	49	49	-2%
Special education expenditures per student	\$4,506	\$3,438	\$3,745	\$5,092	\$4,369	-3%

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

Compared to its peer districts, LPISD is the highest in special education per student expenditures (**Exhibit 2-33**).

Exhibit 2-33
LPISD Special Education Program Expenditures vs. Peer Districts
2000-01 Budget

Entity	Expenditures per Eligible Student
Devine	\$3,225
Pearsall	\$3,376
Carrizo Springs	\$3,722
Cotulla	\$3,965
Charlotte	\$4,334

La Pryor	\$4,508
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Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

The special education director said the district was a member of a cooperative several years ago. The cooperative disbanded. LPISD contacted other districts recently to form a cooperative again, but neighboring districts were not interested. Expenditures increased from 1998-99 to 1999-2000 due to the amount of contracted services. LPISD contracts for occupational and physical therapy services with Therapy Links, located in San Antonio and with Family Counseling of Uvalde for counseling services. LPISD also contracts with an independent speech therapist and a psychologist for services. The speech therapist is in the district two days each week.

FINDING

The Special Education Department uses a software program to help teachers and administrators complete necessary documentation related to the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) process; the Comprehensive learner Adapted Scope Sequence (CLASS).

CLASS is used to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students enrolled in special education. The software includes a comprehensive set of curricula for all special populations, goals and objectives for every subject and every area, criterion-referenced tests in every subject and functional assessments. A teacher may test a student, determine critical weakness areas, choose prerequisites from the CLASS curricula and then print an IEP for the student. The tests may also be used to measure progress the student is making.

COMMENDATION

LPISD's Special Education Department uses technology to reduce administrative burdens on teachers and administrators.

FINDING

LPISD participates in the School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program, which is a Medicaid reimbursement program but does not participate in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC) program.

In 1996, the state implemented another reimbursement program, MAC, to allow districts to receive reimbursement for health-related administrative services provided by districts that cannot be billed through SHARS. At that time, it was not feasible for districts with less than 15,000 students to

participate because the federal requirements for a time study of direct-service staff on the amount of time spent on health-related activities was too burdensome. However, the MAC program has changed significantly, making it feasible for smaller school districts to participate.

Beginning in January 1997, TEA, along with the Texas Department of Human Services and the Health and Human Services Commission, opened MAC to small districts by allowing consortiums of smaller districts representing 15,000 or more students to file collectively. Consortiums also reduce each district's time commitment for the required time study. As a result, half of the districts in the state participate in MAC. A district can join an existing consortium or start one up of its own. Small districts must join a consortium.

Districts that join a consortium provide the names of their staff that provide direct activities, such as counselors, nurses and therapists (not teachers or administrators, but direct staff with high-risk populations). From this list, a percent is selected to participate in the time study, which only requires one week per quarter of coding activities. From this study, the levels of service are determined which, along with base expenditures and Medicaid-eligibility rates, determines the reimbursements to districts for their MAC eligible activities.

Districts sign on with consortium directly. There must be a total of 15,000 or as close to 15,000 students in a consortium as possible. The consortium sends a representative to the district to explain the services and fees, which are based on a percent of reimbursements. There are no out-of-pocket costs, but staff time is required for coding for the week during the quarter that the time study is done. All staff selected for the time study must attend 2-3 hours of training, which must be provided by the MAC consortium within 50 miles of the district, regardless of where the consortium offices are located.

Since the consortiums handle most of the burdensome administrative functions required by the federal government for this program, it is relatively simple for districts to participate. The amount of reimbursements depends on the level of activity of staff for the eligible activities. The amount of reimbursement is tied to the level to which a district promotes health-related activities (the expenditure base) and the percent of the student population that is Medicaid eligible.

One of the consortiums (LaPorte) said the per student reimbursement after administration fees ranges from \$10 to \$30 per student based on total student average daily attendance rate for the district. This consortium serves districts of various sizes. One district with an enrollment of 573 students received \$2,500 for the first quarter 2000-01 period.

Recommendation 12:

Participate in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming program.

By using MAC funds to expand health-related and outreach activities, more students can be enrolled in Medicaid, which potentially would increase SHARS payments and would increase the expenditure base for determining MAC reimbursement levels.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent, director of Business and director of Special Education seek out an existing consortium to join.	August 2001
2.	The board reviews the administration's proposal for joining a MAC consortium and approves the plan.	September 2001
3.	The director of Special Education establishes procedures to participate in the MAC program.	October 2001
4.	The director of Business ensures MAC claims are processed on an ongoing basis.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

One consortium in Texas (La Porte) is achieving per student reimbursement levels from \$10 to \$30 per year depending upon the Medicaid reimbursement rate for the district. This per-student amount is calculated after administration fees are subtracted. By applying the middle of this range to LPISD's student population of 458 students, \$6,870 in annual savings can be achieved (458 students X \$15 per student).

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Participate in the Medicaid Administrative Claiming program.	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$6,870	\$6,870

Chapter 2

EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

G. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Providing a safe and secure environment for students, teachers and other school district employees is a critical task for any district. Because of recent instances of school violence throughout the country, parents, educators, taxpayers and lawmakers are focusing more attention on safety and security in public schools.

In Texas and throughout the country, there has been a steady progression of changes to laws governing the safety and security of students in public schools. In 1994, Congress reauthorized the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, which requires school districts to institute a comprehensive safe and drug-free schools program.

In 1995, the Texas Legislature revised major safety and security related provisions in the Texas Education Code. Under the revised code, each school district must adopt a Student Code of Conduct, following the advice of a district-level committee and the county juvenile board. In addition, law enforcement and local school district officials must share specific information about the arrest or criminal conduct of students.

In 1997, Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act with notable changes. The revisions require school districts to provide appropriate education services to students with disabilities, and make it easier to remove dangerous or violent students with special needs from the classroom. The law also permits the removal of students from regular education programs if they are involved with drugs or bring weapons to school.

The Education Code requires the school district, the juvenile board and juvenile justice systems in counties with a population of 125,000 or more to establish a Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP). The JJAEP operates under the jurisdiction of the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. Its objective is to educate youths who are incarcerated or on probation. In addition, in 1997, the Texas Legislature revised the safe schools provisions of the Education Code. The revisions require the prominent posting of the Student Code of Conduct, clarify removal procedures for offenses committed by students within 300 feet of school property, and apply compulsory attendance laws to JJAEP.

In 1999, at Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander's urging, the Legislature again revised the Education Code, requiring each school to include goals and methods for violence prevention and intervention in its annual campus improvement plans. The Board of Trustees for each school district is also required to publish an annual report to parents and the community that includes the number, rate and type of violent or criminal incidents that occurred on each district campus. The report must also include all information concerning school violence prevention and intervention policies, and procedures that the district is using to protect students.

For many districts, safety and security is one of the fastest growing items in the budget. In 1996-97, the state started tracking expenditures for security and monitoring services as a separate expenditure item. LPISD did not have any expenditure in the area of safety and security for 1999-2000. Safety and Security programs must include elements of prevention, intervention and enforcement. Districts must also cooperate with all local law enforcement agencies. Discipline management and alternative education programs are essential tools.

As a very small school district, LPISD does not have a formal security program. The district employs no truant officers or security guards. Zavala County's Juvenile Probation Department provides a juvenile probation officer through an agreement with LPISD. Since LPISD consists mostly of unincorporated areas of Zavala County, the county sheriff assists with providing peace officers when necessary.

LPISD contracts with area peace officers to provide security at district athletic events, student activities and school sponsored activities. The peace officers providing these services sign a formal contract for each event, and LPISD pays them after the event is completed.

The superintendent is responsible for district security. According to the superintendent, La Pryor is a high crime area. Due to its location at the intersection of U.S. highway 83 and U.S. highway 57 and its proximity to the Texas/Mexico border, drugs and outsiders are a constant problem.

LPISD furnishes central office personnel, principals and transportation personnel with two-way radios. The district has equipped its buildings with alarms to which the county sheriff responds. LPISD has no other surveillance or forensic equipment available to the staff.

FINDING

Each school has a student handbook that includes a code of student conduct for all students. The handbook requires that the student and parent

sign and acknowledge the discipline requirements. The parent/student handbooks include a parent permission form for Internet usage, a picture or name and user agreement of Internet to be signed by the student and the parents and returned to the school.

Discipline infractions are divided into four groups with a list of disciplinary consequences for each group. The list of discipline infractions escalate in severity, and the disciplinary consequences move from teacher directed for Group I infractions to administrator directed for Group II and above. Consequences for Group III infractions may include assignment to the district's Alternative Education Program (AEP). Group IV infractions include suspension, transfer to another school and AEP placement.

The handbooks also list offenses for which a student must be removed from class and placed in an AEP and offenses warranting expulsion. Expulsion involves denial of any education services.

COMMENDATION

LPISD manages discipline problems effectively.

FINDING

LPISD has no supplemental grants to help fund the district's security operations.

A neighboring district, Crystal City ISD has recently received a grant from the Texas Criminal Justice Division to provide funding for a uniformed Crystal City police officer to be at the junior high school during the school day. The officer's duties will include patrolling the district campuses and spending time at the high school as well. The grant is entitled *Detering Delinquency through Intervention and Prevention*. The grant is for \$25,046 and includes a requirement for an additional \$2,821 district match. This grant will help Crystal City ISD with recent increases in absenteeism and truancy, as well as with recent reports of illicit drugs at district campuses. The program also will help the district deal with its "at risk" students.

The grant's scope of work includes:

- patrolling campuses;
- check for contraband, truancy and other criminal activity;
- issue traffic citations, if necessary;
- be present at school activities to deter criminal activity;
- find parents/guardians of students who have exhibited truancy problems;

- work directly with the attendance clerks in scheduling appointments with parents/guardians of students who have been truant;
- coordinate the removal of students from school facilities when necessary due to criminal conduct;
- maintain activity log of work being performed;
- prepare incident reports;
- refer cases to school personnel, judicial court or law enforcement agencies, as applicable;and
- make arrests when necessary.

Recommendation 13:

Investigate grant availability from all sources to improve the district's security operations.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager investigate potential sources of funding through grants from all sources. This investigation includes contacting TEA and Texas Department of Criminal Justice.	August 2001
2.	Available sources of funds are located and the business manager applies for grants as appropriate.	August 2001
3.	The superintendent and business manager modify security operations based on receipt of grant funds.	December 2001
4.	Operations commence under the grant or grants obtained.	January 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact associated with this recommendation cannot be determined.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the financial management of the La Pryor Independent School District (LPISD) in four sections:

- A. Business Office
- B. Budget Process
- C. Risk Management
- D. Cash and Investments

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

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

The purchasing function assures that goods and services are acquired at the best price, at the right time and in the right quantity to support the needs of the district and its personnel, while complying with local, state and federal regulations.

BACKGROUND

LPISD receives revenue from local, state and federal sources. On average for the 1999-2000 year, Texas school districts received 50.5 percent of their revenues from local property taxes, 46.1 percent from the state and 3.4 percent from federal sources. The amount of state revenue sent to each district is proportional, based upon a district's property values and student counts. Districts with greater property wealth per pupil receive less from the state because they can generate more property taxes, while districts with lower property value per pupil receive more from the state.

LPISD and the selected peer districts receive a greater percent of their revenues from the state than districts as a whole (**Exhibit 3-1**). Among its

peers, LPISD receives the highest percent of its revenue from state sources.

Exhibit 3-1
LPISD, State and Peer Districts
Revenue Sources as a Percent of Total Revenues
2000-01

District	Local/Other Revenue	State Revenue	Federal Revenue
La Pryor	12.7%	83.3%	4.0%
Charlotte	20.4%	75.8%	3.8%
Carrizo Springs	20.8%	72.1%	7.1%
Cotulla	26.1%	70.0%	3.9%
Pearsall	25.0%	69.6%	5.3%
Devine	26.5%	70.5%	3.0%
Region 20	40.8%	54.2%	5.0%
State	53.1%	43.6%	3.4%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), PEIMS 2000-01.

Since 1997-98, LPISD's state funding allocation has increased 3.5 percent (**Exhibit 3-2**).

Exhibit 3-2
LPISD Revenue Sources
1997-98 through 2000-01

Revenue Source	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change over Period
Local tax	11.4%	13.8%	11.2%	11.4%	0%
Other local and intermediate	2.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.3%	(53.6%)
State	80.5%	79.9%	83.2%	83.3%	3.5%
Federal	5.3%	4.4%	4.4%	4.0%	(24.5%)
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Source: TEA, AEIS 1997-98 through 1999-2000 and PEIMS 2000-01.

Texas has a court-approved school finance system to equalize property wealth among school districts, which requires wealthy districts to pay into a pool that, together with additional state funds, subsidizes poorer districts. The state defines "wealthy" as a district with property values at or above \$295,000 per pupil in weighted average daily attendance.

Exhibit 3-3 compares LPISD to its peer districts and the state in terms of property value per pupil. LPISD is the lowest of its peer group. None of the peers exceed the state average.

Exhibit 3-3
LPISD and Peer Districts
Property Value per Pupil
2000-01

District	Property Value per Pupil
Cotulla	\$109,821
Pearsall	\$91,090
Charlotte	\$89,186
Carrizo Springs	\$89,074
Devine	\$86,526
La Pryor	\$62,968

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

The state distributes basic allotment payments to all districts based on weighted average daily attendance (WADA). The state adjusts this allotment according to the property wealth of the district. For LPISD, the basic allotment is \$3,997 per student for 1999-2000.

LPISD property value consists mostly of land; land makes up 50.6 percent of its total property value compared to 7.3 percent on average for the state. Residential property makes up 21.6 percent of its total property value compared to 48.7 percent on average for the state. LPISD has 18.2 percent of its property value in business or commercial property values versus 40.6 percent for the state.

La Pryor does not have a thriving business community to provide tax support (**Exhibit 3-4**).

Exhibit 3-4
LPISD and State Property Value by Category
as a Percent of Total Property Value
1999-2000

Property Category	La Pryor	State
Land	50.6%	7.3%
Residential	21.6%	48.7%
Business	18.2%	40.6%
Oil and gas	8.0%	2.8%
Other	1.6%	0.6%
Total	100%	100%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

Compared to its peer districts and the state, LPISD's property value from land is the highest (**Exhibit 3-5**). The percent of business property for LPISD is lowest when compared to the state average and its peer districts.

Exhibit 3-5
LPISD, Peer Districts and State Property Value by Category
as a Percent of Total Property Value
1999-2000

District	Business	Residential	Land	Oil and Gas	Other	Total
La Pryor	18.2%	21.6%	50.6%	8.0%	1.6%	100.0%
Charlotte	19.3%	25.5%	47.3%	5.6%	2.3%	100.0%
Cotulla	23.4%	18.9%	36.2%	19.0%	2.5%	100.0%
Carrizo Springs	30.7%	24.5%	34.8%	7.3%	2.7%	100.0%
Pearsall	30.3%	31.1%	33.6%	2.6%	2.4%	100.0%
Devine	25.3%	40.9%	29.2%	1.6%	3.1%	100.1%
State	40.6%	48.7%	7.3%	2.8%	0.6%	100.0%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1999-2000.

Exhibit 3-6 shows that LPISD's tax rate has decreased by 9.7 percent over the past five years. During the same period, LPISD's property values have increased 2.4 percent.

Exhibit 3-6
LPISD Tax Rates and Assessed Property Value
1996-97 through 2000-01

Category	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	Percent Change
Maintenance and operations tax rate	\$1.47	\$1.43	\$1.43	\$1.32	\$1.44	(2.0)%
Interest and sinking fund tax rate	\$0.29	\$0.27	\$0.31	\$0.07	\$0.14	(51.7)%
Total tax rate	\$1.75	\$1.70	\$1.74	\$1.38	\$1.58	(9.7)%
Total property value (000's)	\$26,986	\$26,632	\$27,491	\$28,783	\$27,642	2.4%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1996-97 through 1999-2000 and Comptrollers Office, 2000.

Compared to its peer districts, LPISD has the highest property tax rate and lowest taxable property value per pupil (**Exhibit 3-7**).

Exhibit 3-7
LPISD Adopted Tax Rate and Taxable Property Value
Compared to Peer Districts and State
2000-01

District	Adopted Tax Rate	Taxable Property Value/Pupil
Cotulla	\$1.56	\$109,821
Pearsall	\$1.44	\$91,090
Charlotte	\$1.45	\$89,183
Carrizo Springs	\$1.50	\$89,074
Devine	\$1.42	\$86,526
La Pryor	\$1.58	\$62,968

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

Exhibit 3-8 shows how LPISD budgeted funds were distributed in 2000-01 compared to the state averages. LPISD spent a higher percent of its total funds in the categories of instruction, school leadership, cocurricular

activities, plant maintenance and operations and central administration while spending a lower percent of its total funds in the categories of instructional related services, student support services, student transportation, and data processing.

Exhibit 3-8
LPISD and State Budgeted Expenditures by Function
as a Percent of Total Expenditures
2000-01

Function	La Pryor		State	
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
Instruction	\$1,979,195	53.9%	\$13,871,475,883	51.3%
Instructional related services	\$66,586	1.8%	\$711,993,126	2.6%
Instructional leadership	\$74,117	2.0%	\$327,217,968	1.2%
School leadership	\$191,709	5.2%	\$1,413,048,962	5.2%
Support services - student	\$90,093	2.5%	\$1,080,558,025	4.0%
Student transportation	\$74,932	2.0%	\$676,770,906	2.5%
Food services	\$0	0.0%	\$1,315,831,789	4.9%
Cocurricular/extracurricular activities	\$173,869	4.7%	\$601,620,200	2.2%
Central administration	\$282,592	7.7%	\$946,026,510	3.5%
Plant maintenance and operations	\$347,985	9.5%	\$2,598,036,618	9.6%
Security and monitoring services	\$0	0.0%	\$153,117,054	0.6%
Data processing services	\$9,235	0.3%	\$298,526,325	1.1%
Other*	\$384,055	10.5%	\$3,061,791,569	11.3%
Total Budgeted expenditures	\$3,674,368	100.0%	\$27,056,013,935	100.0%

Source: TEA, PEIMS 2000-01.

**Includes operating expenditures not listed above and all non-operational such as debt service, capital outlay, and community and parental involvement services.*

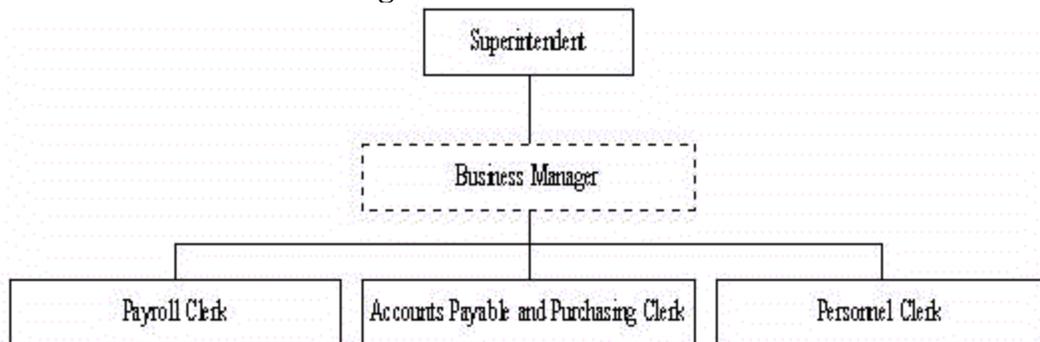
Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

A. BUSINESS OFFICE

The Business Office at LPISD is responsible for preparing the district's financial statements, accounts payable, accounts receivable, purchasing and payroll. The organization chart is presented in **Exhibit 3-9**. Due to the district's small size, the superintendent is in charge of overall business functions and monitors the district's financial operations closely.

Exhibit 3-9
LPISD Business Office
Organization Chart



Source: LPISD superintendent, November 2000.

LPISD maintains its accounting records on the Regional Service Center Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) software supported by Regional Education Service Center (Region 20) in San Antonio. The district has access to all RSCCC modules, including accounting and finance, check reconciliation, budgeting, amendment, payroll, fixed assets and purchasing. The district currently uses the RSCCC software for accounting, payroll, financial reporting, purchasing and fixed assets record keeping. This system uses a series of options, or menus, to allow a district to choose the level of detail it prefers to use in maintaining its business records.

The RSCCC software is able to generate a wide variety of management information reports in four general categories: summary reports, fixed asset/inventory reports, vendor/purchase order reports and journals/checks/detailed ledger reports. Summary reports are most useful for board members and district administrators and include a summary of general ledger activity, comparisons of revenue to budget, budget status by organization and budget status by program.

Competitive procurement methods, as outlined by the Texas Education Code, must be used for all school district purchases valued at \$25,000 or more in the aggregate for each 12-month period, except for contracts for the purchase of vehicle fuel and produce. For purchases valued between \$10,000 and \$25,000 in the aggregate over a 12-month period, the school district is required to obtain written or telephone quotes from at least three suppliers. State laws prohibit the use of competitive bidding for certain types of professional services, including engineering, architectural, accounting and land surveying.

The business manager is responsible for cash management and investment activities and handles all cash receipts and transfers as necessary for investment purposes. LPISD's investment strategy is relatively simple and the district keeps all funds in Zavala County Bank, its official depository.

The State of Texas uses county appraisal districts to determine the appraised and taxable values of properties within each taxing jurisdiction. The Zavala Central Appraisal District (ZCAD) performs these services for the district. The district also contracts with ZCAD to collect its property taxes. ZCAD deposits daily tax collections directly into Zavala County Bank.

The business manager is responsible for issuing bonds and other debt instruments and managing debt service. The district issued bonds most recently in October of 2000, totaling \$1,400,000 for the construction of four new elementary classrooms, a special education classroom, an elementary library and other general renovations. LPISD issued the bonds as authorized by voters in May 2000.

Exhibit 3-10 presents the district's outstanding debt at the end of fiscal 2000.

**Exhibit 3-10
LPISD Schedule of Bonds Outstanding**

Description	Original Issue	Interest Rates	Outstanding Principal
Schoolhouse bonds - series 1976	\$915,000	6.0%-8.0%	\$380,000
Schoolhouse bonds - series 2000	\$1,400,000	5.5%-7.25%	\$1,400,000
Totals	\$2,315,000	N/A	\$1,780,000

Source: LPISD annual financial statements and Series 2000 bonds official statement.

FINDING

The new superintendent hired Uvalde ISD's director of Business Services to assist temporarily in locating and organizing Business Office information and to prepare financial statements for the board's use. The superintendent recently hired the former Uvalde ISD superintendent on a permanent basis to take over as business manager for the district. The former Uvalde superintendent has a number of years of experience as a school district business manager.

The LPISD business manager recently resigned and LPISD's fiscal 2000 financial and compliance audit contained numerous findings and questioned costs. The audit also contained a qualified opinion on federal programs compliance.

LPISD has recently been assigned an all-purpose monitor by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). A letter from TEA dated January 12, 2001 announced that an all-purpose monitor would be assigned to LPISD. One reason stated for the assignment of an all-purpose monitor was due to the depletion of the district's fund balance caused by overspending of its 1999-2000 year budget.

COMMENDATION

The LPISD superintendent has taken steps to fill the vacant business manager position with a business administrator experienced with Texas school districts.

FINDING

LPISD has recently developed a detailed corrective action plan in response to findings in its fiscal 2000 financial and compliance independent audit. The audit cited numerous financial compliance issues and internal control weaknesses. The auditors also qualified their opinion on the district's federal program administrative compliance activities.

Section 44.008 of the Texas Education Code requires school districts to undergo an annual audit of their financial statements. A certified public accountant must perform the audit, which must comply with generally accepted accounting principles and other standards promulgated by various agencies such as the governmental Accounting Standards Board, the Office of Management and Budget and the American Institute of Certified of Public Accountants.

Texas school districts strive for unqualified audit opinions annually due to their significant impact on a district's ability to borrow funds and on the

entire state's financial credibility. TEA has recently proposed a statewide Financial Excellence Indicator System (FEIS). FEIS treats audit opinion qualifications and reported material internal control weaknesses as factors as to whether a school district achieves established minimum financial reporting and related compliance objectives. Under FEIS, LPISD's audit results indicate a failure to meet these standards.

The audit noted that the district had significant noncompliance with requirements of the Title VII Bilingual Education System-wide Improvement Grant received directly from the U.S. Department of Education. These noncompliance issues including unallowable expenditures charged to the grant, cash management activities over direct drawdowns for the grant, real and personal property management activities and certification of contractors.

Exhibit 3-11 summarizes the problems cited in LPISD's fiscal 2000 audit. The Title VII grant is for five years and 1999-2000 is the third year. The district's independent auditor indicated that the district had not exceeded the total five-year amount of the grant due to the compliance violations. The Title VII program had borrowed \$114,812 from the general fund as of the end of the fiscal year pending final approval of the budget amendment noted in the audit findings item 00-8.

**Exhibit 3-11
Summary of LPISD Audit Findings
Fiscal 2000 Audit**

Finding No.	Finding
00-1	Conflicts between approved budget and budget reported to the board
00-2	Incorrect budget amendment calculations
00-3	Excess expenditures over amounts appropriated
00-4	Title VII program payroll expenditures
00-5	Title VII program cash advances in excess of amounts allowed
00-6	Title VII program property inventories
00-7	Title VII program contractor certifications
00-8	Title VII program budget amendment approval not obtained
00-9	\$258,685 error in general fund bank account reconciliation

Source: LPISD Fiscal 2000 Annual Financial and Compliance Audit Report.

The development of a corrective action plan was coordinated by the new superintendent and was submitted to TEA on March 22, 2000. According to TEA officials, the fiscal 2000 corrective action plan has been received and is being processed, however the plan does not explain certain issues disclosed in prior fiscal years, which TEA has asked the district to prepare.

Recommendation 14:

Develop and implement a system to ensure that the detailed financial corrective action plan is followed through.

LPISD has a number of critical financial issues that must be addressed. Having a plan of action is a good first step, but if the plan is not carried through and eventually institutionalized, the district will continue to have difficulties. The board and the superintendent must carefully monitor implementation of the corrective actions required. Procedures and policy must also be put into place to guard against the tendency to return to practices of the past.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager review the 2000 detailed corrective action plan and determine how best to address each of the areas discussed, assign responsibility to staff for individual items as appropriate and identify areas that will require board policy or documented procedures to ensure compliance.	August 2001
2.	The superintendent and business manager draft policies and procedures that will ensure compliance with all laws, rules and regulations and ensure compliance.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent and business manager present a report regarding the status of the corrective action plan to the board including any draft policies or procedures.	October 2001 and Ongoing
4.	The superintendent monitors the implementation of the action plans.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD has not prepared monthly financial statements for the board's review or for internal management use on a consistent basis. This includes budget comparison information. The new superintendent indicates that monthly financial statements have not been prepared since November of 2000. The district has the capability to prepare monthly financial statements using the software supported by Region 20. Due to turnover of personnel in the business office, records have been incomplete for preparation of accurate monthly financial reports.

The independent auditor noted a significant problem in the fiscal 2000 audit related to cash reconciliation errors. These errors lead to inaccurate monthly financial reporting. School districts need monthly financial reports, including budget analyses, to properly carry out the routine business activities internally and for board members to properly discharge fiduciary responsibilities related to a district's financial operations.

The new superintendent plans to submit updated financial information to the board as soon as they can be made available. The district's RSCCC financial software has the capability to produce monthly financial statements directly from computerized records, including budget comparison reports.

Recommendation 15:

Prepare monthly financial statements on a routine basis for use in managing the district's finances.

Monthly financial statements should include budget comparisons and should be made available to administrators and board members as soon after month end as possible. Accounting records should be kept current and accurate so that routine financial statements can be prepared directly for the RSCCC software.

The new superintendent has recently hired the former Uvalde superintendent as business manager. This person has a number of years of experience as a school district business manager and will be able to implement this recommendation.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager reviews and modifies monthly accounting procedures to enable reconciliation of general ledger balances in a timely manner.	September 2001
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2.	The business manager receives input on financial statement formats from the superintendent and board, including budget comparison reports.	October 2001
3.	The business manager develops monthly financial statement formats using the RSCCC financial software, receiving assistance from Region 20 when needed.	November 2001
4.	The business manager uses the RSCCC financial software to produce monthly financial statements.	December 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

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

FINDING

The district's turnover of personnel in the business office caused record keeping problems that increased audit fees for the year 2000 financial and compliance audit. LPISD paid \$39,500 for the fiscal 2000 financial and compliance audit. This amount is \$22,500 more than the annual budget for audit services of \$17,000. The independent auditor indicated that their firm had to review detailed accounting records and perform significant accounting procedures before they were able to start the actual audit. These extra procedures were due to a lack of routine reconciliation procedures of accounting records associated with preparation of monthly financial statements. The independent auditor indicated that their original estimate for audit services was \$11,000.

The TEA's *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG)* provides instructions for school district administrators to use when preparing for its annual audit. The purpose of a financial audit is to determine the accuracy of financial statements, not to correct errors in accounting systems. The audit generally includes an examination of financial related data that supports the financial statements prepared by the school district. The audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used by school district management in preparing the financial statements. School district administrators (not the independent auditors) are responsible for the preparation of the district's annual financial statements.

Preparation for the annual audit by a school district begins with the preparation and adoption of the budget and continue throughout the year. A listing of documents that a district should prepare, collect and provide to auditors that will enhance the annual audit process includes:

- Copies of the budget and amendments as adopted;

- Copies of the minutes of each board meeting and monthly financial statements;
- Copies of an organizational chart showing lines of responsibility;
- Copies of the flow charts of financial documents ;
- Copies of bank reconciliations for each bank account;
- List of all depositories and their addresses, including bank account numbers and account names;
- List of all investment transactions by fund for the year;
- List of encumbrances;
- Schedule of insurance in effect which should include names of companies, type of coverage, inclusive dates of the policies, and total cost per policy;
- Reconciliations of payrolls and related accounts such as payroll taxes and retirement deductions;
- Copies of new bond issues and details of bond sales;
- Copies of teacher contracts and leave schedules, if appropriate;
- Copies of lease agreements;
- Copies of trial balances and, if possible, the financial statements, footnote disclosures and combining schedules; and
- Copies of the prior year audit report and other audit reports prepared by the internal auditors or other government auditors/agencies.

In addition to the listed items, a school district should make available to the auditor schedules prepared to support the financial statements or notes to the financial statement amounts. School districts should strive to provide all information requested in a timely manner. Districts and the auditor should agree on the scope and nature of the information needed for the audit prior to the beginning of the audit.

Some small school districts have their independent auditors review interim financial statements during the year and make suggestions that result in saving time during the audit which reduces the audit fee.

Recommendation 16:

Improve preparation for the annual audit to achieve cost savings.

The new business manager needs to obtain an understanding through discussions with the independent auditor as to what specific information will be needed for future audits. The business manager should also review the problems identified during the fiscal 2000 audit to obtain an understanding of the corrective actions needed to ensure the situation doesn't reoccur during future audits.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager meets with the independent auditor and obtains a listing of everything the independent auditor will need at the beginning of the audit.	August 2001
2.	The business manager sends interim financial statements to the independent auditor and receives suggestions for improvements.	September 2001 and quarterly
3.	The business manager gathers all information needed by the independent auditor, makes necessary adjustments to detailed accounting records and prepares the annual financial statements.	August 2001 through September, 2001
4.	The independent auditor arrives and receives all requested information needed for the annual financial and compliance audit.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

Based on the district's 2000-01 budget of \$17,000 for the annual audit and the initial estimate provided by external auditors of \$11,000, the district could save \$6,000 annually by adequately preparing for the audit. Based on the audit fee for the fiscal 2000 audit of \$39,500, the savings could be as high as \$28,500 (\$39,000 - \$11,000). Professional audit fees are subject to change and will be based on the actual time to perform the audit. Conservatively, if LPISD can prepare properly for its financial and compliance audit, annual savings are estimated as the difference between the 2000-01 budget amount of \$17,000 for audit fees and the independent auditors' original estimate of \$11,000, or \$6,000.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Improve preparation for the annual audit to achieve cost savings.	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000

FINDING

LPISD issued purchase orders in fiscal 2000 for athletic supplies that resulted in total purchases for this expenditure category to exceed the annual limit of \$10,000. No formal quotes or bids were issued for sporting goods and LPISD did not use the cooperative purchasing contracts offered by Region 20. LPISD does use Region 20 contract for food service items. Other categories of items offered by Region 20 contract include art supplies, paper, office supplies, computer supplies, custodial supplies, physical education supplies, copier/duplication supplies, fire

extinguishers, lawn and garden supplies, floor care products and floor pads, graphing calculators and educational technology.

Recommendation 17:

Establish a procedure to ensure compliance with all state and local purchasing laws and policies.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager develops and implements improved administrative procedures and monitoring systems to ensure compliance with state and local purchasing laws and policies.	September 2001
2.	The business manager reviews the 2001-02 budget to determine if bids or quotes will be needed for the purchase of any goods or services.	September 2001
3.	The business manager prepares bids or formal quotes for appropriate goods and services.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent submits bid recommendations to the board for approval.	November 2001
5.	The business manager reviews monthly reports to determine if categories not having contracts are approaching purchasing volumes that may necessitate competitive bids or quotes.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD has had some difficulty submitting accurate and dependable Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data to TEA. One example of this is the submission of enrollment data that resulted in overpayments to the district, that are now causing the district cut budget expenditures in order to be able to reimburse the state. Another example is that budget numbers reported to PEIMS for the current and prior years could not be reconciled to the district's figures by the current administrators. While some of this may be attributable to the turmoil of the past, there are few internal safeguards in place to ensure that PEIMS submissions are accurate.

The PEIMS function is now directly under the Business Manager, which should organizationally provide more guidance and direction.

In the Port Arthur ISD, a significantly larger district but one that was experiencing similar problems, the business manager instituted a process whereby all submissions were verified by the principals and program directors before the submissions are sent. Each person in the chain of command is required to examine the facts being submitted for their area of the district's operation and sign a statement that they have examined the facts presented and that they are correct. Then, if the data submission is incorrect, the individuals know that they are going to be held accountable. This system makes it very clear that PEIMS accuracy is not just the responsibility of the clerk that enters the data, but it is truly the responsibility of each person along the way. Because each person understands their role and is held accountable, each person has an incentive to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Recommendation 18:

Develop a process and system of internal controls to ensure the accuracy of PEIMS data submissions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager and the PEIMS clerk meet to discuss how the PEIMS submission process can be improved.	August 2001
2.	The business manager drafts a procedure for PEIMS data collection, entry and verification and presents it to the superintendent for review and approval.	September 2001
3.	The business manager and PEIMS clerk hold training sessions with district staff to ensure that they understand their role in the PEIMS process.	October 2001
4.	The business manager implements the approved procedure and monitors each step in the process to ensure that the procedure is understood and followed.	November 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD does not have a purchasing procedures manual. A good purchasing manual establishes rules for making school district purchases. The manual provides guidance to school district staff and can be used to acquaint vendors and suppliers with the school district's purchasing policies and procedures. It promotes consistency in purchasing applications throughout

the school district. Such a manual can be either stand-alone or be included as a part of a financial and accounting manual.

Typically, a school district's purchasing procedures manual would include purchasing goals and objectives; statutes, regulations and board policies applicable to purchasing; purchasing authority; requisition and purchase order processing; competitive procurement requirements and procedures; vendor selection and relations; receiving; distribution; disposal of obsolete and surplus property; and requests for payment vouchers.

Recommendation 19:

Create and distribute a districtwide purchasing procedures manual.

Sample forms are also helpful to district users, including the district's bid/proposal form; purchase order form; purchase requisition (if separate from the purchase order); receiving report; vendor performance evaluation form; and request for payment voucher. A Table of Contents or an index will make it easier for users to get answers to their questions. Smithville ISD has developed a comprehensive purchasing procedures manual that would serve as a good model for LPISD.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts other districts to obtain copies of their purchasing procedures manuals to use as a guide to create the LPISD Purchasing Procedures Manual.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent distributes the Purchasing Procedures Manual to the users.	November 2001
3.	The superintendent, or designee, provides training to the users.	November 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

B. BUDGET PROCESS

Texas school districts must comply with financial reporting guidelines in TEA's FASRG. The guide includes budgeting requirements and suggestions for a successful budget development process.

Budgets in the public arena are often considered the ultimate policy document since they are the financial plan a school district uses to achieve its goals and objectives reflecting:

- public choices about what goods and services the district will and will not produce;
- school districts' priorities among the wide range of activities in which they are involved;
- relative weight given to the influence of various participants and interest groups in the budget development process; and
- methods a school district uses to acquire and use its resources.

The budget itself, then, becomes a political document representing school district administrators' accountability citizens.

The state, TEA and local districts formulate legal requirements for school district budgets. State and federal grants also may impose additional legal requirements.

The Foundation School Program (FSP) entitles Texas public school districts to provide a basic education for each student. The basic concept underlying the FSP was first implemented with the passage of the Gilmer-Aiken Bill by the 51st Texas Legislature in 1949. There have been many modifications to the funding formulas since then, but the basic concept remains the same. Financing the foundation program is a shared arrangement between the state and the school district, where property taxes are blended with revenues from the state to cover the cost of basic and mandated programs. The school district's share of FSP is based on its ability to generate tax revenue. TEA bases FSP state revenue entitlements primarily on property wealth and current fiscal year factors such as:

- student average daily attendance (ADA)
- the number of students in special populations and their attendance
- each school district's tax effort.

The FSP revenue a school district earns for a year can and does vary until the time when final values for each of the factors in the formula become available. Availability of the data can be as late as midway into the next fiscal year, when audited property tax collections for the prior fiscal become available.

The only constant in the FSP revenue formula at the time a school district adopts its budget is the school district's local share. Therefore, a school district bases its budget on estimates of variables that affect total FSP. To ensure proper allocation of resources for each educational service, a local district must develop good initial estimates of each of these variables and monitor the situation throughout the year.

Elements that drive FSP calculations such as ADA and contact hours for special populations do not remain static throughout the year. For example, a twenty percent increase in career and technology students over the school district's original projections should not be an unexpected discovery made when summer ADA data is collected after the end of the academic year. A school district should reflect shifts in those factors that require changes in the level of spending for an educational service in timely amendments to the budget.

TEA's revenue section provides an FSP revenue estimation spreadsheet for use by all Texas schools. The spreadsheet is available on the TEA's web site. The Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) sponsors a number of seminars designed to train school business managers to use the spreadsheet to properly track the status of over or under funding.

A budget calendar lists critical dates for the preparation, submission and review of campus budgets for the school district, and is prepared at the district level during the budget planning process. A variety of simple techniques can be used to build the district budget calendar. The simplest is to modify the previous year's calendar. Timing problems from the previous year's process should be reviewed and appropriate changes made in the current calendar. The budget calendar should be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate for the current year's budget. The following three steps may be used to prepare a new budget calendar:

- Determine the level of detail needed. A district may have several budget calendars with varied levels of detail. Administrators may present a general calendar to the school board while campus personnel may use detailed calendar at the campus level. If several calendars are used, they are summarized in a district master calendar to ensure that all activities and dates are consistent and compatible;

- Identify all activities that must be included in the calendar, and arrange them in chronological order; and
- Assign completion dates to each activity on the calendar. Completion dates are assigned working backward through the activities from August 20, the legally mandated date for presentation of the preliminary school district budget to the school board. Dates are also assigned to ensure sufficient time is allowed for completion of each activity on the calendar. Some school districts may assign only completion dates for each activity and allow budget analyst/groups to determine when an activity begins. Other school districts assign suggested or mandatory start dates for activities to ensure their timely completion.

A budget manual prescribes all necessary steps in preparing and adopting an annual budget. The TEA's FASRG contains legal and procedural guidance in this regard. The extent of prescribed steps included in a budget manual depends on a district's size and operational complexity. The budget manual assists district administrators in the budget process, especially when there is employee turnover in the business office. The budget manual generally provides for standard documentation guidelines and record filing methods for each annual budget process. A budget manual is generally updated annually, as an individual district's systems and operating characteristics change. Many Texas school districts have adopted budget manuals to assist in financial operations.

Responsibility for preparation of district budget guidelines and the budget calendar lies primarily with district administrators and the superintendent. Because these guidelines create a framework for the entire budget development process, their careful design is critical to an efficient and effective process.

FINDING

Because of erroneous student enrollment projections, LPISD received \$65,487 in 1999-2000. More in state revenues than it was entitled to and is projected to receive an additional \$183,893 in 2000-01. As a result, payments from TEA will be reduced in 2000-01 and 2001-02.

The Legislature appropriates revenues to fund the FSP using projections of property values and student counts. A funding model is created using projections of the various elements for each school district. TEA uses this model to calculate payments to school districts for the biennium. When a school district actually earns less than the model in a given year, TEA recovers the excess amount the following year by reducing the payments for the next year.

The primary reason for these over payments was due to inaccurate projections of students in average daily attendance by the previous business manager. It appears that LPISD increased its projected ADA in these years to achieve additional state funding. According to the new superintendent, trustees never approved submission of these ADA estimate changes to the TEA's revenue section.

As a property-poor district, LPISD relies heavily on state revenues for its operating capital. Shifts in state funding caused by overstating ADA are devastating to the succeeding year's operating budget. Consequently, the new LPISD superintendent has had to amend budgets in educational service areas due to the overfunding of state revenues.

School districts know within a few months after the beginning of the school year whether they have been over or under paid by the state. While some school districts have experienced significant financial problems by spending the state overpayments, others appropriately account for over and under payments in their accounting records. If overpayments are received, these districts place the money into a restricted, interest-bearing account. When the repayments are required by the state, the money is available, with interest.

Recommendation 20:

Use TEA provided spreadsheet software to track potential changes in state funding throughout the fiscal year.

Proper use of the spreadsheet will enable the district to promptly identify overpayments that will have to be returned to TEA or underpayments that the district will need to monitor to ensure they are received. The prompt identification of over/under payments will enable the district to more effectively manage its budget by identifying changes to FSP budgeted revenue in a timely manner so that appropriate actions can be taken.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager obtains the FSP revenue estimation spreadsheet from TEA and attends a seminar on its proper use.	August 2002
2.	The business manager implements a procedure to evaluate the status of FSP revenues throughout the fiscal year and report the status of these revenues to the superintendent and board.	September 2002
3.	The business manager implements a procedure to set aside FSP revenues received when over funding becomes apparent. The procedure should include notifying TEA of any negative impact changes in ADA and other variables.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD's does not have a formal budget calendar identifying the timetable for the budget review and adoption process or a budget manual for the use of district administrators. Typically, the superintendent discusses the timing of the process with the board during regular board meetings in the spring, and they jointly establish convenient dates for workshops to review budget information. Such a calendar is an important planning tool because it establishes specific tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines.

The district's fiscal 2000 audit report indicated significant deficiencies in the budgeting process.

Smithville ISD, a small Central Texas school district, has prepared a budget calendar that works well for them (**Exhibit 3-12**).

Exhibit 3-12 Example Budget Calendar

Date	Action
February 15	Budget worksheets distributed to all administrators.
March 22	Preliminary budgets due to central office.
April 1-5	Budget hearings to be conducted with administrators.
May 17	First draft of budget to be distributed to Board of Trustees.
June 21	Revised budget to be distributed to Board of Trustees.
August 2	Publish notice of public meeting to adopt budget.
August 16	Regular board meeting to adopt budget.
August 23	Special meeting to discuss tax rate, take record vote and schedule public hearing.
August 30	Publish "Notice of Public Hearing on Tax Increase" at least seven days before public hearing.
September 9	Public hearing scheduled and announce meeting to adopt tax rate 3-14 days from this date.
September 13	"Notice of Vote on Tax Rate" published before meeting to adopt tax rate.

September 20	Meeting to adopt tax rate. Meeting is 3-14 days after public hearing and after the adoption of the budget.
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Source: Smithville ISD director of Business.

Nearby Eagle Pass ISD has developed a detailed budget manual and budget manual guidance is also available through Region 20 or the TASBO.

Recommendation 21:

Develop a budget calendar and manual for LPISD administrators and board members to use in the annual budget process.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager develop guidelines for the preparation of a budget calendar and manual through planning meetings and input from other district administrators and board members.	December 2001
2.	The business manager prepares a draft budget calendar and manual for review by other district administrators and board members.	January 2002
3.	Based on input received from other district administrators and board members, the business manager prepares a budget manual and calendar for use in the next budget process.	February 2002
4.	District administrators and board members begin using the budget calendar and manual in preparing the next fiscal year's budget.	March 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

C. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

The business manager is responsible for ensuring that insurance coverage is adequate to protect the district, including property and casualty insurance, directors' and officers' liability insurance, workers' compensation and employee health insurance. The district participates in the Texas Political Subdivisions Property/Casualty Joint Self-Insurance Fund for certain casualty insurance coverage.

Exhibit 3-13 details the casualty insurance coverage for the district and the corresponding cost of each policy.

Exhibit 3-13
LPISD Casualty Insurance Coverage
2000-01

Coverage	Premium
Fleet liability	\$5,307
Property and casualty	\$5,481
General liability	\$1,174
School board legal	\$4,543
Boiler and machinery	\$585
Student insurance	\$11,000
Athletic insurance	\$11,000
Total	\$39,090

Source: LPISD business manager.

The district's employee health insurance carrier is Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas. The district provides the coverage under a managed health care, indemnity out of area and prescription drug program. LPISD pays employees' premiums for the basic plan. The district also provides its employees an option to purchase dental insurance. The employees pay the

premiums for this coverage. LPISD covers all employees under the health insurance plan.

Exhibit 3-14 summarizes the employee health insurance at LPISD.

**Exhibit 3-14
Summary of LPISD Medical Plan Benefits
2000-01**

Type of Service	Network	Out of Network
Calendar year deductible (Non-inpatient hospital services)	\$500 individual/\$1,000 family	\$750 individual/\$1,500 family
Fourth quarter carryover applies	Yes	Yes
Coinsurance stop loss maximum	\$3,000 individual/\$6,000 family per calendar year	\$6,000 individual/\$12,000 family per calendar year
Lifetime maximum per participant	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Inpatient hospital services	80 percent after \$250 per admission deductible	60 percent after \$500 per admission deductible
Pre-certification failure penalty	None	\$250
Emergency/treatment room facility charges - accident and medical emergency	80 percent after \$50 co-pay, waived if admitted	80 percent after \$50 co-pay, waived if admitted
Emergency/treatment room physician charges - accident and medical emergency	80 percent after calendar year deductible	80 percent after calendar year deductible
Emergency/treatment room facility charges - non emergency	80 percent after \$50 co-pay, waived if admitted	60 percent after \$50 co-pay and calendar year deductible, waived if admitted
Emergency/treatment room physician charges - non emergency	80 percent after calendar year deductible	60 percent after calendar year deductible

Physician office visit (non surgical) including lab and X-ray	100 percent after \$25 co-pay per visit	70 percent after calendar year deductible
Immunizations to age 5	100 percent	100 percent
Physician surgical - any setting	80 percent after calendar year deductible	60 percent after calendar year deductible
Outpatient lab and X-ray	80 percent after calendar year deductible or 100 percent depending on service	60 percent after calendar year deductible or 70 percent after calendar year deductible depending on service
Home infusion therapy (pre-cert. required)	80 percent after calendar year deductible	60 percent after calendar year deductible
Physical, occupational and manipulative therapy	80 percent after calendar year deductible	60 percent after calendar year deductible
Physical, occupational and manipulative therapy - office services	30 sessions per calendar year/\$50 per session	30 sessions per calendar year/\$50 per session
Other outpatient services and supplies	80 percent after calendar year deductible	60 percent after calendar year deductible
Routine preventive including vision and hearing	100 percent after \$25 co-pay per visit	70 percent after calendar year deductible
Home health care (pre-cert. required)	100 percent/\$10,000 calendar year maximum	70 percent after calendar year deductible/\$7,000 calendar year maximum
Skilled nursing facility care (pre-cert. required)	\$10,000 per calendar year	\$7,000 per calendar year
Hospice care (pre-cert. required)	\$20,000 lifetime maximum	\$14,000 lifetime maximum
Mental health inpatient hospital (pre-cert. required)	80 percent after \$250 per admission deductible	60 percent after \$500 per admission deductible
Mental health inpatient physician (pre-cert.	80 percent after calendar year	60 percent after calendar year deductible

required)	deductible	
Mental health inpatient calendar year limits	30 inpatient days/30 physician visits	15 inpatient days/15 physician visits
Mental health outpatient visits/consultations (pre-cert. required)	100 percent after \$25 co-pay per visit	70 percent after calendar year deductible
Mental health outpatient physician/facility (pre-cert. required)	80 percent after calendar year deductible	60 percent after calendar year deductible
Mental health outpatient visits allowed	30 visits per calendar year	30 visits per calendar year
Chemical dependency in substance abuse facility (pre-cert. required)	Three treatment series per lifetime/paid as any other sickness	Three treatment series per lifetime/paid as any other sickness
Chemical dependency - outpatient	Paid as mental health	Paid as mental health
Serious mental illness (pre-cert. required)	Paid as any other sickness	Paid as any other sickness
Pharmacy prescription drugs - non-preferred brand name	\$25 co-pay	80 percent up to average wholesale price minus co-pay
Pharmacy prescription drugs - preferred brand name	\$10 co-pay if no generic available or prescribed "dispense as written"	80 percent up to average wholesale price minus co-pay
Pharmacy prescription drugs - generic	\$5 co-pay	80 percent up to average wholesale price minus co-pay
Mail service prescription drugs - non-preferred brand name	\$25 co-pay	\$25 co-pay
Mail service prescription drugs - preferred brand name	\$10 co-pay if no generic available or prescribed "dispense as written"	\$10 co-pay if no generic available or prescribed "dispense as written"
Mail service prescription drugs - generic	\$5 co-pay	\$5 co-pay

Source: LPISD business office records.

LPISD contributes \$241 monthly for employee only plan premiums. **Exhibit 3-15** details employee contributions.

Exhibit 3-15
LPISD Full-Time Employee Monthly
Premium Contributions for Medical Coverage
2000-01

Coverage	Premiums
Employee only	\$0
Employee + family	\$356

Source: LPISD business office records.

LPISD pays for health insurance for employees only, while the employee is required to pay the cost of coverages for their families. **Exhibit 3-16** compares LPISD's monthly medical premium costs to those of LPISD peer districts.

Exhibit 3-16
LPISD and Peer Districts Monthly Cost per Person for Medical
Insurance
2000-01

District	Amount of Premium Paid by the District	Cost to Employee			
		Employee Only	Employee and Children	Employee and Spouse	Employee and Family
La Pryor	\$241.00	\$0	\$356.00	\$356.00	\$356.00
Cotulla	\$199.67	\$61.96	\$297.42	\$323.58	\$637.55
Carrizo Springs	\$189.75	\$62.42	\$281.47	\$361.09	\$580.13
Pearsall	\$158.30	\$34.48	\$359.83	\$359.83	\$359.83
Devine	\$110.00	\$66.69	\$358.99	\$397.27	\$553.87

Source: Telephone survey conducted by TSPR, December 2000.

LPISD has the highest monthly district contribution for the group surveyed. The employee pays \$356 monthly for employee and family coverage.

FINDING

The district has not regularly issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for employee health insurance or student insurance. Due to its small size, LPISD rarely issues purchase orders for more than \$25,000. However, during the 1999-2000 school year, a purchase order was issued to Blue Cross Blue Shield for the district's health insurance in the amount of \$93,361 without a formal bid. According to the administrative assistant for Finance and Personnel, the last time health insurance was bid was in 1988. A purchase order was also issued to GM Southwest for \$22,000 for student insurance without formal quotes or bids. The last time bids were taken on student insurance was in 1998.

The 77th Texas Legislative, meeting during the spring of 2001, established a statewide school employee health insurance plan for teachers and other employees of school districts. Coverages for smaller district employees will begin in the fall of 2002. Coverage would be expanded to larger districts as early as 2003. The Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS) will be administering the plan, and as written, districts with 500 employees or less, or more than 80 percent of the school districts in Texas, are required to participate in the plan. Districts with between 501-1,000 employees may join the plan within three years or continue in the local insurance plan. These districts must inform TRS of their desire to participate by September 1, 2001. Districts with more than 1,000 employees may join within three years or no later than 2005, as determined by TRS.

There are some special provisions to the plan that deal with risk pools and self-insurance programs.

Risk pools: If a risk pool was in existence on January 1, 2001, the districts with under 501 employees within the pool may elect not to participate in the state pool.

Self-Insured: Districts with under 501 employees that were individually self-insured on or before January 1, 2001, and have continued a self-insured program since, may elect not to participate in the state pool.

Furthermore the bill 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 those part-time employees who are members of TRS are automatically covered by the basic state plan, which is considered catastrophic coverage. Receiving 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 (\$83 a month) to pay for additional employee coverage, dependent coverage, compensation or any combination of the above. Part-time employees who are not TRS members 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 currently making that effort, over the next six years the state will help them pay that local district share. The state will phase out this hold harmless aid over the next six years. Districts reaching the Maintenance and Operations tax cap of \$1.50 will also be held harmless for any tax effort over \$1.50 required to reach their minimum district effort of \$1.50 a month.

All of the details of the plan have not been thoroughly defined in legislation and will be subject to contract negotiations with health insurance providers as well as rules and guidelines set by TRS. TRS expects to have more details during the summer of 2001, so that districts with between 501-1,000 employees can make a decision regarding participation before the September 1, 2001 deadline for declaring their intent to participate. Consequently, within the next year more than 80 percent of the districts in the state will be examining the options and making plans to transition to the new plan.

Because the Legislature was concerned about the affect that the termination or bidding of insurance contracts during this final year of coverage would have on a district's ability to obtain competitive bids for health insurance, the state has exempted these smaller school districts from the competitive bid requirements for health insurance coverages for the coming year. This provision does not impact districts with more than 1,000 employees.

Recommendation 22:

Establish a committee of staff and administrators to assess the state employee health insurance plan and help determine the district's course of action.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent directs the business manager to establish a committee of representative teachers and other employees to research the options and prepare recommendations for how the district will approach the new employee health coverages in the	August 2001
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	coming year.	
2.	The business manager selects a committee and begins to gather information from TRS, Region 20 and the state on the program.	September 2001
3.	The committee examines the information and prepares a plan of action to be presented to the board.	October - December 2001
4.	The superintendent and business manager presents the plan to the board for review and approval.	January 2002
5.	Upon approval, the committee communicates the plan to all members of the staff.	February 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 3

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

D. CASH AND INVESTMENTS

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

LPISD's investment policy and the Public Funds Investment Act (PFIA) requires that the investment officer to prepare and submit a written report of investment transactions for all funds covered by the PFIA for the preceding reporting period. The investment officer is required to present the report not less than quarterly to the district's governing body and the district superintendent within a reasonable time after the end of the reporting period.

The report must:

- describe in detail the investment position of the district on the date of the report;
- be prepared jointly by all investment officers of the district;
- be signed by each investment officer of the district;
- contain a summary statement, prepared in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles, of each pooled fund group that states the:
 - beginning market value for the reporting period;
 - additions and changes to the market value during the period;
 - ending market value for the period; and
 - fully accrued interest for the reporting period;
- state the book value and market value of each separately invested asset at the beginning and end of the reporting period by the type of asset and fund type invested;
- state the maturity date of each separately invested asset that has a maturity date;
- state the district's account or fund or pooled group fund for which each individual investment was acquired; and
- state the district's compliance of the investment portfolio as it relates to:
 - the investment strategy expressed in the district's investment policy; and
 - other relevant provisions of the PFIA.

The district's investment policy is designed to ensure the safety of idle funds; the availability of operating, capital and debt service funds when needed; and a competitive return on investments. Emphasis should be placed on the safety of principal and liquidity and must address investment diversification, yield, maturity and the quality and capability of investment management. The policy allows three investment types, with restrictions, summarized as follows:

- Obligations of the U. S. Treasury, certain U.S. agencies, and the State of Texas as permitted by Government Code 2256.009;
- Certificates of deposit; and
- Public funds investment pools.

The district's business manager makes investment decisions based on the cash balances available. Once cash needs are determined, the business manager initiates any investment purchases or sales by telephone to TexPool and communicates the transaction to the depository bank. The business manager makes a journal entry to record the transaction in the general ledger system. The business manager is also responsible for balancing monthly bank statements. Internal controls are present in that one of the clerks in the Business Office is involved in recording and handling cash and investment transactions, the board receives monthly reports with details of the cash and investment account and the board reviews and approves monthly financial reports.

The district is a type one payee for state funding purposes. According to Section 42.259 of the Texas Education Code, a type one payee is a school district having a wealth per student of less than one-half of the statewide average wealth per student. Type one payees receive their funding proportionally throughout the year (**Exhibit 3-17**) since these school districts do not have significant tax revenues for operating purposes.

Exhibit 3-17
State Revenue Payment Timing
For Type One Payee School Districts
2000-01

Fiscal Year On or Before Date	Percent of Yearly Entitlement
September 25	15%
October 25	10%
November 25	10%
December 25	10%

January 25	10%
February 25	5%
March 25	10%
May 25	10%
June 25	10%
July 25	10%

Source: Texas Education Code -
<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/ed/ed004200.html#ed035.42.259>.

LPISD has to work diligently to invest any excess funds to maximize interest earnings.

LPISD uses Zavala County Bank as its depository. Texas school districts bid and issue depository contracts for a two-year period; however, recent legislation allows a district to renew its depository contract for one additional two-year term if the district considers the service satisfactory. The district's current contract extends until August 31, 2001. Zavala County Bank maintains all bank accounts for the district, including operations, interest and sinking, payroll, student activity, bond construction and certificates of deposit. All bank accounts except the payroll account are interest bearing, earning a rate of 4.7 percent as of December 2000. As required by state law, the depository agreement also provides for the pledge of acceptable securities to protect district funds on deposit at the bank at any given time.

FINDING

LPISD's cash and investment policies and depository agreement provides for the investment of excess funds in higher yielding certificates of deposit or other investments generally allowable for Texas political subdivisions.

As of December 31, 2000, the district had \$1,754,157 in checking accounts and \$1,516,500 in depository bank certificates of deposit (**Exhibit 3-18**).

Exhibit 3-18
LPISD Schedule of Cash and Investments by Account
As of December 31, 2000

Account Name	Balance	Percent of Total Cash
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		and Investments
General operating	\$1,303,859	39.87%
Interest and sinking account	\$37,957	1.16%
Payroll account	\$37,390	1.14%
Student activity	\$30,800	0.94%
Bond construction	\$344,151	10.52%
Certificates of deposit	\$1,516,500	46.37%
Total	\$3,270,657	100.00%

Source: Business Office records.

Ninety-eight percent of all LPISD money is invested at their local bank. Traditionally, districts have used only time deposits (CDs) bought from their local banks as their investments. Since all CDs are collateralized in Texas, there is little risk of loss on bank defaults. But that translates into lower interest rates, because investors are rewarded for taking risk.

Currently however, under the law and its standard of care, the district's cash should be used for maximum investment benefit. It is the responsibility of the district to thoroughly research its options and choose an appropriate strategy that safeguards funds but also earns a reasonable market yield. Since every investment has some risk, the investor must research those risks and follow some set strategy to minimize unacceptable risks.

Many small districts use local government investment pools for all their investment needs. These

commingled investment vehicles address all the strategy requirements required by law and offer current market rates through an economy of scale and professional management. Larger districts use the pools for the liquidity portion of their portfolios for the same reason. The biggest advantage of pools is having a full-time professional making the "big" decisions while the district reaps the benefits.

There are several pools available in Texas to help districts. There are different types of pools, however, the investor should understand the pool's objectives and structure. Small districts normally need pools that strive to maintain \$1 net asset value (constant dollar pools). A constant dollar pool is a type of money market fund that offers safety of principal and liquidity. The fund maintains a stated objective of a \$1 share value for

all participants, which means that the dollar value of the original deposit is expected to be maintained through conservative management practices. Even though these are extremely conservative, their size and active management create rates normally above both CDs and Treasury Bills.

Recommendation 23:

Invest excess cash in higher interest yielding instruments.

Because of the limited number of staff available to manage the district's investments, it is important the board and administration locate investments that continue to be simple to administer but provided the greatest benefit to the district.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager research possible investment opportunities with their local depository bank and with various investment pools.	August 2001
2.	The business manager prepares a recommendation for the board's review and approval.	September 2001
3.	The business manager implements the approved plan, by moving excess dollars to the approved instruments.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

If the district were able to invest the \$1.5 million that it currently holds in CDs in an investment instrument yielding even one percent higher interest, the additional revenues would be \$15,000 annually.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Invest excess cash in higher interest yielding instruments.	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000

FINDING

Based on discussions with the new superintendent and temporary business manager, LPISD has not complied with its investment policy in relation to quarterly reporting requirements. The quarterly reports are required under the PFIA.

The independent auditor found in the 1998-99 fiscal period that the district's investment officer had not completed required training under

PFIA requirements. The investment officer received the required training in the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The district's investment officer is the business manager. The auditor did not report this PFIA compliance violation in the 1999-2000 audit because LPISD places all excess funds in its depository bank. Government entities are required to have their quarterly investment reports reviewed by their independent auditors under the following guidelines.

A government investing in other than:

- money market mutual funds;
- investment pools; or
- accounts offered by the depository bank in the form of certificates of deposit, money market accounts or similar accounts.

Recommendation 24:

Develop an investment report in compliance with Public Funds Investment Act requirements.

Based on the simplicity of district's investments, which consist of accounts and CDs in the depository bank, the report should be prepared and submitted to the superintendent and board on a monthly basis.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and business manager develop guidelines for the preparation of a monthly investment report in compliance with Public Funds Investment Act requirements.	August 2001
2.	The business manager prepares the report monthly and submits it with other monthly board meeting information items.	September 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

This chapter reviews the operations of the La Pryor Independent School District (LPISD), including:

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

A school district's maintenance program should provide a clean and safe environment and make repairs in a timely manner to prevent facilities from deteriorating. The Food Service operation should provide nutritious meals to students and staff. Transportation should transport students to and from school and special events safely and efficiently. Technology is an area that should support and enhance educational programs as well as administrative operations. All of these support functions are integral to the overall operations of a school district and all of them cost money. Proper management of these functions can ensure that the district runs smoothly and that the district's limited resources will not be needlessly diverted away from the district's primary mission of educating students.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

A. FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT

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

A comprehensive facilities management program supports each campus and department by:

- Planning to ensure facilities data are gathered and used to develop effective education programs;
- Analyzing how facilities are used to ensure they are used efficiently and effectively based on student enrollment, educational program requirements and school board and state-mandated regulations;
- Ensuring facilities are safe and in working order to provide an effective learning environment for students;
- Ensuring the general cleanliness and upkeep of the facilities; and
- Developing an energy management program to reduce costs through energy conservation.

La Pryor ISD's facilities are located within the same land area in separate buildings. These facilities include the elementary school, middle/high school, administrative offices and various academic and support facilities (**Exhibit 4-1**). The total square footage for the district is 96,173 square feet.

Exhibit 4-1
LPISD Facilities and Square Footage
2001

Facility	Square Footage
Elementary school	7,776
Elementary school addition	696

Counselor's office and classroom	696
Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten building	2,250
Classroom wing	6,888
Cafeteria	6,000
Middle/high school	23,520
Additional classroom	3,840
Gym	16,560
Field house	3,000
Field house addition	3,150
Art room	1,449
Band hall	2,652
In-school suspension building	1,000
Agriculture shop	3,600
Title VII building	1,624
Elementary resource classroom	736
Speech room	736
Administrative offices	10,000
Total	96,173

Source: LPISD maintenance supervisor.

Since 1996-97, LPISD's student population decreased (**Exhibit 4-2**). Compared to its peer districts, LPISD is one of four districts (including Charlotte, Cotulla and Pearsall) that have lost student enrollment since 1996-97.

Exhibit 4-2
LPISD, Peer Districts, Region 20 and State Rates of Student Growth
1996-97 through 2000-2001

Entity	1996-97	2000-01	Percent Change
Devine	1,843	1,884	2.2
La Pryor	459	439	-4.4
Charlotte	515	487	-5.4

Carrizo	2,338	2,467	5.5
Pearsall	2,410	2,273	-5.7
Cotulla	1,425	1,294	-9.2
State	3,828,975	4,071,433	6.3
Region 20	315,875	325,851	3.2

Source: Texas Education Agency, AEIS 1996-97 and PEIMS 2000-2001.

FINDING

In 1997, the Texas Legislature created the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) to fund instructional facilities, primarily for districts like LPISD that did not have the funds to build or renovate their buildings. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is designated as the program's administrator.

To qualify for the IFA, a district must meet certain wealth per student requirements, which TEA annually adjusts. A district also must pass a local bond issue in any amount, of which the portion that is not funded by the IFA must be paid back with local funds.

In May 2000, LPISD passed a bond issue for \$1.4 million. This bond issue included funds for the construction of four new elementary classrooms, a special education classroom, an elementary library and other general renovations.

At the same time, the district submitted an IFA application to TEA. Of the \$1.4 million received by LPISD, TEA funds 79.4 percent, or approximately \$1.11 million. Under the IFA agreement, LPISD receives a payment each September over the life of the bonds for the IFA portion of the total package.

COMMENDATION

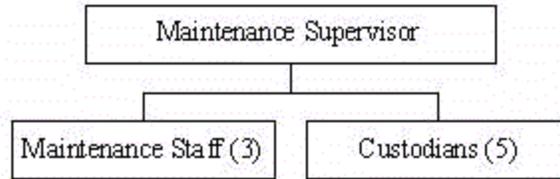
LPISD sought available funding alternatives to complete needed facilities upgrades.

FINDING

LPISD does not have a regular nor preventive maintenance program. Maintenance work is done on an "as needed" basis, usually in a reactive manner. The LPISD Maintenance Department has nine employees: four general maintenance personnel (of which one is the supervisor) and five

custodians (**Exhibit 4-3**). This mix of employees is sufficient to perform routine maintenance and custodial functions for LPISD facilities.

**Exhibit 4-3
Organization of LPISD Maintenance Department**



Source: LPISD Superintendent, November 2000.

The maintenance supervisor is responsible for building maintenance and supervision of the department. The maintenance personnel are responsible for completing any repair work-orders and grounds keeping for the district. The custodians are responsible for assuring all LPISD facilities are clean. They also serve as part-time maintenance personnel when the need arises.

LPISD's total maintenance and custodial expenditures are at the statewide average and above the average for Region 20 (**Exhibit 4-4**).

**Exhibit 4-4
LPISD and Peer District Maintenance and Custodial Budgets
2000-2001**

District/Entity	Maintenance and Custodial Budgets	Percent of Total Budget
Devine	\$1,006,298	8.8%
Carrizo Springs	\$1,634,718	9.1%
La Pryor	\$347,985	9.5%
Charlotte	\$423,833	9.7%
Pearsall	\$1,668,846	11.3%
Cotulla	\$1,201,577	11.8%
Region 20	\$185,508,360	8.4%
State	\$2,576,890,955	9.5%

Source: Texas Education Agency, PEIMS 2000-2001.

On a cost per student basis, LPISD's maintenance and custodial costs are the fourth highest among its peer districts (**Exhibit 4-5**). The cost per student is well above the state and regional averages. According to the maintenance supervisor, older facilities, deferring maintenance due to limited funds, the lack of trained staff, and other work responsibilities (for example, driving LPISD buses) all contribute to the higher costs.

Exhibit 4-5
LPISD and Peer District Maintenance and Custodial Budgeted Cost
Per Student
2000-2001

District/Entity	Maintenance and Custodial Budgets	Enrollment	Budgeted Maintenance and Custodial Cost Per Student
Devine	\$1,006,298	1,884	\$534
Carrizo Springs	\$1,634,718	2,467	\$663
Pearsall	\$1,668,846	2,273	\$734
La Pryor	\$347,985	439	\$793
Charlotte	\$423,833	487	\$870
Cotulla	\$1,201,577	1,294	\$929
State	\$2,576,890,955	4,071,433	\$633
Region 20	\$185,508,360	325,851	\$569

Source: Texas Education Agency, PEIMS 2000-2001.

A well-designed program of regular maintenance offers numerous benefits. Equipment life is lengthened, breakdowns are reduced, cost savings are achieved, energy consumption is reduced, work productivity is increased, and facilities look and function better.

Recommendation 25:

Develop a schedule of regular and preventive maintenance for each facility and all major equipment.

The district will need to evaluate all facilities and major equipment to determine the current condition, the immediate maintenance needs and the regular preventive maintenance that is required to keep the facility or equipment in peak condition. Once formulated, LPISD personnel should maintain a regular maintenance program.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Maintenance supervisor develops a list of regular facility and equipment maintenance needs and a schedule to address each need.	August 2001
2.	The supervisor reviews the list with each principal and the superintendent and makes modifications as necessary.	September 2001
3.	The supervisor determines staffing and outside contractor needs to implement the program on a regular basis and formulates a budget.	September - October 2001
4.	The supervisor reviews the budget with the superintendent.	October 2001
5.	The superintendent includes the budget in the overall district budget and reviews it with the board.	October 2001
6.	The board approves the maintenance budget as part of the overall district budget.	October 2001
7.	The supervisor implements the program and provides regular reports on its implementation to the superintendent and board.	October 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be accomplished within existing resources.

Energy Management

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

Districts who regularly check their utility rate schedules and control their facilities' operating hours will be in a better position to bargain with utility companies for favorable rates. The utility companies are not the enemy, and getting to know a utility company's representative may be one of the

most cost-effective actions a district can take. It is the district's responsibility to select the rate structure from the available range. Changing building equipment operating hours and scheduling equipment use can help a school district determine the most cost effective rate structure for each facility.

FINDING

LPISD spent more than \$92,000 on utility bills during the 1998-99 school year, the latest year for which data is available. Based on a total of 96,000 square feet of facilities owned by the district, this is less than \$1 per square foot, which is an appropriate level of energy use according to energy experts.

The State Power Program, an energy program offered by the General Land Office (GLO), can save participating districts 4 to 5 percent on their utility bills if their current utility provider also participates in the program. The GLO commissioner can negotiate and execute contracts to help reduce the energy costs of school districts and other political subdivisions.

Districts are not being charged to participate in the State Power Program. They can keep their current energy provider and receive the same services they currently use.

Recommendation 26:

Participate in the State Power Program to reduce the district's utility bills.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts the General Land Office to discuss options for purchasing electricity through the agency's program.	August 2001
2.	The superintendent reports findings to the board for approval.	August 2001
3.	The superintendent develops the program application.	September 2001
4.	The superintendent applies for the program.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

Using the 1998-99 utility bills for LPISD, the district could save about 4 percent on their utility costs by participating in the GLO's energy program.

LPISD's 1998-99 utility bills were \$92,000 x 4 percent = \$3,680 in energy savings.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Participate in the State Power Program to reduce the district's utility bills.	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680	\$3,680

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

B. FOOD SERVICES

The Texas School Food Service Association (TSFSA) has identified 10 standards of excellence for evaluating school food services programs. The standards state that effective programs should:

- Identify and meet current and future needs through organization, planning, direction and control;
- Maintain financial accountability through established procedures;
- Meet the nutritional needs of students and promote the development of sound nutritional practices;
- Ensure that procurement practices meet established standards;
- 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, development and morale;
- Promote a positive image to the public; and
- Measure success in fulfilling regulatory requirements.

TSPR inspected the LPISD's department of Food Services kitchen and cafeteria operations. LPISD serves students in one elementary school, one middle school and one high school. The Food Services department prepares all student meals from a central kitchen.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) approved the district's offer-versus-serve meal service. This service allows students to select as few as three of the five meal components offered. LPISD serves students the same menu regardless of grade level. Eighty-five percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. There is an Average Daily Participation (ADP) of 21 percent for breakfast and 75 percent for lunch. There are no a la carte, snack bars or approved snacks sold. The menus that are served to the students in the 2000-01 school year were written three years ago and approved by Region 20 for nutritional adequacy and compliance.

LPISD's department of Food Services receives revenues from the sale of meals and from the federally funded breakfast and lunch programs. The district submits detailed reports to TEA to document reimbursements from the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. LPISD is subject to coordinated TEA reviews. The last review was in 1998.

The School Lunch and Breakfast Agreement is a legal contract between TEA and LPISD. The provisions are identical to the provisions of the contract between TEA and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). At the end of each school year, districts must complete a renewal of agreement on the Child Nutrition Programs Information Management System (CNPIMS). Although the Texas Department of Health conducts sanitation inspections, it has not inspected LPISD since 1998.

LPISD Food Services' budget represents 3.5 percent of the LPISD total budget compared to TEA's recommendation of 5 percent. The Food Services department had a positive fund balance of \$32,960 for the 1999-2000 school year.

Exhibit 4-6 presents LPISD's Food Services department's financial information.

Exhibit 4-6
LPISD Food Services Department Actual Financial Information
1998-99 through 1999-2000

Category	1998-99 Actual	Percent of Total Expenditures	1999-2000 Actual	Percent of Total Expenditures	Percent Change of Total Expenditures
Payroll	\$63,033	34%	\$64,678	38%	3%
Benefits	\$15,015	8%	\$17,020	10%	12%
Professional/ Contracted Services	\$348	0.1%	\$355	2%	2%
Food	\$106,025	57%	\$71,090	42%	(49)%
Commodities	-	-	6,247	4%	100%
Other	\$1,079	0.5%	\$9,243	5%	88%
Travel/Subsistence	-	-	1,016	1%	100%
Other	-	-	543	0.3%	100%
Total	\$185,500		\$170,192		(9%)

Source: LPISD Food Services department/TEA PEIMS Data.

Exhibit 4-7 represents the reimbursable rates for each eligible breakfast and lunch served. *Severe need* breakfast funding is available to schools that served 40 percent or more of their lunches at free or reduced-price

two years ago and have breakfast costs higher than the regular breakfast reimbursement rates.

Exhibit 4-7
LPISD 2000-2001 Federal Reimbursement Rates
for Breakfast and Lunch

	Breakfast	Lunch
Full	\$0.21	\$0.21
Reduced-price	\$1.03	\$1.64
Free	\$1.33	\$2.04

Source: TEA and USDA Federal School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

Exhibit 4-8 and Exhibit 4-9 shows comparisons of LPISD's and selected peer districts; expenditures and revenues from their Food Service funds. LPISD is the only district of its peers that reduced its expenditures from 1995-96 through 1998-99. LPISD Food Services expenditures decreased by 3 percent, and the district ranked lowest among peer districts for increases in revenues for the 1995-2000 period.

Exhibit 4-8
LPISD and Selected Peer District Food Service Expenditure
Comparison
1995-96 through 1999-2000

District	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change
La Pryor	\$169,511	\$214,198	\$185,500	\$170,192	\$170,192	(.4%)
Crystal City	\$793,840	\$880,777	\$996,134	\$1,017,992	\$923,075	16%
Cotulla	\$442,306	\$464,089	\$497,624	\$581,874	\$534,727	21%
Charlotte	\$169,218	\$168,654	\$189,922	\$214,611	\$204,450	21%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1995-96 through 1998-99 and PEIMS for 1999-2000.

Exhibit 4-9
LPISD and Selected Peer District Food Service Revenue Comparison
1995-96 through 1999-2000

District	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-	Percent
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					2000	Change
La Pryor	\$159,557	\$154,874	\$185,773	\$190,677	\$164,400	3%
Crystal City	\$735,001	\$770,845	\$882,360	\$893,436	\$892,275	21%
Cotulla	\$394,339	\$390,530	\$433,465	\$514,355	\$490,000	24%
Charlotte	\$137,040	\$138,290	\$150,688	\$167,354	\$153,235	12%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1995-96 through 1998-99 and PEIMS for 1999-2000.

Exhibit 4-10 shows LPISD and selected peer district comparisons for food service expense per student. In 1998-99, LPISD had the lowest expenses per student among the selected peer districts.

Exhibit 4-10
LPISD and Selected Peer District Expense per Student
1995-96 through 1999-2000

District	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	Percent Change
La Pryor	\$378	\$477	\$413	\$379	\$366	(3)%
Crystal City	\$381	\$423	\$478	\$489	\$443	16%
Cotulla	\$310	\$325	\$348	\$407	\$374	21%
Charlotte	\$339	\$338	\$381	\$430	\$410	21%

Source: TEA, AEIS 1995-96 through 1998-99 and PEIMS for 1999-2000.

FINDING

LPISD does not have accurate job descriptions or regularly documented evaluations of Food Services employees' performance. Managing child nutrition programs requires a clearly defined set of objectives. The size of the district or number of students that are served does not affect the need for effective management. Human resource management involves setting and implementing standards and controls, monitoring, mentoring, developing and coaching personnel. The Texas School Food Service Association's *Standards of Excellence Manual* states that written job descriptions must be available to personnel and should include education and experience requirements, performance standards for each position and current task descriptions.

A recommended practice is to evaluate employees annually using performance standards. Other districts have used the Texas Association of School Board's (TASB) job descriptions to set performance standards and to define the level of service and quality for the food service operations.

Recommendation 27:

Develop written job descriptions and evaluations that measure quality of work productivity.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The administrative assistant of Food Services meets with the superintendent to coordinate the format of employee job descriptions and evaluation forms.	August 2001
2.	The superintendent presents the employee job descriptions and evaluation forms to the board for approval.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent begins using the written forms in documenting the job performance of the head cook and employees for Food Services employees.	November 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD breakfast participation rates have fluctuated over the years from 1995-96 to 1999-2000 and lunch participation increased by 8 Percent points. In **Exhibit 4-11**, the Average Daily Participation (ADP) is compared to the Average Daily Attendance (ADA). This calculation provides a comparison of LPISD to selected peer districts.

**Exhibit 4-11
LPISD and Selected Peer District Percent
of Average Daily Participation**

District	1995-96 B/L	1996-97 B/L	1997-98 B/L	1998-99 B/L	1999- 2000 B/L	Percent Point Change
La Pryor	27%/67%	69%/63%	62%/66%	58%/66%	27%/75%	0%/8%
Crvstal	29%/82%	29%/79%	29%/83%	30%/76%	40%/74%	11%/(8)%

City						
Cotulla	21%/74%	18%/77%	25%/83%	28%/82%	26%/79%	5%/5%
Charlotte	21%/70%	18%/67%	17%/66%	21%/68%	20%/80%	(1)%/10%

Source: TEA, Child Nutrition Programs District Profiles 1995-96 through 1999-2000.

Public school directors are under pressure to break even financially, while offering low cost meals and ensuring compliance with nutrition standards. Increasing student meal participation is important to a school district because a district increases its federal reimbursements for every student who participates in meals, and because it ensures that more students receive nutritious meals as directed by the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs.

The review team identified some barriers to participation in LPISD school meal programs. The barriers include a lack of variety in menus; poor food quality; unappealing food presentation and facility inadequacies that prohibit the sale of some desirable food items. LPISD also inappropriately offers middle and high school students the same menus as the elementary school students. The high school also has an open campus, which makes it possible for students to leave school and purchase less nutritious food from outside vendors.

In focus groups, students voiced concerns about the quality of the food items and the lack of nutritious choices. The students requested more selections and sandwiches, juices and snack items. The high school students wanted food choices like students in other districts, and wanted to know why they had to eat with the younger children. They also stated that the portions were not large enough and did not satisfy their hunger. Some teachers and staff stated that they rarely eat in the cafeteria.

Recommendation 28:

Increase participation in lunch and breakfast programs by eliminating barriers and implementing new programs.

The Food Services Department must develop districtwide programs to increase student participation. The district could:

- Evaluate opportunities for separate menu items and serving lines;
- Evaluate present menus and recipes to improve quality of food;
- Increase training for food service employees to improve service;

- Write new menus, offer more selections and different menus for the middle school and high school;
- Offer snack and *a la carte* items;
- Increase marketing, merchandising and promotional activities; and
- Evaluate after-school snack programs for additional funding.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The administrative assistant develops a plan to increase menu items, sell snack items, and prepare new menus and present plan to the superintendent.	August 2001
2.	The administrative assistant prepares an addition to the food bid to include the additional items and begins to sell new items.	August 2001
3.	The head cook writes a new menu obtains the approval of Region 20 for nutritional adequacy and compliance.	August 2001
4.	The head cook serves the new menus and menu items to the students.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD is not participating in the Provision 2 Special Assistance Program of the Federal School Lunch Program. Eighty-seven percent of LPISD students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. LPISD participates in the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs and Summer Feeding Program. Students who live in households where the total income is less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals. Students qualify for free meals if the household income is less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

Approximately 80 percent of LPISD's students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. An additional 7 percent are eligible, but have not yet qualified for the program. LPISD is reimbursed for student lunch and breakfast costs.

Two neighboring districts, Crystal City and Eagle Pass, also have a high percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. These two districts are operating under Provision 2 Special Assistance Program of the Federal School Lunch Program. Under this program, all students are eligible to eat free. This provision reduces application burdens and

simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures. It allows schools to serve all meals at no charge for a four-year period.

Schools must serve meals to all participating children at no charge for a period of four years. During the first year, or base year, the school makes eligibility determinations and takes meal counts by type. During the next three years, the school makes no new eligibility determinations and counts only the total number of reimbursable meals served each day. Reimbursement during these years is determined by applying the Percents of free, reduced-price and paid meals served during the corresponding month of the base year to the total meal count for the claiming month.

The base year is included as part of the four years. At the end of each four-year period, the state agency may approve four-year extensions if the income level of the school's population remains stable. Schools choosing this alternative must pay the difference between federal reimbursement and the cost of providing all meals at no charge. The money to pay for this difference must come from sources other than federal funds.

Recommendation 29:

Apply for Provision 2 Special Assistance Program of the Federal School Lunch Program to increase federal reimbursements and decrease application burdens.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The administrative assistant meets with the superintendent to coordinate the application for Provision 2 Special Assistance.	August 2001
2.	The administrative assistant completes the application process and follows the steps recommended by TEA for implementation.	September 2001
3.	The administrative assistant supervises the implementation of the program.	October - May 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

The first year will be the application year, and the increased revenue will begin after federal approval. As a result of this program, all children should be able to eat free, therefore there will be little incentive for students to bring lunches from home or go off campus for food. LPISD should be able to increase participation and therefore revenues by 10 to 15 percent. To be conservative, TSPR is estimating only a 5 percent increase over last years reported revenues of \$164,400, or \$8,220, beginning the second year.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Apply for Provision 2 Special Assistance Program of the Federal School Lunch Program to increase federal reimbursements and decrease application burdens.	\$0	\$8,220	\$8,220	\$8,220	\$8,220

FINDING

LPISD has no Point of Sale (POS) system to track student eligibility, daily cash, participation rates, daily financial records and free and reduced-price meal applications. In 2000, TEA did identify some problems with LPISD's current system related to tracking and counting for food service.

The *Administrator's Reference Manual* of the Texas Education Agency for child nutrition programs states that acceptable point-of-sale counting and claiming procedures are required in determining reimbursable meals. Any alternate counting/collection procedure must provide for an employee to be stationed at the end of the serving line to monitor and record the types of meals selected to ensure that each meal claimed for reimbursement meets the meal requirements. Regulators define a point-of-sale meal count as "that point in the food service operation when a determination can accurately be made that a reimbursable free, reduced-price or paid meal has been served to an eligible child." In addition, the anonymity of eligibility for each child must be protected.

The Food Services Department operates the cash management system manually. Compiling reports manually is a time consuming task for the clerk and administrative assistant. The clerk and staff could be trained to operate an automated system that would also generate the necessary reports.

Recommendation 30:

Purchase a Point of Sale system to maintain financial accountability.

LPISD should be able to reduce some of the administrative burden associated with the food service operations, and the addition of new menus, a la Carte and sale of snack items will require additional record keeping.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts TEA for the list of approved vendors of POS systems and the requirements to a Request for Proposal.	October 2001
2.	The superintendent submits the Request for Proposal to vendors.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent evaluates proposals and presents the final bid to the board for approval.	November 2001
4.	LPISD purchases a POS system, and the vendor trains the employees.	December 2001
5.	The administrative assistant and clerk implement the system.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost for a system in LPISD would be approximately \$5,500. An additional \$500 would be needed for upgrades in the third year.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Purchase a Point of Sale System to maintain financial accountability.	(\$5,500)	\$0	(\$500)	\$0	\$0

FINDING

The LPISD Food Services Department operates a kitchen that has serious safety and sanitation problems. **Exhibit 4-12** shows a list of equipment identified as needing repair or replacement, based upon an evaluation using the Federal Food Code and Serv® Safe standards.

Exhibit 4-12 Status of Kitchen Equipment Year 2001

Equipment	Below Standard Scores on Sanitation and Safety Guidelines in Federal Food Code
La Pryor Food Services and Cafeteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broken food warmer. 2. Range top stove with only one of four burners working. 3. Refrigerator is leaking water. 4. Doors to walk in cooler and freezer do no seal causing ice build up. 5. Incorrect wiring of the large mixer causes sparks

	<p>to fly when turned on at high speed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Can opener is rusty and dirty. 7. Brazing tilting pan is not working. 8. Food Processor is broken. 9. Floor tile is broken and/or missing. 10. Ceiling tiles are stained and not clean. 11. Ice machine leaks causing standing water in the storage room and leaks between the wall. 12. Drains backs up causing strong sewage odor. 13. Serving table lacks cold unit for serving.
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Source: TSPR Inspection

The Texas Department of Health did not perform inspections in La Pryor in 1999-2000, and TEA itself does not perform sanitation inspections.

Additionally, there are aesthetic things that could be done to make the cafeteria more appealing. For example, all children eat at the same size tables, making it necessary for smaller children to eat on their knees. There is little signage, banners or color on the walls, which could make the room feel more inviting and could encourage students to eat more nutritiously.

The district has a fund balance of \$32,960 for the 1999-2000 school year, meaning there are funds available that can only be used for improving the food service operation.

Recommendation 31:

Prepare a plan to systematically repair the cafeteria and replace kitchen equipment.

The district should assess all of the facilities and equipment and prepare a plan to systematically repair or replace items annually. By dedicating some portion of the overall food service budget to annual maintenance, the district should be able to improve efficiency and the quality of food served in its cafeteria.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent appoints a maintenance team to prepare a list of all kitchen repair and maintenance needs in cooperation with the cafeteria supervisor.	August 2001
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2.	The business manager and cafeteria supervisor work together to prepare a realistic budget that includes an allocation for regular repairs and equipment replacements.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent directs the maintenance staff to make as many repairs as possible.	September 2001
4.	The business manager, principals, head cook and food service workers meet to discuss ways to make the cafeteria more inviting.	October 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation will result in additional budget allocations from the food service fund balance each year of approximately \$5,000.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Prepare a plan to systematically repair the cafeteria and replace kitchen equipment.	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)

FINDING

Some smaller districts that have major operations and management problems have benefited from outsourcing food service operations to other larger districts.

Crystal City ISD and Uvalde ISD, both approximately 20 miles from La Pryor have the capacity to prepare and transport meals to LPISD. Crystal City operates a successful central kitchen and satellites to all the Crystal City ISD schools. At one time, the existing director of food services at Crystal City ISD contracted with La Pryor to provide menus and to consult on management issues.

Recommendation 32:

Consider purchasing prepared meals from a neighboring school district to improve quality, reduce renovation costs and decrease labor costs.

Based on discussions with business and food service managers in both Crystal City ISD and Uvalde ISD, either district can deliver meals to LPISD each day. LPISD could continue to sell snacks, beverages including milk and other items that can be kept under approved storage temperatures. Meals would be purchased from Crystal City or Uvalde on a

per-meal cost, which reflected the costs of labor, food, supplies, transportation and some equipment.

It is possible that several employee positions could be eliminated, because food would not be produced on site. In addition, the directors in the other districts could provide management expertise and training to LPISD employees. The networking of a point of sale systems is possible to either LPISD or Uvalde so the number of meals served could be tracked.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager and the cafeteria supervisor prepare a list of services required and presents to the superintendent.	August 2001
2.	The business manager presents a request for services to Crystal City ISD and Uvalde ISD.	September 2001
3.	The business manager and superintendent evaluate the responses to the requests for services from the districts.	November 2001
4.	The superintendent presents the proposals to the board for their consideration.	January 2002
5.	If the board approves one of the proposals, the business manager and cafeteria supervisor work with the successful district to plan for full implementation in the new year.	February - May 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

Exploring the feasibility of contracting with a neighboring school district for meals should have no fiscal impact. Should the district decide to contract with another district, savings should be possible, but could not be estimated at this time.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

C. TRANSPORTATION

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

The TEC also states that a school district may receive state funding for transporting regular and special program students between home and school and career and technology students to and from vocational training locations. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) sets the funding rules. Local funds must pay for transportation costs that are not covered by the state. For the regular transportation program, TEA reimburses qualifying transportation expenses according to a prescribed formula that is based on linear density, which is the ratio of the average number of regular program students transported daily to the number of miles driven daily.

State transportation funding for regular program transportation is limited to students living two or more miles from the school they attend, unless the students face hazardous walking conditions on the way to school. The state also does not pay for summer school transportation or for co-curricular routes between schools during the day.

Extra-curricular transportation costs, such as trips to after-school and weekend events, are also not funded by the state. That is why individual schools are expected to reimburse the district's Transportation Department for these services.

All special education transportation, except for certain field trips, is eligible for state reimbursement. The Texas Legislature capped reimbursement for special program transportation at \$1.08 per mile. The actual cost to LPISD for transporting special program students in 1998-99 was reported as \$1.28 per mile. The special program, unlike the regular program, cannot achieve greater efficiency by clustering students at bus stops.

LPISD's Transportation Department operates seven in-district routes per day, carrying an average of 97 students to school and home on regular

runs and 5 students on special education runs. The total ridership of 102 represents about 25 percent of the district's 400 students. The district also transports 10 students from the Asherton community, which is part of Carrizo Springs ISD, to LPISD. In addition, LPISD transports students on special activity runs for athletic, educational and extra-curricular programs. School buses typically operate on regular routes between 5:50 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. in the morning and 3:10 p.m. and 6:10 p.m. in the afternoon.

LPISD has eight full-time bus drivers, four of whom are custodians. One custodian is designated as the lead bus driver and is responsible for checking the fluid levels in all buses and performing minor maintenance.

Exhibit 4-13 shows that LPISD's bus driver salaries are the lowest among the peer districts. Drivers receive \$5.15 per hour while driving the bus, but receive a higher wage rate for their custodial duties, ranging from \$6 per hour to \$7.24 per hour.

Exhibit 4-13
LPISD and Peer District Comparison of Bus Driver Hourly Rates
1999-2000

School District	Minimum	Mid-Point	Maximum
La Pryor	\$5.15	\$5.15	\$5.15
Charlotte	Regular drivers: \$375 per month Special drivers: \$625 per month		
Cotulla	\$8.75	\$8.75	\$8.75
Carrizo Springs	\$6.40	\$7.83	\$9.25
Devine	\$6.75	\$9.88	\$13.00
Pearsall	All route drivers are paid by the route		

Source: Telephone interviews with the Transportation Department in each school district.

Exhibit 4-14 compares LPISD's health benefits for bus drivers with peer districts.

Exhibit 4-14
LPISD and Peer Districts, Comparison of Employee Health Benefits
1999-2000

School District	Hours per Week Required to Earn Health Benefits	Percent of Total Premium Paid By District
La Pryor	40	100%
Charlotte	22	100%
Cotulla	40	100%
Carrizo Springs	32	90%
Devine	20	80%
Pearsall	20	Almost 100%

Source: Telephone interviews with the Personnel Department of each peer district.

To receive state funding, all Texas school districts must submit two reports to TEA each year: the *School Transportation Operations Report* and the *School Transportation Route Services Report*. The first of those reports, the *School Transportation Operation Report*, is designed to establish a cost-per-mile to be used to calculate reimbursements in the fiscal year following the report.

Exhibit 4-15 shows that between 1994-95 and 1998-99 LPISD's regular transportation costs have decreased by 27 percent, while the total regular route mileage has increased by 58 percent. LPISD's cost per mile for regular transportation is 54 percent less than it was five years ago, due mainly to the fact that no buses have been purchased in the last three years.

Exhibit 4-15
LPISD Summary of School Transportation Operations Reports -
Regular
1994-95 through 1998-99

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
Operations Costs						
Salaries & Benefits	\$22,795	\$19,022	\$19,390	\$7,291	\$23,495	3%

Purchased & Contracted Services	\$578	\$13,700	\$722	\$74	\$5,077	778%
Supplies & Materials	\$12,630	\$19,500	\$19,350	\$11,017	\$12,689	1%
Other Operating Expenses	\$6,267	\$8,600	\$9,213	\$4,095	\$3,172	-49%
Debt Service	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Capital Outlay	\$18,664	\$48,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	-100%
Total Operations Costs	\$60,934	\$109,322	\$48,675	\$22,477	\$44,433	-27%
Mileage Summary						
Route Mileage	27,000	17,311	24,984	41,850	35,910	33%
Extra/Co curricular Mileage	10,000	25,548	9,756	17,574	22,473	125%
Non-School Organizations Mileage	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Other Mileage	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total Annual Mileage	37,000	42,859	34,740	59,424	58,383	58%
Cost per Mile - Regular	\$1.647	\$2.551	\$1.401	\$0.378	\$0.761	-54%

Source: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Operations Reports, 1994-95 - 1998-99.

Exhibit 4-16 shows that, between 1994-95 and 1998-99, LPISD's special transportation costs have decreased by 56 percent while the total special route mileage has increased by 33 percent. The result is that cost per mile for special education transportation has declined by 67 percent.

Exhibit 4-16
LPISD Summary of School Transportation Operations Reports -
Special
1994-95 through 1998-99

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
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Operations Costs						
Salaries & Benefits	\$4,185	\$1,830	\$3,647	\$4,344	\$1,620	-61%
Purchased & Contracted Services	\$130	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$564	334%
Supplies & Materials	\$2,839	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,268	-55%
Other Operating Expenses	\$1,409	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$275	-80%
Debt Service	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Capital Outlay	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Total Operations Costs	\$8,563	\$1,830	\$3,647	\$4,344	\$3,727	-56%
Mileage Summary						
Route Mileage	2,200	1,592	1,302	1,404	2,916	33%
Extra/Co curricular Mileage	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Non-School Organizations Mileage	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Other Mileage	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total Annual Mileage	2,200	1,592	1,302	1,404	2,916	33%
Cost per Mile - Special	\$3.892	\$1.149	\$2.801	\$3.094	\$1.278	-67%

Source: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Operations Reports, 1994-95 - 1998-99.

Other information obtained from peer district *School Transportation Operations Reports* shows that LPISD has the lowest cost-per-mile for regular pupil transportation (**Exhibit 4-17**) and the second lowest cost-per-mile for special transportation compared to its peer districts (**Exhibit 4-18**). Deadhead miles, as defined by TEA, are those incurred between the location where the student transportation vehicle is parked and the campus site where the route officially begins and ends.

Exhibit 4-17
LPISD and Peer Districts, Comparison of Mileage Data - Regular
1998-99

School District	Route Mileage (includes Deadhead)	Extra/Co-Curricular Mileage	Non-School Organizations Mileage	Other Mileage	Total Annual Mileage	Cost per Mile (Regular)
Devine	114,696	44,511	0	0	159,207	\$1.740
Carrizo Springs	182,142	75,946	0	0	258,088	\$1.447
Cotulla	253,549	119,041	0	44,730	417,320	\$1.426
Charlotte	48,195	10,041	0	550	58,786	\$1.227
Pearsall	177,586	84,587	0	569	262,742	\$0.832
La Pryor	35,910	22,473	0	0	58,383	\$0.761

Source: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Operations Reports.

**Exhibit 4-18
LPISD and Peer Districts, Comparison of Mileage Data - Special
1998-99**

School District	Route Mileage (includes Deadhead)	Extra/Co-Curricular Mileage	Non-School Organizations Mileage	Other Mileage	Total Annual Mileage	Cost per Mile (Special)
La Pryor	2,916	0	0	0	2,916	\$1.278
Charlotte	7,020	0	0	100	7,120	\$1.463
Devine	7,128	0	0	0	7,128	\$2.053
Cotulla	39,790	1,099	0	2,461	43,350	\$2.471
Pearsall	53,243	480	0	183	53,906	\$0.449
Carrizo Springs	55,886	0	0	0	55,886	\$1.912

Source: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Operations Reports.

Although LPISD's cost per mile is low, it has the highest cost-per-rider when compared to its peer districts (**Exhibit 4-19**). This is indicative of a district that must transport a smaller number of students long distances, such as in the case of rural communities.

Exhibit 4-19
LPISD and Peer Districts, Comparison of Cost Per Rider
1998-99

School District	Total Annual Operating Costs	Annual Ridership	Cost Per Rider Per Day
La Pryor	\$48,160	2,880	\$16.72
Cotulla	\$702,262	49,320	\$14.24
Charlotte	\$82,574	7,380	\$11.19
Carrizo Springs	\$480,348	151,020	\$3.18
Devine	\$291,645	108,000	\$2.70
Pearsall	\$242,684	105,660	\$2.30

Source: TEA, School Transportation Operations Reports and Route Services Reports.

The second state report, the *School Transportation Route Services Report* includes information on ridership and mileage for regular, special and career and technology programs. It also includes a calculation of "linear density" for the regular home-to-school program, which is the basis for transportation funding.

Linear density is the ratio of the average number of regular program students transported daily to the number of miles driven daily. TEA uses this ratio to assign each school district to one of seven groups, with each group receiving a different per-mile reimbursement. **Exhibit 4-20** shows the categories of reimbursement, the linear density for each category and the related reimbursement, as defined by TEA.

Exhibit 4-20
Categories of State Linear Density Reimbursement for Regular Bus Routes

Category	Linear Density Range	Reimbursement per Mile
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1	.000 - .399	\$0.68
2	.400 - .649	\$0.79
3	.650 - .899	\$0.88
4	.900 - 1.149	\$0.97
5	1.150 - 1.649	\$1.11
6	1.650 - 2.399	\$1.25
7	2.400 - 9.999	\$1.43

Source: TEA.

To establish route mileage and daily ridership figures, TEA requires districts to gather mileage and ridership data on the first Wednesday of each month. **Exhibit 4-21** shows the route data for LPISD for five years, beginning with the 1994-95 school year.

Exhibit 4-21
LPISD Summary of Route Services Reports
1995-96 through 1999-2000

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	Percent Change
Regular Program						
Annual Standard Ridership	4,500	4,320	4,320	2,700	2,880	-36%
Annual Standard Mileage	12,737	24,984	31,572	33,966	30,133	137%
Linear Density	0.353	0.173	0.137	0.079	0.096	-73%
Allotment per Mile	\$0.68	\$0.68	\$0.68	\$0.68	\$0.68	0%
Annual Mileage (includes hazardous)	17,312	36,774	43,650	47,368	34,345	
Total Daily Ridership	194	132	197	45	52	-73%
Hazardous Annual Mileage	4,575	11,790	10,962	13,401	4,212	-8%
Hazardous Daily Ridership	169	108	172	30	36	-79%
Special Program						

Total Daily Ridership	18	4	5	7	17	-6%
Total Annual Mileage	1,501	1,228	1,260	2,916	30,168	1,910%
Career & Technology Program						
Total Daily Ridership	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total Annual Mileage	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Allotments						
Regular Program	\$9,527	\$18,688	\$24,451	\$25,407	\$22,539	137%
Special Program	\$1,621	\$1,326	\$1,361	\$3,149	32,581	1,910%
Career & Technology Program	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Private Program	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0%
Total Allotment	\$11,148	\$20,014	\$25,812	\$28,556	\$55,120	394%

Source: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Route Services Reports, 1995-96 through 1999-2000.

Exhibit 4-22 shows that LPISD has the lowest linear density for regular transportation compared to its peer districts. Yet, LPISD receives more state allotment than it spends for pupil transportation indicating that it is operating efficiently.

**Exhibit 4-22
LPISD and Peer Districts, Linear Density and State Allotment
1998-99**

School District	Linear Density (Riders Per Mile)	Allotment per Mile	Total State Allotment	Percent of Operating Costs
La Pryor	0.096	\$0.68	\$55,120	114%
Pearsall	0.564	\$0.79	\$174,438	72%
Carrizo Springs	0.845	\$0.79	\$236,418	49%
Charlotte	0.181	\$0.68	\$35,049	42%
Devine	1.090	\$0.97	\$121,066	42%
Cotulla	0.203	\$0.68	\$222,475	32%

Source: TEA School Transportation Route Services Status, 1998-99.

TEA provides reimbursement for transportation costs for students who live further than two miles from the school to which they are zoned. Districts, however, can receive up to an additional 10 percent reimbursement for busing students who live less than two miles from their school when the route to school poses a safety risk, or hazard to the students. Although the term "hazardous" is up to the district to define, TEA guidelines suggest that areas with few or no sidewalks, busy roadways or railroad tracks would qualify as hazardous.

Exhibit 4-23 shows a comparison of hazardous routes between LPISD and its peer districts. In 1999-2000, the number of hazardous miles in LPISD exceeded the 10-percent maximum permitted under Texas law. Therefore, 1,199 of the 4,212 district's hazardous miles were not reimbursed by the state.

Exhibit 4-23
LPISD and Peer Districts, Comparison of Hazardous Routes
1999-2000

School District	Hazardous Annual Mileage	Hazardous Daily Ridership
Charlotte	0	0
Pearsall	0	0
La Pryor	4,212	36
Cotulla	972	102
Devine	7,740	159
Carrizo Springs	18,435	357

Source: TEA School Transportation Route Services Status, 1999-2000.

The general qualifications and requirements of Texas school bus drivers are found in *Texas Education Code*, Section 21.174(b)(3) and 21.917, *Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes*, Article 6687b, Section 5(a), and *Texas Administrative Code*, Sections 85.214, 85.231, 85.232 and 85.233. By law, all drivers employed to transport school children shall:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Be properly licensed to operate a school bus;
- Have undergone an annual physical examination completed on forms furnished by the Texas Education Agency, which reveals the

driver's physical and mental capabilities to operate a school bus safely;

- Have an acceptable driving record in accordance with the standards developed jointly by the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Department of Public Safety; and
- Be certified as having completed a state-approved school bus driver's training course at least every three years or possess a valid enrollment certificate.

The Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 also requires alcohol and drug testing for all bus drivers prior to employment, after an accident and at random.

FINDING

Until January 2001, LPISD transported about 10 high school students from Asherton to La Pryor each day, but according to the TEA's Transportation Division, this route is not eligible for state reimbursement because Asherton is in the Carrizo Springs ISD. This was done because they closed the high school and gave the students the option of going to LPISD or Carrizo Springs. The district felt this was a financially sound decision based upon its declining enrollment. The distance from Asherton to La Pryor is 38 miles, requiring two round trips per day, or a total of 152 miles per day. For a school year (180 days), this route covers 27,360 miles. Based on the 1998-99 School Transportation Operations Report, LPISD's operations costs for regular transportation is \$0.76 per mile. The total cost of this route was $\$0.76 \times 27,360 \text{ miles} = \$20,794$ per year. Students did not pay for transportation, but to recoup this cost, each student would have to pay a fee of more \$2,000 per year.

In January 2001, this practice of transporting students was discontinued. Students are still welcome to attend LPISD, but if they choose to do so, they must provide their own transportation.

COMMENDATION

Recognizing that transporting students from Asherton was not cost effective, the district discontinued the practice.

FINDING

According to LPISD's former administrative assistant for Finance and Personnel, school bus drivers in LPISD have never been tested for drugs or alcohol. However, the United States Congress passed the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991, requiring alcohol and drug testing of safety-sensitive employees in the aviation, motor carrier,

railroad and mass transit industries, which includes school bus drivers. The Omnibus Act extended the scope of the Department of Transportation (DOT) drug testing and added a requirement for alcohol testing, requiring employers to implement comprehensive alcohol and drug misuse programs, including alcohol and drug testing of employees. DOT regulations prohibit alcohol and drug misuse for covered employees, including:

- Use of alcohol for four hours prior to duty;
- Use of alcohol while on duty;
- Use of alcohol after an accident for at least 8 hours or until the employee has been tested;
- Use of controlled substances, except as prescribed by a licensed physician with knowledge of the employee's safety-sensitive job duties'
- A blood alcohol level greater than 0.04 on a DOT alcohol test;
- A confirmed positive test result on a DOT drug test; and
- Refusal to participate in a DOT alcohol or drug test.

Drug and alcohol tests must be performed on covered employees in the circumstances listed below.

- Pre-employment (prior to first performing DOT-covered safety-sensitive duties for a given employer);
- At random;
- Post-accident (as soon as possible, but always within 8 hours of the accident);
- Reasonable suspicion (when an employee is observed, while performing safety-sensitive duties, by a qualified supervisor to have the physical, behavioral, speech, or performance characteristics of an individual under the influence of alcohol or drugs);
- Return-to-work (prior to resuming safety-sensitive duties after a violation of a DOT alcohol or drug misuse prohibition); and
- Follow-up (a minimum of six unannounced tests in 12 months after a violation of DOT rules).

These requirements are also spelled out in LPISD board policy.

Recommendation 33:

Comply with all state and federal laws and LPISD board policy on drug and alcohol testing of bus drivers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts Region 20 for assistance in complying with drug and alcohol testing requirements.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent arranges for a drug-testing contractor from Region 20 to test all bus drivers for drugs and alcohol.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent places documentation of the results of drug and alcohol testing in each driver's personnel file.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent develops LPISD procedures for future drug and alcohol testing.	October 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

Using the Region 20 drug-testing co-operative, the cost of an individual drug test is \$38 and an alcohol test is \$16. Testing all drivers, including substitutes, would cost the district about \$540 the first year. In subsequent years, the district only needs to budget about \$250 per year for testing new drivers, post-accident testing, random testing and if there is reason for suspicion of drug or alcohol use.

Recommendation	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Comply with all state and federal laws and LPISD board policy on drug and alcohol testing of bus drivers.	(\$540)	(\$250)	(\$250)	(\$250)	(\$250)

FINDING

LPISD has no provisions to measure the effectiveness of drivers after they receive the initial 20-hour Texas Certification Course and some behind-the-wheel training. A driver is assumed to be doing a good job unless a parent calls to complain. There are no provisions for anyone to monitor the driver's driving abilities or effectiveness after the initial training. Periodic behind-the-wheel evaluations, especially during the first year, could help identify areas where the driver might need some additional training.

Recommendation 34:

Perform behind-the-wheel evaluations of all bus drivers at least once a year.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent contacts other school districts to get copies of their behind-the-wheel driver evaluation forms.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent develops a behind-the-wheel driver evaluation form for LPISD.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent arranges for the training of personnel to serve as behind-the-wheel driver evaluators.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent develops an evaluation schedule.	October 2001
5.	The designated evaluator(s) begin behind-the-wheel evaluations.	November 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

The district is not maintaining proper documentation of bus driver records and their qualifications for employment in the district's personnel files. Failure to keep documentation could subject a school district to penalties and civil liabilities, especially in case of a bus accident. Documentation that verifies driver qualifications should include:

- A photocopy of the driver's CDL license;
- The results of the driver's annual physical
- Documentation of the driver's yearly motor vehicle license check;
- Documentation of the driver's original 20-hour certification training;
- Documentation of the driver's road test;
- Documentation of the eight-hour refresher course, required every three years;
- The driver's pre-employment drug test; and
- The results of all random or other required drug testing

Depending on district policy, transportation departments may wish to maintain other records including:

- Documentation of training related to Omnibus Drug Testing;
- The driver's behind-the-wheel evaluation(s) (at least once a year);
- The driver's attendance records;
- A photocopy of the driver's Social Security Number;
- Documentation of the driver having received special information, such as safety manuals and employee handbooks; and
- A copy of the driver's employment application

Recommendation 35:

Develop a checklist of documents that should be in each bus driver's personnel folder and audit each driver's file for compliance at least once per semester.

The checklist should be attached in the personnel folder to document the dates when each item was added or updated and who entered the data.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent and the superintendent secretary determine what forms are required to be in each bus driver's folder.	September 2001
2.	The superintendent secretary audits each driver's file, makes a list of any missing documentation and requests the documentation from the drivers.	October 2001
3.	The superintendent secretary writes a procedure that explains what must be audited each year.	October 2001
4.	The superintendent secretary audits the personnel files annually.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

According to the former administrative assistant for Finance and Personnel, although some bus drivers are both drivers and custodians, they are only paid overtime if their custodial work exceeds 40 hours per week, instead of combining driving and custodial time to compute overtime. For example, a bus driver/custodian may work from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., but the employee does not receive any overtime compensation. Taking out one hour for lunch, that employee works nine hours per day, or 45 hours per week. Therefore, they are eligible for five hours of overtime compensation for that week.

Recommendation 36:

Comply with Federal laws covering overtime compensation.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The business manager examines the current practices and	August 2001
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	timecards of driver/custodians and drafts a procedure that clearly outlines that when a driver has accumulated more than 40 hours of combined driving time and custodial duties that they will be compensated for overtime.	
2.	The business manager distributes a copy of this procedure to all drivers and supervisors and begins to implement the plan.	September 2001
3.	The superintendent and business manager monitor the use of overtime and make staffing adjustments to ensure that overtime payments are kept to a minimum.	October 2001 and Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

FINDING

LPISD operates 12 buses, eight of which are used on daily bus routes. The remaining four buses are used as spares when other buses need maintenance.

A list of all LPISD buses is shown in **Exhibit 4-24**.

**Exhibit 4-24
LPISD Bus Fleet
2000-01**

Bus No.	Year	Passengers	Make	Fuel Type	Regular or Special Ed.
12*	1981	72	International	Gasoline	Regular
14	1984	10	GMC	Gasoline	Regular
15	1984	32	GMC	Gasoline	Regular
16*	1984	72	GMC	Gasoline	Regular
17*	1991	42	Chevrolet	Gasoline	Regular
18	1991	42	Chevrolet	Gasoline	Regular
19	1991	72	GMC	Gasoline	Regular
20	1991	6	GMC	Gasoline	Special Ed.
21	1993	72	GMC	Gasoline	Regular
22	1994	72	GMC	Gasoline	Regular

23	1996	32	GMC	Gasoline	Regular
24	2000	72	International	Diesel	Regular

Source: LPISD Transportation Department record.

*Note: These buses are scheduled for auction.

Exhibit 4-25 shows how the age of LPISD buses compares to the age of peer district buses.

Exhibit 4-25
LPISD and Peer District, Comparison of Age of Buses
1998-99

District	Age			Total Number of Buses	Percent Greater Than 10 Years
	1-5 Years	5-10 Years	10 Years or Greater		
Charlotte	2	1	5	8	63%
La Pryor	3	5	4	12	36%
Carrizo Springs	4	22	10	36	28%
Devine	6	5	9	20	45%
Pearsall	7	3	8	18	44%
Cotulla	19	22	1	42	2%

Source: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Operations Reports.

Eleven of LPISD's 12 buses are gasoline-powered instead of diesel-powered. Gasoline buses are half as fuel efficient as diesel buses. A gasoline bus gets about 5 miles per gallon of fuel compared to 10 miles per gallon in a diesel-powered bus. Assuming an average bus travels 7,500 miles per year, a gasoline bus will consume 750 more gallons of fuel per year than a diesel bus. At a cost of \$1 per gallon of fuel, a diesel bus would save the district \$750 per year compared to a gasoline bus.

Gasoline buses used to be less expensive than diesel buses, but that has changed. Bus manufacturers are charging about \$2,000 more for gasoline buses because there is not a big demand for the gasoline engine for several reasons:

- Gasoline engines are less fuel-efficient than diesel engines;
- Gasoline engines have higher pollution standards than diesel engines;
- Gasoline is more flammable than diesel fuel in a crash (a liability issue);
- Gasoline engines are harder to work on than diesel engines;
- Gasoline engines require more preventive maintenance than diesel engines;
- Diesel engines have fewer breakdowns than gasoline engines; and
- Diesel engines will last at least 50,000 more miles than gasoline engines.

Recommendation 37:

Replace gasoline buses with diesel buses during the normal purchasing cycle.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The superintendent develops a district bus purchase and replacement policy that stipulates the purchase of diesel buses.	September 2001
2.	As buses are replaced, the business manager should begin tracking the costs and savings to ensure that the district is getting full benefit from the diesel powered buses.	Ongoing

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented at no cost to the district. However, each time the district replaces a bus, they should be able to save \$2,000 toward the purchase price by buying diesel buses, plus \$750 per year in fuel costs. Assuming a bus lasts 15 years, the savings to the district over the life of a bus would be \$13,250.

Chapter 4

OPERATIONS

D. COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

A well-managed administrative technology and information services department is guided by a clearly defined plan based on appropriate goals and organization, clear assignments of responsibility for each application, well-defined development procedures for new applications and a customer-service orientation that seeks to meet and anticipate users' needs.

A technology-rich educational environment requires hardware, software, training and administrative support. Balance among the areas, in both time and money, is crucial. Often schools invest a majority of time and money in hardware, leaving limited funds for software or educator training. Hardware is a major investment for districts. An increasing number of schools are leasing hardware at a fixed rate per year to alleviate the financial burden of upgrading every few years. Many school districts have also passed bond elections for the purpose of funding an initial investment in information technology. Hardware/software standards also are an important aspect to consider when purchasing computers.

The need for educator training in the use of hardware/software is frequently overlooked or allocated insufficient funding and time resources. It is possible for students and teachers to learn applications on their own through exploratory learning sessions. Many learners, however, need some guidance during the learning process. For teachers, this task can often be accomplished by dedicating time to hands-on laboratory instruction for the initial training, followed up by practice and implementation support via E-mail and teleconferencing consultations with trainers. Finding the time to learn new applications is often the most difficult task for busy teachers.

The Long-Range Plan for Technology, 1996-10 and Chapter 32 of the Texas Education Code call for standards to ensure all high school graduates are computer literate by the year 2000. The Technology Applications TEKS include those standards. This is the first time in Texas history that comprehensive K-12 knowledge and skills are specified for the use of computers and other related technologies. The Technology Applications TEKS focus on creating, accessing, manipulating, utilizing, communicating and publishing information during the learning process. The goal of the Technology Applications TEKS is for students to gain knowledge and skills and apply them in all curriculum areas at all grade levels.

Network infrastructure is the underlying system of cabling, telephone lines, hubs, switches, routers and other devices, which connects the various parts of an organization through a Wide Area Network (WAN). If a sound infrastructure is in place, most users can access people and information throughout the organization and beyond, greatly facilitating their ability to perform their job.

Typically, a WAN allows users to communicate with personnel within the organization through tools such as electronic mail systems. It also provides a bridge to the Internet that allows anyone connected to the WAN to access information and people outside the organization. WANs are usually "closed," which means they include security measures to prevent unauthorized users outside the organization from accessing information or people inside the organization.

Organizational Structure

An instructional technology support department must establish a positive working relationship with the instructional team to ensure that all technology initiatives support the learning process.

FINDING

LPISD does not have an active technology group that participates in monitoring and adjusting the district's current technology plan. In addition to the technology coordinator, who reports to the Title VII Director, the district has a Site Based Decision Making (SBDM) committee to assess district technology needs and make recommendations to the superintendent.

While the technology coordinator is responsible for developing the district's technology plan, ongoing input is needed from the teachers and administrators as well as students, parents, and community members. The processes of identifying the tasks, cost estimates, and timeframes for each goal should be monitored and driven by an active Technology Committee if the plan's goals are to be realized.

A Technology Committee that coordinates the goals, tasks and detailed implementation steps makes it easier for people in the district and in the community to see that the district's goals are being accomplished.

Recommendation 38:

Create a formal Technology Committee of teachers, principals and directors to support the technology plan.

The Technology Committee should:

- Share information on how technology is currently being used in LPISD;
- Share technology problems or issues that have arisen in LPISD;
- Research what other districts are doing with technology (sight visits, inviting guests from other districts, or searching the Internet);
- Discuss where LPISD technology should be, but focus on only one topic per meeting. (Topics might include hardware, software, infrastructure, staffing and integration of technology in the curriculum, training, equity, funding, community access and administrative uses);
- Develop goals and objectives for each topic;
- Determine the cost of each objective;
- Explore alternative funding methods;
- Review each goal for affordability, and revise as necessary;
- Develop a detailed plan of implementation;
- Finalize the technology plan; and
- Submit the plan to the superintendent and board.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Title VII Director and the technology coordinator determine the composition of the Technology Committee.	October 2001
2.	The Title VII Director and technology coordinator identify personnel that could serve on the committee.	October 2001
3.	The Title VII Director and technology coordinator enlist members of the Technology Committee.	November 2001
4.	The Title VII Director and Technology coordinator establish and publish the agenda and meeting schedule for the Technology Committee.	December 2001

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Technology Planning and Funding

Adequate planning is critical to the success of any venture. Planning for the use of new technologies is particularly important to education because of the factors listed below.

- **Equity.** Despite the best intentions, the level of technological resources available to each school in a district can vary unacceptably. Unfortunately, poorly-planned introductions of new technology can widen the gap between the "haves" and "have nots." Careful planning at the district level can ensure that all schools receive adequate support.
- **Rapid Change.** The pace of technological change continues to accelerate. If planning for the implementation of new technology does not cover an adequate span of time (three to five years), the district risks failing to take full advantage of this rapid change.
- **Funding.** Funding can be the greatest barrier to the effective use of technology in the classroom. Unless planning addresses how projects will be funded, limited funding can have a greater impact than it should.
- **Credibility.** The public is eager to see that its tax dollars are spent effectively. Thorough planning makes it possible to demonstrate that proposed strategies have been well thought out, acquisitions of technological resources have been carefully considered, and that every aspect of the implementation is cost-effective.

To implement information technology effectively in administrative offices or schools, a district must have:

- An extensive computer network connecting modern computers;
- Comprehensive administrative and instructional software and up-to-date operating systems;
- Effective, ongoing training and adequate technical support;
- A professional staff capable of implementing and administering a technology-rich environment; and
- A way to provide the community access to school information through technology.

FINDING

LPISD has developed a three-year (1998-2001) technology plan that is updated every 3 years. The plan includes the current needs, existing conditions and instructional use of technology. The plan identifies the resources and staff development needed to carry out the activities, including technical installation and network design. It examines how to sustain and secure additional future funding. The district's acceptable-use policy, which outlines the proper use of technology and access to the Internet, is included. The plan also describes who will lead the work and when tasks will be implemented. The plan indicates how progress will be evaluated.

Exhibit 4-26 describes the LPISD technology goals and objectives.

Exhibit 4-26
LPISD Technology Goals & Objectives
1998 through 2001

Goals/	Objectives
<p>Goal 1 - Incorporate technology in all areas of the curriculum to improve, enrich, and where necessary, change the content of what is learned and taught.</p>	<p>Objective 1.1 - Develop guidelines for technology and curriculum integration, which are developmentally appropriate and aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Technology Applications.</p> <p>Objective 1.2 - In three years, each student transitioning from one level to another will demonstrate technological competencies in the areas of communication, information processing and productivity as defined for that level.</p> <p>Objective 1.3 - In three years, each high school graduate will demonstrate technological competencies in the areas of communication, information processing and productivity as defined for graduation.</p>
<p>Goal 2 - Integrate technology in instructional practices and administrative processes within all aspects of the learning community.</p>	<p>Objective 2.1 - In three years, each faculty member will demonstrate technological competencies in the areas of instructional delivery, student assessment and communication as measured by the competencies assessment tool.</p> <p>Objective 2.2 - In three years, each faculty member will demonstrate technological competencies in the areas of instructional leadership, data analysis/management and communication as measured by the competencies assessment tool.</p> <p>Objective 2.3 - In three years, each staff member will demonstrate technological competencies according to job responsibilities and description as measured by the competencies assessment tool.</p>
<p>Goal 3 - Provide adequate, current and appropriate technological resources to realize the technology plan.</p>	<p>Objective 3.1 - By the school year 1998-99, a local area network (LAN) providing connectivity for the entire will be established.</p> <p>Objective 3.2 - By the school year 1998-99, a wide area network (WAN) providing connectivity will be established through</p>

	<p>Southwest Junior College in Uvalde, Texas (SWTNet).</p> <p>Objective 3.3 - By the school year 1999-2000, the Elementary Library will be automated for circulation and have online access to resources.</p> <p>Objective 3.4 - On a three-year continuum, technological resources will be increasingly provided for instruction and administration as outlined in the guidelines and to meet performance competencies.</p> <p>Objective 3.5 - On a three-year continuum, maintenance will be provided for all technological resource acquisitions according to a maintenance schedule.</p>
<p>Goal 4 - Provide appropriate technology training for all staff and the wider community to allow them to gain required skills to use the technological resources.</p>	<p>Objective 4.1 - Staff will be trained in the use of technological resources as indicated by attending at least four staff development sessions each year.</p> <p>Objective 4.2 - Parents and community members will be trained in the use of technological resources as indicated by increasing attendance at technology workshops.</p>
<p>Goal 5 - Evaluate effectiveness and measure progress to guide implementation of the technology plan.</p>	<p>Objective 5.1 - An annual evaluation will assess equity of access, appropriateness and utilization of resources by students.</p> <p>Objective 5.2 - An annual evaluation will assess equity of access, appropriateness and utilization of resources by faculty.</p> <p>Objective 5.3 - An annual evaluation will assess equity of access, appropriateness, and utilization of resources by staff.</p>

Source: Interview with Technology coordinator.

The current technology plan is not specific on technology progress milestones; and the planned measures of technology progress are subjective. The effectiveness of the technology plan is assessed only informally.

Recommendation 39:

Update and revise the LPISD technology plan to include milestones and specific task responsibilities.

With a revised technology plan that clearly outlines technology progress goals, the Technology Department can develop appropriate measurements that give the district an understanding of how LPISD is meeting its technology plan goals.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Title VII director and Technology coordinator with assistance from other interested parties in the district, review the technology plan, draft milestones and tentatively assign specific task responsibilities.	October 2001
2.	The Title VII director and technology coordinator take the draft plan to the superintendent and business manager for review and discussion.	November 2001
3.	The superintendent approves the plan as revised and takes the plan to the board for review and approval.	December 2001
4.	The technology coordinator monitors progress toward implementation of the three- year technology plan and regularly reports progress to the board.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Instructional Technology and Training

The process of integrating technology into the instructional programs of the school district involves providing the infrastructure and technology hardware, training the staff on the technology system, establishing curriculum for technology, training staff on the curriculum standards, and monitoring implementation of the curriculum.

Training is one of the most critical factors in determining whether technology is used effectively. Teachers must be comfortable with instructional technology and must know not only how to operate it, but also how to integrate it effectively into their teaching. Studies indicate that it may take three to five years for a teacher to acquire the appropriate level of expertise. Planning and support for technology-related training must take this into account.

Technology-related training must be ongoing. Teachers need continuous opportunities to expand their technological skills and to interact with other teachers so they can share new strategies and techniques. Access to

electronic mail and the Internet have proven a valuable tool for teachers to share ideas on classroom uses of technology.

Other training, moreover, is just as critical for technical support staff. Rapid technological change makes it easy for technology specialists to fall behind. Sufficient time and funding for continuing training is essential if technical support is to remain effective.

FINDING

LPISD does not have a definitive plan for integrating technology into the curriculum. Teachers are not required to demonstrate technology skills or required to obtain any type of technology certification. Each campus principal is responsible for encouraging teachers to include technology in their lesson plans. There is no formal requirement for technology teaching and no monitoring of lesson plans.

On May 5, 2000, the State Board for Educator Certification approved five certification standards in technology applications for all beginning teachers of Early Childhood-Grade 4 and Grades 4-8. These same five standards for all beginning teachers in Grades 8-12 are currently available for public comment. The proposed draft standards reflect the requirements for the knowledge and skills for which the beginning teacher of technology applications will be responsible. The drafts are based on the corresponding Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Technology Applications in Grades 8-12. The Technology Applications 8-12 standards will be used in developing working drafts of certification test frameworks.

Recommendation 40:

Use the State Board for Educator Certification draft technology standards as a guideline for establishing LPISD's technology requirements for teachers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The Title VII director reviews the state certification standards for technology applications.	November 2001
2.	The Title VII director and the technology coordinator prepare training material for introducing the new certification standards.	November 2001
3.	The technology coordinator schedules workshops to introduce the new certification standards.	December 2001
4.	The technology coordinator conducts workshops to introduce	January

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Infrastructure

A technology infrastructure has two parts: human resources-which deals with professional learning and support-and technology-which deals with hardware, software and facilities. With technological change occurring at a rapid pace, purchasers of new technology sometimes feel hard pressed to keep up. School districts, with limited budgets and technical expertise, have a difficult time choosing and buying technology. Often they lack adequate information about the newest technologies and how to use them; or they do not take into account the level of training and staff development needed to use the technology.

The key to technology planning is to make informed decisions. Without good information about the nuts and bolts of technology, planners are at a disadvantage. The best way to overcome this problem is to take a broad view of technology and educate planners and staff about current and emerging technologies and their benefits and then realize that implementing technology is not a one-time thing but an ongoing process that requires a supportive infrastructure that is flexible enough to deal with the rapid pace of technological change.

The Texas Education Agency has made short-term (1997-98), mid-term (1999-2002), and long-term (2003-10) recommendations to local education agencies. The short-term goal for technology equipment is a student-to-workstation ratio of 4:1. The mid-term goal for technology equipment is a student-to-workstation ratio of 3:1. The long-term goal for technology equipment is a student-to-workstation ratio of 1:1.

Technical Support

Technical support, like training, significantly influences how effectively technology is used in the classroom. Teachers, even those who are experienced computer users, often encounter technology-related difficulties that interrupt their planning or classroom activities. Unless they receive quick responses to their questions, their effectiveness will be diminished.

When solutions to such problems are not provided promptly, teachers sometimes are forced to abandon the computers in the classroom and may be reluctant to resume even after problems are resolved. Schools that can

resolve such difficulties quickly are best able to prepare their students effectively.

FINDING

Exhibit 4-27 describes the LPISD technology staffing levels and its peer districts.

**Exhibit 4-27
LPISD & Peers, Technology Staffing Comparisons
2000-01**

District	Administrative	Infrastructure & Support	Instructional
La Pryor ISD Total Staff: 1	1 Technology coordinator		
Cotulla ISD Total Staff: 2	1 Technology director	1 Network administrator	
Carrizo Springs ISD Total Staff: 3	1 Technology director	2 computer technicians	
Devine ISD Total Staff: 2	1 Technology director	1 technician	
Pearsall ISD Total Staff: 1	1 Technology director		
Charlotte ISD Total Staff: 1	1 Technology director		1 Instructional support

Source: Telephone interview with Technology administrators in peer districts.

Exhibit 4-28 describes LPISD's technology support staffing levels and its peer districts.

**Exhibit 4-28
LPISD & Peers, Technology Support Staff Ratios
2000-01**

District	Total	Technology Support Staff	Ratio of Users to Technology Support Staff
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Charlotte ISD	75	2	38:1
Devine ISD	200	3	67:1
Carrizo Springs ISD	258	3	86:1
Cotulla ISD	220	2	110:1
La Pryor	168	1	168:1
Pearsall ISD	180	1	180:1

Source: Telephone interview with Technology administrators in peer districts.

The district's technology coordinator is unable to keep up with the maintenance and training requirements. For the more difficult technical issues, LPISD has engaged the services of an outside firm to support the technology coordinator with cabling, requests and service/support issues. A representative of the firm usually spends one day each week with the technology coordinator. While many of the peer districts have technology support staffs of more than one individual, LPISD could benefit from additional support provided by interested staff volunteers.

Recommendation 41:

Identify and recruit internal staff interested in supporting the technology coordinator with minor technical issues such as printer problems, software initialization and login problems.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TIMELINE

1.	The technology coordinator identifies interested personnel that would be willing to provide volunteer technical support for the technology coordinator	November 2001
2.	The technology coordinator interviews the applicants.	December 2001
3.	The Technology coordinator selects and trains the volunteers.	January 2002

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Appendix A

TEACHER SURVEY

Demographic Data

TOTAL RESPONSES AS OF January 22, 2001								11
1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response				
		27%	55%	18%				
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response	
		45%	0%	36%	0%	0%	18%	
3.	How long have you been employed by La Pryor ISD?	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response	
		55%	9%	18%	9%	0%	9%	
4.	What grade(s) do you teach this year (circle all that apply)?							
	Pre-Kindergarten	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third			
	0%	8%	8%	4%	0%			
	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth			
	8%	0%	0%	4%	4%			
	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth				
	16%	16%	16%	16%				

A. District Organization & Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1.	The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	0%	36%	55%	9%	0%	0%
2.	School board members listen	0%	36%	18%	36%	9%	0%

	to the opinions and desires of others.						
3.	School board members work well with the superintendent.	0%	0%	9%	45%	45%	0%
4.	The school board has a good image in the community.	0%	9%	18%	45%	27%	0%
5.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	27%	9%	18%	27%	18%	0%
6.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	27%	9%	18%	36%	9%	0%
7.	Central administration is efficient.	0%	36%	9%	27%	27%	0%
8.	Central administration supports the educational process.	0%	55%	9%	36%	0%	0%
9.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	0%	27%	45%	18%	9%	0%

B. Educational Service Delivery And Performance Measurement

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
10. Education is	27%	55%	0%	18%	0%	0%

	the main priority in our school district.						
11.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest programs and materials that they believe are most effective.	18%	64%	0%	18%	0%	0%
12.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	0%	9%	55%	36%	0%	0%
13.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0%	18%	45%	36%	0%	0%
14.	The district provides curriculum guides for all grades and subjects.	0%	27%	0%	55%	9%	9%
15.	The curriculum guides are appropriately aligned and coordinated.	0%	27%	9%	55%	9%	0%
16.	The district's curriculum guides clearly outline what to teach and how to teach it.	0%	9%	18%	64%	9%	0%
17.	The district has effective educational programs for						

	the following:						
	a) Reading	0%	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%
	b) Writing	0%	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%
	c) Mathematics	0%	73%	0%	27%	0%	0%
	d) Science	0%	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%
	e) English or Language Arts	9%	82%	0%	9%	0%	0%
	f) Computer Instruction	9%	64%	9%	18%	0%	0%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%
	h) Fine Arts	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%
	i) Physical Education	0%	73%	18%	9%	0%	0%
	j) Business Education	0%	27%	55%	9%	0%	9%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	0%	27%	55%	18%	0%	0%
	l) Foreign Language	0%	36%	45%	9%	0%	9%
18.	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	0%	27%	36%	18%	18%	0%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0%	36%	27%	36%	0%	0%
	c) Special	0%	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%

	Education						
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	0%	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%
	e) Dyslexia program	9%	73%	18%	0%	0%	0%
	f) Student mentoring program	0%	27%	45%	27%	0%	0%
	g) Advanced placement program	0%	9%	73%	18%	0%	0%
	h) Literacy program	0%	36%	27%	36%	0%	0%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0%	45%	36%	18%	0%	0%
	j) Summer school programs	0%	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%
	k) Alternative education programs	0%	27%	64%	9%	0%	0%
	l) "English as a second language" program	9%	73%	9%	9%	0%	0%
	m) Career counseling program	0%	18%	64%	9%	0%	9%
	n) College counseling program	0%	18%	55%	18%	0%	9%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	0%	27%	36%	27%	0%	9%
	p) Drop out prevention	9%	27%	45%	18%	0%	0%

	program						
19.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	0%	27%	36%	36%	0%	0%
20.	Teacher turnover is low.	9%	0%	0%	73%	18%	0%
21.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0%	18%	18%	55%	9%	0%
22.	Teacher openings are filled quickly.	0%	9%	18%	45%	27%	0%
23.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0%	27%	18%	36%	18%	0%
24.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	0%	55%	27%	18%	0%	0%
25.	Teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.	0%	73%	18%	0%	9%	0%
26.	All schools have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.	0%	82%	0%	18%	0%	0%
27.	The student-to-	0%	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%

	teacher ratio is reasonable.						
28.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	0%	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%

C. Personnel

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
29.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0%	18%	18%	55%	9%	0%
30.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0%	18%	9%	45%	27%	0%
31.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0%	9%	18%	73%	0%	0%
32.	The district successfully projects future staffing needs.	0%	0%	18%	64%	18%	0%
33.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0%	0%	36%	36%	27%	0%
34.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	9%	55%	9%	27%	0%	0%
35.	District	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

	employees receive annual personnel evaluations.						
36.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	0%	27%	36%	36%	0%	0%
37.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0%	45%	45%	9%	0%	0%
38.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0%	18%	45%	18%	9%	9%
39.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0%	64%	0%	18%	18%	0%

D. Community Involvement

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
40. The district regularly communicates with parents.	0%	73%	18%	9%	0%	0%

41.	The local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0%	9%	55%	9%	18%	9%
42.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0%	27%	27%	27%	18%	0%
43.	District facilities are open for community use.	9%	91%	0%	0%	0%	0%

E. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
44.	The district plans facilities far enough in the future to support enrollment growth.	0%	0%	45%	18%	36%	0%
45.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board provide input into facility planning.	0%	9%	45%	18%	18%	9%
46.	The architect and construction managers are	0%	0%	91%	0%	0%	9%

	selected objectively and impersonally.						
47.	The quality of new construction is excellent.	9%	0%	64%	27%	0%	0%
48.	Schools are clean.	9%	45%	9%	0%	27%	9%
49.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	9%	27%	18%	18%	27%	0%
50.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0%	36%	18%	27%	18%	0%
51.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0%	73%	18%	9%	0%	0%

E. Financial Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
52.	Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0%	64%	9%	18%	9%	0%
53.	Campus administrators are well trained in fiscal	0%	64%	18%	9%	9%	0%

	management techniques.						
54.	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	0%	36%	45%	9%	9%	0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
55.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	0%	73%	9%	0%	18%	0%
56.	Purchasing acquires the highest quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0%	55%	27%	0%	18%	0%
57.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0%	36%	27%	18%	18%	0%
58.	Vendors are selected competitively.	0%	27%	45%	18%	0%	9%
59.	The district provides teachers and administrators an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.	0%	36%	18%	36%	9%	0%
60.	Students are	0%	82%	9%	9%	0%	0%

	issued textbooks in a timely manner.						
61.	Textbooks are in good shape.	0%	73%	18%	9%	0%	0%
62.	The school library meets the student needs for books and other resources.	0%	9%	18%	18%	55%	0%

H. Food Services

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
63.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	0%	27%	27%	27%	18%	0%
64.	Food is served warm.	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%
65.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	0%	55%	9%	18%	18%	0%
66.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
67.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	0%	73%	0%	27%	0%	0%
68.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and	9%	91%	0%	0%	0%	0%

	friendly.						
69.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	0%	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%

I. Safety and Security

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
70. School disturbances are infrequent.	0%	73%	0%	27%	0%	0%
71. Gangs are not a problem in this district.	0%	64%	18%	18%	0%	0%
72. Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0%	9%	9%	64%	18%	0%
73. Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0%	36%	18%	36%	9%	0%
74. Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	0%	45%	27%	9%	9%	9%
75. Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	0%	45%	27%	9%	0%	18%
76. A good working arrangement exists between the local law	0%	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%

	enforcement and the district.						
77.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	0%	73%	0%	27%	0%	0%
78.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	0%	45%	27%	27%	0%	0%

J. Computers and Technology

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
79.	Students regularly use computers.	0%	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%
80.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	0%	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%
81.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	0%	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%
82.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	0%	82%	0%	18%	0%	0%
83.	The district meets student needs in classes in computer	0%	82%	0%	18%	0%	0%

	fundamentals.						
84.	The district meets student needs in classes in advanced computer skills.	0%	45%	45%	0%	0%	9%
85.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

May not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix B

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF SURVEY

Demographic Data

TOTAL RESPONSES AS OF February 6, 2001								6	
1.	Gender (Optional)		Male	Female	No Response				
			0%	83%	17%				
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)		Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response	
			17%	0%	50%	0%	17%	16%	
3.	How long have you been employed by La Pryor ISD?			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
				0%	33%	17%	17%	0%	33%
4.	Are you a(n):	a. administrator	b. clerical staffer	c. support staffer (i.e., transportation, food services, etc.)			No Response		
		33%	33%	17%			17%		
5.	How long have you been employed in this capacity by La Pryor ISD?			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years	No Response
				0%	33%	17%	0%	0%	50%

A. District Organization & Management

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1. The school board allows sufficient time for public input at meetings.	0%	50%	0%	17%	33%	0%
2. School board	0%	33%	33%	0%	33%	0%

	members listen to the opinions and desires of others.						
3.	The superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%
4.	The superintendent is a respected and effective business manager.	0%	33%	17%	17%	33%	0%
5.	Central administration is efficient.	0%	33%	0%	50%	17%	0%
6.	Central administration supports the educational process.	0%	67%	0%	17%	17%	0%
7.	The morale of central administration staff is good.	0%	33%	17%	17%	33%	0%

B. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
8.	Education is the main priority in our school district.	0%	17%	50%	17%	17%	0%
9.	Teachers are given an opportunity to suggest	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%

	programs and materials that they believe are most effective.						
10.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%
11.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	0%	17%	17%	67%	0%	0%
12.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%
	a) Reading	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%
	b) Writing	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%
	c) Mathematics	0%	33%	0%	50%	0%	17%
	d) Science	0%	33%	0%	50%	0%	17%
	e) English or Language Arts	0%	50%	17%	17%	0%	17%
	f) Computer Instruction	0%	50%	0%	33%	0%	17%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	0%	33%	17%	33%	0%	17%
	h) Fine Arts	0%	50%	17%	0%	17%	17%
	i) Physical Education	0%	50%	17%	0%	17%	17%
	j) Business Education	0%	17%	17%	50%	0%	17%
	k) Vocational (Career and	0%	33%	17%	33%	0%	17%

	Technology) Education						
13.	The district has effective special programs for the following:	0%	17%	17%	33%	17%	17%
	a) Library Service	0%	0%	17%	33%	33%	17%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	0%	33%	0%	17%	33%	17%
	c) Special Education	0%	17%	33%	17%	17%	17%
	d) Head Start and Even Start programs	17%	50%	17%	0%	0%	17%
	e) Dyslexia program	0%	0%	33%	17%	33%	17%
	f) Student mentoring program	0%	17%	50%	17%	0%	17%
	g) Advanced placement program	0%	0%	33%	33%	17%	17%
	h) Literacy program	0%	0%	33%	17%	33%	17%
	i) Programs for students at risk of dropping out of school	0%	0%	50%	33%	0%	17%
	j) Summer school programs	0%	0%	50%	17%	17%	17%
	k) Alternative education programs	0%	17%	50%	17%	0%	17%
	l) "English as a	0%	17%	33%	17%	17%	17%

	second language" program						
	m) Career counseling program	0%	33%	17%	0%	33%	17%
	n) College counseling program	0%	17%	17%	0%	17%	50%
	o) Counseling the parents of students	0%	17%	17%	0%	17%	50%
	p) Drop out prevention program	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%
14.	Parents are immediately notified if a child is absent from school.	17%	0%	33%	0%	0%	50%
15.	Teacher turnover is low.	0%	0%	33%	50%	17%	0%
16.	Highly qualified teachers fill job openings.	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%
17.	Teacher Openings are filled quickly.	0%	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%
18.	Teachers are rewarded for superior performance.	0%	17%	0%	50%	33%	0%
19.	Teachers are counseled about less than satisfactory performance.	0%	17%	50%	17%	17%	0%
20.	All schools	0%	33%	17%	50%	0%	0%

	have equal access to educational materials such as computers, television monitors, science labs and art classes.						
21.	The student-to-teacher ratio is reasonable.	17%	83%	0%	0%	0%	0%
22.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%
23.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	0%	50%	33%	0%	17%	0%

C. Personnel

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
24.	District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.	0%	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%
25.	The district has a good and timely program for orienting new employees.	0%	0%	17%	67%	17%	0%
26.	Temporary workers are rarely used.	0%	17%	33%	17%	33%	0%
27.	The district successfully	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%

	projects future staffing needs.						
28.	The district has an effective employee recruitment program.	0%	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%
29.	The district operates an effective staff development program.	0%	0%	33%	50%	0%	17%
30.	District employees receive annual personnel evaluations.	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%
31.	The district rewards competence and experience and spells out qualifications such as seniority and skill levels needed for promotion.	0%	0%	17%	33%	50%	0%
32.	Employees who perform below the standard of expectation are counseled appropriately and timely.	0%	0%	17%	33%	50%	0%
33.	The district has a fair and timely grievance process.	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%

34.	The district's health insurance package meets my needs.	0%	67%	17%	0%	17%	0%
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D. Community Involvement

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
35.	The district regularly communicates with parents.	0%	0%	33%	50%	0%	17%
36.	Local television and radio stations regularly report school news and menus.	0%	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%
37.	Schools have plenty of volunteers to help student and school programs.	0%	0%	0%	67%	17%	17%
38.	District facilities are open for community use.	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

E. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
39.	Parents, citizens, students, faculty, staff and the board	0%	17%	0%	50%	17%	17%

	provide input into facility planning.						
40.	The architect and construction managers are selected objectively and impersonally.	0%	17%	33%	17%	17%	17%
41.	Schools are clean.	0%	17%	17%	50%	0%	17%
42.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	0%	0%	33%	50%	0%	17%
43.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	0%	0%	33%	50%	0%	17%
44.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	0%	17%	50%	0%	17%	17%

F. Financial Management

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
45. Site-based budgeting is used effectively to extend the involvement of principals and teachers.	0%	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%
46. Campus administrators	0%	0%	17%	67%	0%	17%

	are well trained in fiscal management techniques.						
47.	The district's financial reports are easy to understand and read.	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%
48.	Financial resources are allocated fairly and equitably at my school.	0%	0%	33%	50%	17%	0%

G. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
49.	Purchasing gets me what I need when I need it.	0%	17%	0%	50%	33%	0%
50.	Purchasing acquires high quality materials and equipment at the lowest cost.	0%	17%	17%	67%	0%	0%
51.	Purchasing processes are not cumbersome for the requestor.	0%	33%	50%	17%	0%	0%
52.	The district provides teachers and administrators	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%

	an easy-to-use standard list of supplies and equipment.						
53.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%	0%
54.	Textbooks are in good shape.	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%	0%
55.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	0%	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%

H. Safety and Security

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
56.	Gangs are not a problem in this district.	17%	0%	50%	17%	0%	17%
57.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	0%	0%	17%	33%	33%	17%
58.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	0%	0%	33%	33%	17%	17%
59.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	17%	17%	50%	0%	0%	17%
60.	Security personnel are respected and	0%	17%	67%	0%	0%	17%

	liked by the students they serve.						
61.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	17%	33%	17%	17%	0%	17%
62.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	17%	0%	0%	17%	50%	17%

I. Computers and Technology

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
63. Students regularly use computers.	17%	17%	17%	33%	0%	17%
64. Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	0%	17%	17%	50%	0%	17%
65. Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	0%	17%	33%	33%	0%	17%
66. The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	0%	50%	17%	17%	0%	17%
67. The district	0%	50%	17%	17%	0%	17%

	meets student needs in advanced computer skills.						
68.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	0%	33%	33%	17%	0%	17%
69.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	0%	67%	17%	0%	0%	17%

May not add to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix C

STUDENT SURVEY

Demographic Data

TOTAL RESPONSES AS OF February 7, 2001								48
1.	Gender (Optional)	Male	Female	No Response				
		38%	56%	6%				
2.	Ethnicity (Optional)	Anglo	African American	Hispanic	Asian	Other	No Response	
		4%	0%	88%	0%	2%	6%	
3.	What is your classification?		Junior	Senior	No Response			
			44%	50%	6%			

A. Educational Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1.	The needs of the college-bound student are being met.	2%	42%	21%	19%	10%	6%
2.	The needs of the work-bound student are being met.	6%	48%	10%	10%	19%	6%
3.	The district has effective educational programs for the following:						
	a) Reading	31%	46%	8%	10%	0%	4%
	b) Writing	35%	35%	13%	13%	0%	4%
	c) Mathematics	25%	44%	8%	19%	0%	4%
	d) Science	27%	50%	8%	6%	0%	8%
	e) English or	42%	42%	4%	8%	0%	4%

	Language Arts						
	f) Computer Instruction	17%	46%	13%	17%	2%	6%
	g) Social Studies (history or geography)	31%	48%	6%	8%	2%	4%
	h) Fine Arts	19%	44%	21%	6%	4%	6%
	i) Physical Education	25%	44%	10%	10%	4%	6%
	j) Business Education	4%	29%	25%	25%	10%	6%
	k) Vocational (Career and Technology) Education	4%	17%	33%	25%	15%	6%
	l) Foreign Language	13%	42%	19%	13%	8%	6%
4.	The district has effective special programs for the following:						
	a) Library Service	13%	35%	19%	13%	17%	4%
	b) Honors/Gifted and Talented Education	19%	40%	19%	10%	8%	4%
	c) Special Education	19%	35%	25%	13%	4%	4%
	d) Student mentoring program	8%	23%	35%	15%	13%	6%
	e) Advanced placement program	21%	40%	21%	8%	6%	4%
	f) Career counseling	2%	19%	35%	23%	17%	4%

	program						
	g) College counseling program	6%	15%	29%	25%	21%	4%
5.	Students have access, when needed, to a school nurse.	23%	50%	8%	17%	0%	2%
6.	Classrooms are seldom left unattended.	13%	31%	25%	23%	6%	2%
7.	The District provides a high quality of education.	2%	40%	21%	21%	10%	6%
8.	The district has a high quality of teachers.	4%	29%	33%	17%	15%	2%

B. Facilities Use and Management

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
9.	Schools are clean.	4%	54%	6%	21%	13%	2%
10.	Buildings are properly maintained in a timely manner.	6%	42%	27%	17%	4%	4%
11.	Repairs are made in a timely manner.	8%	29%	21%	21%	19%	2%
12.	Emergency maintenance is handled promptly.	10%	38%	19%	13%	15%	6%

C. Purchasing and Warehousing

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
13.	There are enough textbooks in all my classes.	15%	21%	10%	38%	15%	2%
14.	Students are issued textbooks in a timely manner.	21%	38%	17%	17%	6%	2%
15.	Textbooks are in good shape.	6%	31%	23%	25%	13%	2%
16.	The school library meets student needs for books and other resources.	15%	27%	21%	13%	23%	2%

D. Food Services

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
17.	School breakfast program is available to all children.	31%	40%	8%	13%	6%	2%
18.	The cafeteria's food looks and tastes good.	4%	6%	19%	13%	56%	2%
19.	Food is served warm.	2%	19%	15%	25%	38%	2%
20.	Students have enough time to eat.	4%	2%	2%	19%	71%	2%

21.	Students eat lunch at the appropriate time of day.	21%	46%	15%	6%	10%	2%
22.	Students wait in food lines no longer than 10 minutes.	15%	44%	15%	19%	6%	2%
23.	Discipline and order are maintained in the school cafeteria.	8%	46%	27%	10%	4%	4%
24.	Cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.	15%	29%	15%	19%	21%	2%
25.	Cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.	13%	19%	33%	21%	13%	2%

E. Transportation

Survey Questions		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
26.	I regularly ride the bus.	4%	10%	29%	8%	42%	6%
27.	The bus driver maintains discipline on the bus.	10%	6%	69%	4%	8%	2%
28.	The length of my ride is reasonable.	6%	13%	71%	0%	6%	4%
29.	The drop-off zone at the school is safe.	8%	17%	58%	4%	8%	4%

30.	The bus stop near my house is safe.	8%	17%	65%	2%	6%	2%
31.	The bus stop is within walking distance from my home.	6%	13%	71%	2%	6%	2%
32.	Buses arrive and leave on time.	6%	17%	69%	4%	2%	2%
33.	Buses arrive early enough for students to eat breakfast at school.	6%	19%	63%	6%	4%	2%
34.	Buses seldom break down.	4%	19%	67%	0%	6%	4%
35.	Buses are clean.	4%	15%	63%	13%	4%	2%
36.	Bus drivers allow students to sit down before taking off.	8%	17%	67%	2%	4%	2%

F. Safety and Security

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
37. I feel safe and secure at school.	29%	27%	15%	17%	10%	2%
38. School disturbances are infrequent.	10%	38%	23%	15%	13%	2%
39. Gangs are not a problem in this district.	46%	33%	6%	2%	10%	2%

40.	Drugs are not a problem in this district.	2%	8%	29%	17%	42%	2%
41.	Vandalism is not a problem in this district.	6%	10%	31%	25%	25%	2%
42.	Security personnel have a good working relationship with principals and teachers.	6%	10%	50%	4%	25%	4%
43.	Security personnel are respected and liked by the students they serve.	2%	13%	48%	17%	17%	4%
44.	A good working arrangement exists between the local law enforcement and the district.	4%	38%	35%	13%	8%	2%
45.	Students receive fair and equitable discipline for misconduct.	4%	31%	29%	6%	27%	2%
46.	Safety hazards do not exist on school grounds.	4%	17%	33%	21%	21%	4%

G. Computers and Technology

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
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47.	Students have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.	33%	31%	10%	15%	8%	2%
48.	Teachers know how to use computers in the classroom.	33%	33%	15%	10%	6%	2%
49.	Computers are new enough to be useful for student instruction.	38%	29%	15%	10%	6%	2%
50.	The district meets student needs in computer fundamentals.	21%	33%	15%	21%	8%	2%
51.	The district meets student needs in advanced computer skills.	23%	31%	25%	8%	10%	2%
52.	Teachers and students have easy access to the Internet.	38%	31%	8%	10%	10%	2%

May not add to 100% due to rounding.