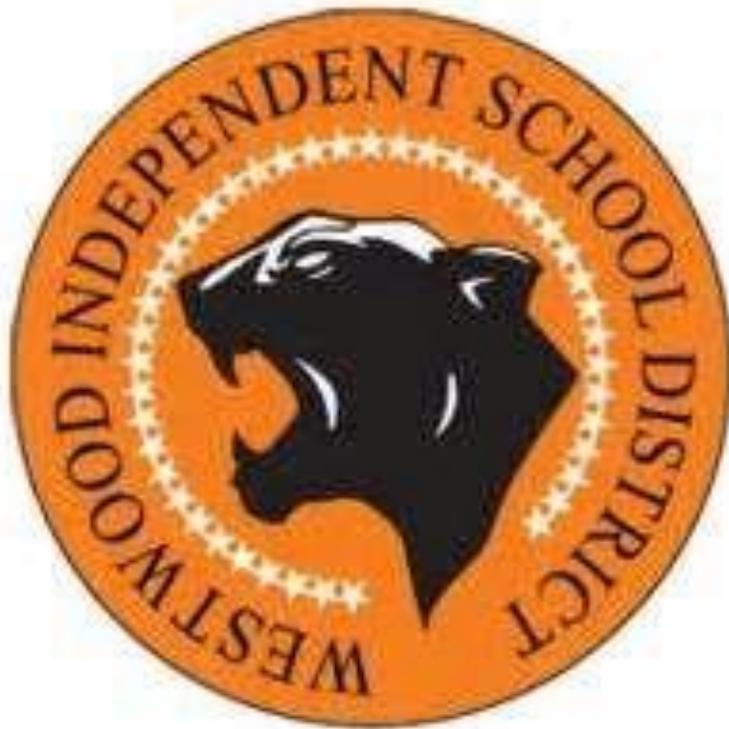


District of Innovation Plan

May 2017 – May 2022



INTRODUCTION

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in Spring 2015 and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability.

PROCESS

On January 9, 2017, Westwood Independent School District's Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

On January 23, 2017, the Westwood ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public discussion on whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a District of Innovation. With there being no objection from the hearing, the Board of Trustees appointed the District Advisory Committee (DAC) to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, and district administration. The committee met initially on March 28, 2017, to discuss the plan. A follow-up meeting to develop the plan was held on April 4, 2017.

The plan was posted on the District website for 30 days before being presented to the DAC on May 9, 2017. Westwood ISD notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final District of Innovation Plan and the plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on May 15, 2017.

TERM

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in May 2017 and will remain in effect for five years, through May 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District Advisory Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and if at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, as per the Districts of Innovation process, the district will reconvene the DAC to explore the request

TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity/Task
January 9, 2017	Board of Trustees passed Resolution to initiate District of Innovation Plan
January 23, 2017	Board of Trustees held public hearing and appointed DAC to draft Plan
March 28, 2017	Initial meeting of DAC to discuss District of Innovation Plan
April 4, 2017	Meeting to develop District of Innovation Plan
April 5, 2017	Post District of Innovation Plan on WISD website
May 5, 2017	District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education
May 9, 2017	DAC vote on District of Innovation Plan
May 15, 2017	Board of Trustees votes on District of Innovation Plan
May 31, 2017	Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to Commissioner of Education

DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

First Name	Last Name	Member Category
Cindy	Christian	District Administrator
Tiffany	Carwell	District Administrator
Wade	Stanford	District Administrator
Tricia	Wardell	Director of Finance
John	Folmar	Director of Technology
Judy	Evans	Elementary Administration
Kelly	Brown	Elementary Teacher
Karla	Gregory	Elementary Teacher
Janice	Bryan	Primary Administration
Autumn	Brown	Primary Teacher
Crystal	Bayless	Primary Teacher
Jennifer	Randall	Primary Teacher
Roxy	Wendland	Primary Paraprofessional
Sonya	Brown	Junior High Administration
Nancy	Oster	Junior High Teacher
Kim	Kennedy	Junior High Teacher
Rodney	May	Junior High Teacher
Kyle	Lock	High School Administration
Christine	Bedre	Assistant Principal
Scott	Nettles	Assistant Principal
Lauren	Tyler	High School Counselor
Sherilyn	Deffenbaugh	High School Teacher
Karen	Plumb	High School Teacher
Trisha	Couch	Parent Representative
Kristi	Starr	Parent Representative
Ana	Brown	Parent Representative

EXEMPTIONS

§25.0811 Uniform School Start Date

A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.

Proposed

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would support semester course curriculum. Students will begin no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August. Teachers will begin no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August. In addition, flexibility in the start and end of the school year would allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also allow WISD to begin the first week of classes with a shortened week, easing the transition for students entering primary, elementary, junior high, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

§25.081 and §25.082 Minimum Minutes of Instruction

Sec. 25.081 (e). OPERATION OF SCHOOLS. (e) For purposes of this code, a reference to a day of instruction means 420 minutes of instruction.

Sec 25.082(a). School Day. (a) A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed

This exemption will provide WISD the flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction that will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. It also has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of a school day. This may include a later start or early release time. This will accommodate additional professional development and collaboration opportunities for both professional and support staff in our district

§25.092 90 Percent Attendance Rule

TEC 25.092 states a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75 percent and less than 90 percent may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

Proposed

The exemption from the 90 percent attendance rule will allow the district to establish local criteria regarding student attendance requirements. WISD will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. The District strongly believes that a student's mastery of learning outcomes should be the determining factor in earning credit and/or a final grade rather than measures such as "seat time" that do not consider the real objectives of the educational experience.

The requested exemption from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or change existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28,0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

§21.003 Teacher Certification

TEC 21.003(a) states that 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.

Proposed

CTE Teacher Certification

The current state teacher certification requirements could potentially inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach specialized Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of specialized CTE course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the certification requirements set forth in law.

Before examining the employment of non-certified personnel, all efforts will be made to hire state certified teachers. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations, such as welding, health sciences, architecture, and construction, the District will have the flexibility to hire professionals in trades, community college instructors, university professors, business professionals or certified teaching professionals seeking assignments outside of their certification area. This innovation has the potential to enrich applicant pools in specialized CTE course offerings and afford more students the opportunity to take courses if state certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

In order to best serve our students, decisions on teacher certification in these specialized areas will be handled locally. The campus principal must submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a CTE subject out of his/her certified field. An individual with experience in a CTE field may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the person possesses qualifying this individual to teach this course.

- Included in this request must be a summary of all the steps taken to find a state certified educator for the position. The superintendent will then submit this action to the Board of Trustees for Board approval prior to the individual beginning any employment.
- Local teaching certificates will be for one year.
- The employee will be at-will full or part-time.
- This local certificate option is not available for any course below 7th grade.

- Parental notification to those parents who have a student enrolled in a course with a locally-certified teacher will continue as currently required by law.
- Locally-certified teachers must complete district-led classroom management training along with any other continuing education requirement determined by the Board of Trustees, and will be assigned a state certified teacher as a mentor.

§21.401 Teacher Contract Days

Current Law

Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed

In each year of the plan, it will be the goal of the calendar planning committee to reduce the number of teacher contract days without impacting teacher salaries. This plan will allow WISD to better align with the 75,600 minute requirement for student instruction.

- a. This plan will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- b. This plan should enhance teacher recruitment.
- c. This plan will provide teachers more flexibility during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.
- d. Local Guidelines: This applies to 10-month educator contracts only without affecting stipend contract addendums.

As a District of Innovation, we will continue our process of on-going evaluation. As required, any additions or modifications would follow the same process:

- District Advisory Committee will shape and approve the plan.
- The plan will be posted for 30 days and the public would have the opportunity to review.
- District Advisory Committee will vote on plan
- The plan will be submitted to the board for final approval.
- The revised plan would be submitted to TEA.