This report is in response to the General Appropriations Act, H.B. 1, Article III – 18, Rider 60 from the Eighty-second Legislature. Rider 60 stipulates that the Windham School District (WSD) shall expend funds for the following activities:

    a. a pilot in computer adaptive intensive math and reading intervention programs that address individual needs and develop skills from elementary levels through high school, and a pilot in virtual learning options that allow a student to earn a high school diploma, high school equivalent certification, certification and/or college credit. The WSD shall report progress and findings of the pilot programs in improving educational attainment to the Eighty-third Legislature, and produce a final report for the Eighty-fourth Legislature;

    b. a pilot in evidence-based substance abuse treatment and behavioral health programs. The WSD shall report of the efficacy of these programs to the Eighty-third Legislature; and

    c. an investigation on alternative organizational structure for the Windham School District that would promote efficiencies and improve the achievement of its mission. The Windham School District shall report its findings to the Eighty-third Legislature.

Part A – Pilot Programs: Math and Reading Intervention Programs and Virtual Learning Options

The WSD is piloting a computer adaptive intensive math and reading intervention program in the Title I classrooms on nine campuses throughout the district.

Fraction Nation, from Scholastic, was chosen by the WSD to target fractions and decimals – two of the most difficult concepts to teach and learn. Designed to develop the critical foundations of fraction fluency – conceptual understanding and procedural knowledge – Fraction Nation delivers fraction fluency through explicit instruction, extensive practice, and ongoing assessments. Fraction Nation guides students on a journey through 64 carefully crafted lessons to build a strong foundation in fractions and decimals. It is research-based instruction delivered through adaptive technology to target each student's individual needs. The lessons align with What Works Clearinghouse recommendations for fraction instruction. The program creates actionable reports to help teachers with placement and progress monitoring.

The reading intervention program chosen by the WSD is READ 180. READ 180, also from Scholastic, is a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development proven to raise reading achievement for struggling readers in grades four through twelfth and beyond. Designed for any student reading two or more years below grade-level, READ 180 leverages adaptive technology to individualize instruction for students and provides powerful data to teachers for differentiation.

The WSD has begun the data collection process in order to report progress and findings for these pilot programs in improving educational attainment.   The following data elements are currently being gathered and filtered for ambiguity in preparation for analysis:

- For students with current or prior enrollment in Title I:
    - Length of enrollment in Title I by hours
    - Educational achievement (EA) composite score, reading subtest score, math subtest score, and test level before first Title I enrollment date
    - Highest EA composite score, reading subtest score, math subtest score, and test level after enrollment date
    - GED attainment
    - Concurrent enrollment programs
    - Enrollment groups by gender, race, ethnicity & age

- A comparator group of students:
    - Enrolled in regular literacy education on same unit
    - Enrolled for an equal amount of hours
    - No prior Title I enrollment
    - EA composite score, reading subtest score, math subtest score, and test level before and after enrollment
    - GED attainment
    - Concurrent enrollment programs
    - Enrollment by gender, race, ethnicity and age

After data analysis and comparison is complete, a report will be compiled and presented to the Eighty-fourth Legislature showing the impact of the Read 180 and Fraction Nation programs on student achievement and educational attainment.

In order to pilot virtual learning options to allow a student to earn a high school diploma, high school equivalency certificate, certification and/or college credit, the WSD would require significant resources as recently noted by the Sunset Advisory Commission. The commission wrote that *the State would need to invest significant resources to implement a virtual education structure.* Consequently, the commission did not make a recommendation to move towards creating a virtual learning school. However, as an alternative to virtual learning, the WSD in collaboration with Alvin Community College (ACC) developed a system similar to distance learning.

In the fall of 2011 with the significant loss of college funding, the WSD and colleges eliminated programs. ACC and the WSD identified a cohort of offenders who needed a finite number of specific college credit academic courses in order to realize the completion of the associate's degree. None of the required courses, however, had sufficient student enrollment numbers to establish individual classes. In order to meet the unique needs of these students, it became obvious an alternative delivery model must be explored. ACC worked with its faculty to design alternative, pre-recorded lessons. Many of these lessons involve static downloaded images or other virtual strategies. These lessons are then delivered to the students through computer work stations and pushed through WSD secured servers.

This facilitated learning project was utilized during the spring and summer 2012 semesters on the following campuses: Clemens, Ramsey, and Jester 3. The classes were conducted in the computer labs at each facility. A college proctor brought the assignments into the unit on a flash drive and loaded the individual assignments onto the students' computers. At the end of class, the students' work was loaded onto the flash drive. The flash drive was taken back to the main campus and uploaded to the proper teacher of record for grading/reporting.

This project was intended to be a temporary service because the process was labor intensive and it eliminated student/teacher contact. The goal was to provide services for a small number of students who needed a handful of courses to complete a degree. To allow for more degree completions, at the end of the summer semester students were transferred to the Ramsey campus where ACC is still providing college academic programming through its normal delivery mode.

There were 122 students who participated in the program during these two semesters. To date, 26 of these participants have completed an Associate of Arts degree. The number of students that participated in this project and completed a degree after the fall 2012 semester has not been reported. However, it is anticipated that the number of graduates resulting from this endeavor will increase.

In the fall of 2012, the WSD began efforts to pilot the administration of Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) industry certification which requires internet access. In prior years, approximately 150 students attained an ASE industry certification through traditional paper and pencil tests. However in 2012, ASE transitioned to computer-based testing eliminating access for WSD students. The WSD joined a collaborative effort with correctional education programs in West Virginia and Indiana as well as staff from the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence. The WSD is currently in discussions with Information Technology staff within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Because of the security aspect of allowing offenders access to the Internet, every step of this project will require coordination with and approval of the TDCJ. Initial testing is proposed for the spring of 2013. The Luther Unit has been chosen as the first site for this pilot project.

Part B – Substance Abuse Treatment and Behavioral Health

Traditionally the TDCJ has been tasked with providing substance abuse treatment programs through the following legislative initiatives:
- Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facilities (SAFPF) (72nd Legislature 1991)
- In-Prison Therapeutic Community (IPTC) (72nd Legislature 1991)
- Substance Abuse Continuity of Care (71st Legislature)
- Tier of Rehabilitation Programs (75th Legislature)

However, these initiatives are distinctly different from the drug education lessons provided by the WSD, specifically treatment as compared to education.

The WSD offers a class with a substance abuse component for offenders, CHANGES II.

Students who complete the CHANGES II curriculum receive two certificates: a certificate for completing CHANGES II and a Drug Education Certificate. The Drug Education Certificate fulfills the requirements for certain individuals placed by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) who are required to complete a 15-hour class in an authorized Drug Education Program for each drug or controlled substance offense. DPS began accepting the approved drug education certificates from the WSD on February 5, 2009, based on its compatibility with the drug education program provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Behavioral health is addressed through the Cognitive Intervention Program (CIP) which is an instructional curriculum designed to help offenders overcome criminal thinking and behavior. The program was originally adapted for use within the Texas correctional system with the assistance of the National Institute of Corrections and their consultants. After CIP was initially implemented, supporting research for the program was reviewed and accepted by the Criminal Justice Policy Council in Austin, Texas.

CIP is based on research regarding the effectiveness of various programs designed to reduce the recidivism (re-incarceration) of offenders through cognitive restructuring and cognitive skill development. Cognitive restructuring helps offenders examine and change the thoughts and beliefs that are associated with criminal behavior. Skills learned in CIP help offenders manage life's stressors more effectively. Students will have an improved ability to reduce their anger and anxiety, as well as, increase their communication and problem solving abilities. The curriculum is designed for open-entry, open-exit flexibility. Eligible students may be placed into the CIP program at any time during their confinement.

The program consists of the following 10 lesson modules:
1. **The Criminal Addictive Cycle** – This module helps students identify patterns in their thinking and actions that currently exist. This level of insight helps students understand that change is needed and possible. The students soon learn that unless they make a determined effort to change their thinking patterns they will continue to automatically act in ways that will lead them into trouble.
2. **The Franklin Reality Model and Self-Control Model** – These models provide a simple method for offenders to examine and change the thinking that supports criminal and/or addictive lifestyles. The lessons describe the basic human needs that are common for everyone and help offenders find appropriate ways to meet these needs. The students learn to examine their thoughts, beliefs, actions and evaluate the consequences of their actions over time.
3. **Stop and Think** – This module teaches the students how to recognize and respond to high risk social situations that can lead to destructive actions. After they have learned and practiced ways to stop habitual negative reactions, they are able to evaluate the consequences of their new actions. A great deal of time is spent on anger management and the conflict cycle. Role playing is used heavily in this section.
4. **Problem Solving** – The problem solving steps are learned through role playing problem situations presented by the students. These situations are processed through five problem solving steps: 1) defining the problem and desired outcome; 2) gathering information and insight; 3) developing alternatives and consequences; 4) choosing, planning and doing, and 5) evaluating the results.

5. **Anger Management** – Throughout the program, students are taught techniques to recognize and deal with stress and anger. The students are encouraged to use the techniques to avoid conflicts and control their behavior in frustrating situations.
6. **Thinking Reports** – Thinking Reports provide another method for offenders to examine and change their thinking. This lesson enables students to discover the pattern of thinking that leads to inappropriate behavior. In doing so, they can develop alternative reactions that will bring more desirable results.
7. **Thinking Errors** – The concept of cognitive distortions or "wrong thinking" is introduced in a non-defensive discussion. Examples are given of these types of thinking errors and how they can affect behavior. Students are encouraged to recognize any thinking errors in their daily activities and are provided strategies for changing these errors.
8. **New Thinking Patterns** – Students are encouraged to look at the affect their thoughts and behavior have had on their lives as well as the lives of those around them. Role playing is a key tool for these activities. Students are encouraged to play both roles in the conflicting scenarios in order to experience the difference in their attitude and emotion. By playing opposing roles, students can also develop an appreciation and understanding of the thoughts and feelings of others.
9. **Goal Setting** – Goal Setting is taught in conjunction with anger management, problems solving and the other life management skills. Students are encouraged to identify the steps to focus on in order to attain their goals.
10. **Relapse Prevention** – Another major module helps students create specific plans to help them avoid continuing in the behaviors that resulted in disciplinary action. They are also encouraged to create plans that will help them avoid returning to a life of crime when they are released from confinement. The students are required to use all the tools, they have learned and practiced, to create their personal relapse prevention plan. They identify the people, places and situations that may trigger their destructive habits. The students create role plays to practice how they will respond to various problem situations. They also identify positive people and resources that they can rely on to help them maintain positive habits.

To measure the efficacy of these programs the WSD initiated the inclusion of both programs to the WSD Accountability System. Both CHANGES II and CIP will be included on a report card created for each campus. The report card will reflect performance data gathered by the district. In addition, both CHANGES II and CIP participants were included in an evaluation conducted by the Sam Houston State University (SHSU). The evaluation determined that a CHANGES II program assessment could not be conducted at this time because the CHANGES II curriculum had not been in place long enough to research from an outcomes perspective. Future plans include an evaluation of program completers as compared to non-completers.

However, a CIP assessment was conducted and included in the SHSU evaluation. The study concluded that CIP, along with other programs, demonstrated to a statistically significant degree that higher levels of program exposure decreased the likelihood of offender re-incarceration. Moreover, the study found that offenders who completed CIP earned significantly higher wages when post-release earnings were reported as compared to non-CIP participants.

Part C – Alternative Organizational Structures

Beginning in 2010 and throughout the 2011 school years, the WSD participated in a review by the Sunset Advisory Commission. Created to identify and eliminate waste, duplication and inefficiency in government, the commission also considers new and innovative changes to improve organization operations and activities. After a review of the WSD, the commission did not recommend any action or changes to the organizational structure of the district. In the *Staff Report with Commission Decisions, September 2012*, the commission noted,

> *Consistent with legislative requirements, Sunset staff evaluated Windham's school district delivery model to determine whether alternative structures could provide more effective correctional education services. The review considered the cost and quality of certified teachers, the size of the district's administration and the impact of recent staff and funding reductions. Sunset staff also compared Windham's school district model to several alternative structures, including Adult Basic Education, virtual education, charter schools, and traditional local school districts. Any advantage of these alternative structures could not be sufficiently quantified to justify changing Windham's structure at this time. The review also indicated that using certified teachers is not necessarily more expensive than using non-certified teachers in this type of structure, and that the State would need to invest significant resources to implement a virtual education structure.*

In addition, the Chairman of the WSD Board of Trustees (board) established the Education Operations Efficiency and Performance Standards Committee in June 2011. The committee has met on several occasions to conduct an investigation of alternative organizational structures. The committee investigated the potential impact of organizational changes on student services, current policies and overall district performance.

Committee members were involved in extensive discussions regarding the elements of Texas Education Code Chapter 19, Schools in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Discussions surrounded correctional education delivery models found across the country and pertinent areas likely to be influenced by the delivery model. Various types of program evaluations were also examined including performance measures required by the budgetary process, evaluation of employment training required by Chapter 19 as well as the WSD Accountability System similar to public school accountability systems. The committee explored program implementation by comparing WSD practices to research-based factors associated with effective correctional education programs. Last, the committee reviewed the *Evaluation of the Windham School District Correctional Education Programs, 2012* conducted by Sam Houston State University (SHSU). The results definitively found that each WSD program demonstrated to a statistically significant degree that higher levels of program participation decreased the likelihood of WSD offender re-incarceration.

The committee reviewed costs associated with moving from a district model to an agency model and found that factors such as social security, retirement contributions, longevity pay, and loss of dollars associated with a school funding model must be taken into account when contemplating organizational restructuring.

Additionally, a move away from the Teacher Retirement System would likely discourage career teachers from seeking employment with WSD, an issue for the committee as they have concluded the utilization of certified teachers is important to the success of the offender students. Furthermore, by lowering salaries to save costs, the resulting rise in turnover rates for staff would very likely increase costs associated with hiring and training staff on a more constant basis. Last, there is no evidence available to indicate that a different model would result in more effective results in terms of recidivism and employment factors as indicated in the SHSU study.

To date, the committee has not found sufficient evidence to support a recommendation to change the current organizational structure. However, as responsible stewards of public trust, the committee will continue to investigate and promote operational efficiencies to improve the district's attainment of its core mission and goals.