

Pirates

LUBBOCK-COOPER ISD
District of Innovation Plan

Introduction:

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th session of the Texas Legislature, amended Chapter 12 of the Texas Education Code, which authorizes school districts to become Districts of Innovation. This allows school districts more flexibility and local control to meet the needs of their students and community.

On January 19, 2017 the Lubbock-Cooper ISD Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to begin the process of becoming a District of Innovation. On March 23, 2017 the Lubbock-Cooper ISD Board of Trustees named the District Advisory Committee as the Innovation Plan Committee. The length of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is a five year term, unless discontinued by the Lubbock-Cooper ISD Board of Trustees.

Amendments approved by the District Advisory Committee and approved to the School Board May 14, 2020.

Exemption from: TEC §25.0811; TEC §25.0812

School Start and End Date

TEC §25.0811 states a school district may not begin student instruction before the fourth Monday of August. TEC §25.0812 states a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Innovation:

The goal is to allow for a flexible school calendar which fits the needs of the Lubbock-Cooper community, emphasizes active learning, and promotes college and career readiness. In addition, this local control of the calendar is intended to improve attendance rates and equip the district to meet the needs of all students.

- The instructional days of the fall semester could be increased, making the number of days in the first semester more similar to the days of the spring semester. This allows for a more balanced approach to the scope and sequence of all classes, but greatly benefits single semester courses.
- Allows for a more equal distribution of the number of days in each grading period.
- Allows students and teachers to participate in summer courses offered by postsecondary institutions
- Allows for more flexibility in scheduling professional development for the Lubbock-Cooper ISD faculty during the school year.

Exemption from: TEC §21.003(a); TEC§ 21.057

Teacher Certification

TEC §21.003(a) states a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEC§ 21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Innovation:

Lubbock-Cooper ISD will continue to seek highly effective certified educators for teaching positions. By establishing local certification instead of requirements set in the Texas Education Code, Lubbock-Cooper ISD will be able to best serve students by employing high quality educators that might not ordinarily qualify under the traditional teacher certification pathway. Examples of this could be an experienced university professor being allowed to teach an upper level academic course, a local technician with a master level skill teaching students in a Career and Technology class, or a teacher already certified in one subject being allowed to teach a different subject as long as he/she possessed sufficient university hours in the different subject.

In order to best serve Lubbock-Cooper ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally, and notification of District Teaching Permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.

The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the designee a request for a District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining the individuals credentials/qualifications.

Qualification for local certification could include, but is not limited to:

- professional work experience
- formal training/education in the content area
- active/relevant professional industry certification/registration
- a combination of work experience, training, and education
- demonstration of successful experience working with students

The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if the individual possesses the knowledge, skills, and experience required of the position and the superintendent or his/her designee feels the individual could be an asset to students, by providing valued instruction. It should be noted that special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.

An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers and will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers. Also, where applicable and appropriate, employees working under a District Teaching Permit will be encouraged to seek state certification in the area that they are teaching.

All state certified teachers will continue to receive a contract and will be paid according to the state and district teacher pay scale.

Exemption from: TEC §25.112; TEC §25.113
Class Size Ratios

TEC §25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for kindergarten – fourth grade classes. TEC §25.113 requires a district to notify parents of waivers or exemptions to class size limits. Districts are required by state law to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for kindergarten – fourth grade classes.

Innovation:

Lubbock-Cooper ISD recognizes that smaller class sizes are beneficial and will continue to use the 22:1 student/teacher ratio for kindergarten-fourth grade in projecting the number of staff needed for future school years. If all the classes on a particular grade level reach the 22:1 ratio, the district will determine if it best suits the district to enroll the student at another campus, allow the current campus to exceed the 22:1 limit, or hire an additional classroom teacher to compensate for the additional students.

No campus will be allowed to exceed 24:1 student/teacher ratio in each section of a grade level. The Lubbock-Cooper ISD Board of Trustees will be informed at the next convenient meeting when a grade level is exceeding the 22:1 ratio; however, parental notification in each instance will be encouraged but optional.

**Coordinator Exemption from: TEC §37.0012
Designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator**

TEC§37.0012 requires a person be designated to serve as the Campus Behavior Coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code.

Lubbock-Cooper ISD has always taken a collaborative approach to student discipline on each of the campuses. With the exemption from the requirement and duties of the Campus Behavior Coordinator, principals will be able to create the system where the duties of the CBC are shared among the administrative staff. This allows a more personal and effective approach to student discipline and better communication with parents.

Amendment 1:

**Exemption from: TEC §22.004(i)
Group Health Benefits for School Employees.**

TEC §22.004(i) Group Health Benefits for School Employees states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC §22.004(b) after the date a district implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all district employees. This provision also prohibits the district from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverage for its employees at a lower cost. This provision does not give the district the flexibility needed to acquire benefits packages that would potentially be more attractive to prospective employees.

Innovation:

TEC §22.004 is not included in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to TEC §12A.004 or the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in the Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309. Therefore, in order to have the option to offer additional benefit options to employees and to increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs, the district proposes that the District of Innovation Plan be amended to exempt the district from the health insurance requirements in TEC §22.004(i).

Amendment 2:

**Exemption from: TEC 37.005
Out-of-School Suspension for Students Below Grade 3**

TEC §37.005 states a student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension, unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, the student engages in:

- (1) conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Section 46.02 or 46.05, Penal Code;
- (2) conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense under Section 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, or 22.021, Penal Code; or
- (3) selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of any amount of:
 - (A) marihuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et seq.;
 - (B) a dangerous drug, as defined by Chapter 483, Health and Safety Code; or
 - (C) an alcoholic beverage, as defined by Section 1.04, Alcoholic Beverage Code.

Innovation:

To best serve the students of Lubbock-Cooper ISD and provide a high quality educational environment for all students, faculty, and staff, the district proposes that school administrators be able to exercise professional judgement and place students of any grade level in out-of-school suspension for violations of the Student Code of Conduct and when they deem it necessary for safety and to maintain an orderly learning environment for all stakeholders.

The district will continue to monitor the suspension of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure that District Policy and the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the district.