



DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN



IT STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the 84th Session of the Texas Legislature passed HB 1842 which allows Texas public school districts in Texas the option of pursuing a District of Innovation Designation. The law allows school districts the opportunity to access most of the flexibilities available to charter schools. In order to access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Chapter 12A.

PROCESS

On January 4, 2022, Liberty-Eylau Independent School District's ("LEISD" or "Liberty-Eylau ISD") District Leadership Team (DLT) met to consider the renewal of designation as a District of Innovation. The meeting was open to the public and the DLT reviewed and approved the proposed renewal plan by a majority vote. The DLT is composed of teachers, campus and district level administrators, parents, and business and community leaders.

The plan was posted on the district website for 30 days beginning January 4, 2022 and the plan was submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on February 10, 2022.

The Commissioner of Education was notified that LEISD plans to adopt a District of Innovation plan on February 11, 2022.

TERM

The Liberty-Eylau ISD District of Innovation Plan will begin March 2022 and remain in effect for five years through February 2027, unless the Board of Trustees desire to terminate or amend the plan.

TIMELINE

TIMELINE	Activity/ Task	Date Completed
January	DLT Meeting to consider renewal of DOI Plan	04-Jan-22
January	Post District of Innovation Plan on District website	04-Jan-22
February	Board of Trustees vote to adopt the DOI Plan	10-Feb-22
February	Notify Commissioner of Education	11-Feb-22

PLANNING COMMITTEE

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	CAMPUS	Category
King	Kayla	Early Childhood	Parent
Bell	Korie	Early Childhood	Parent
Dean	Gaytha	Early Childhood	Parent
Hoover	Jessica	Early Childhood	Non-Teaching Professional
Robinson	Teresa	Early Childhood	Non-Teaching Professional
Davis	Vickie	Early Childhood	Classroom Teacher
Overmyer	Jennifer	Early Childhood	Classroom Teacher
Thompson	Pamela	Early Childhood	Classroom Teacher
Keener	Carlia	Elementary	Parent
Montgomery	Jesse	Elementary	Parent
Sangalli	Amanda	Elementary	Parent
Brown	Kristi	Elementary	Non-Teaching Professional
Savage	Jarnisha	Elementary	Classroom Teacher
Trotter	Auburn	Elementary	Classroom Teacher
Walker	Regina	Elementary	Classroom Teacher
Griffith	Lamond	Middle School	Parent

Medus	Erica	Middle School	Parent
Mixon	Alisha	Middle School	Parent
Byrdsong	Marlon	Middle School	Non-Teaching Professional
Oliver	Carolyn	Middle School	Non-Teaching Professional
Clardy	Toya	Middle School	Classroom Teacher
Cornett	Brandi	Middle School	Classroom Teacher
O'Neal	Dana	Middle School	Classroom Teacher
Blackwell	Teresa	High School	Parent
Dollarhide	Regina	High School	Parent
Hodgson	Darica	High School	Parent
Keith	Marietta	High School	Parent
Phillips	Roshea	High School	Non-Teaching Professional
Mitchell	Daniel	High School	Classroom Teacher
Nard	Mercedes	High School	Classroom Teacher
Walker	Dana	High School	Classroom Teacher
Block	Linda	High School	District Level Professional
Ganter	Debra	High School	Community Representative
Price	Chuck	High School	Business Representative
Royal	Mary	High School	Business Representative
Floyd	Jo Anne	Administration	Non-Teaching Professional
Gill	Earl	Administration	Non-Teaching Professional

EXEMPTIONS

The district seeks exemptions in the following areas:

First and Last Day of Instruction – [EB(LEGAL); TEC § 25.0811, 25.0812]

Current Law

Texas Education Code sections 25.0811 and 25.0812 respectively state a district may not begin instruction for students before the fourth Monday in August and may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year after May 15th.

Proposed

This exemption will allow Liberty-Eylau ISD a flexible start and end date in order to develop a calendar that fits the needs of the students, staff, and community. The district will determine when each school year begins and ends. This calendar would provide:

- A better balance of instructional days in first and second semesters.
- Additional instructional days prior to state assessments.
- Removing the uniform start date will also allow the district to start classes on a Wednesday or Thursday, as a short week, easing the back-to-school transition for students.

Student/Teacher Ratios and Class Size – [EBB(LEGAL); TEC § 25.111, 25.112, 25.113]

Current Law

Under Section 25.111 of the Texas Education Code, a school must employ a sufficient number of teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than 1 teacher to 20 students. Texas Education Code section 25.112 states a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with TEA annually. Texas Education Code section 25.113 states a campus or district granted a class size waiver to exceed the 22:1 ratio shall provide written notice to parents of each student that a waiver has been submitted.

Proposed

This exemption will allow the district flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually or notify parents. Liberty-Eylau ISD will attempt to keep all the core K-4 classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, class sizes must, at times, be balanced with the logistics of adding staff and staff shortages within the district's community. The Board of Trustees will be notified of K-4 classrooms that exceed 22:1.

Teacher Certification – [DK(LEGAL); DK(LOCAL); DK(EXHIBIT); TEC § 21.003, 21.057]

Current Law

A district must place a certified teacher in the instructional classroom. In the event a district cannot secure a certified teacher, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and provide notification to the parents of each student assigned to a class taught by the non-certified teacher. TEA may then approve or deny the request.

Proposed

These statutes make it difficult for the district to recruit, employ, and retain persons who have appropriate expertise, experience and/or industry certifications or knowledge that render them qualified to fill such positions. This system also limits the applicant pool further in this time of a teacher shortage. The availability of certified teachers causes the district to have to limit course offerings. Through exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, Liberty-Eylau ISD will have the flexibility to hire highly skilled professionals if certified teachers are not available.

Liberty-Eylau ISD will continue its commitment to hire certified professionals and will continue to seek highly effective, certified educators for all teaching positions. However, where that is not possible, the district will have the flexibility to issue a local innovation permit and hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and are fully equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position based on local certification criteria without requesting a permit or waiver from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

This innovation will be implemented as follows:

LEISD will handle all certification and assignments locally. Certification waivers, state permit applications and fees will not be submitted to TEA.

LEISD will continue its goal to find effective, certified teachers, but in the event that a certified teacher or administrator cannot be secured, the district may issue a local innovation permit based on skills and experiences outside the traditional certification pathway based on the following criteria:

- An individual with certain qualifications who is not state certified as a teacher or administrator can be eligible to fill positions including, but not limited to:
 - Career and Technology Education
 - Dual Credit
 - Math
 - Science
 - Counselor
- Individuals hired under the LEISD DOI Plan exemption will:
 - Be issued a local innovation permit;

- Receive a one-year, non-certified contract that must be renewed annually; and
- Be appraised using the same teacher, principal or local administrator appraisal system.
- The principal/director must submit to the Superintendent and/or the Superintendent's designee a request for a local innovation permit outlining all of the individual's qualifications.
- Qualifications that may be considered include, but are not limited to:
 - Professional work experience;
 - Formal training and education, including an Associate's degree (CTE) and Bachelors/Masters/Doctoral degrees;
 - Active/Relevant industry license or certification;
 - Combination of work experience, training and education; and
 - Demonstration of successful experience working with students.
- If approved by the Superintendent, the candidate will be presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration.
- Local innovation permits will expire at the end of each school year and may be renewed at the Superintendent's discretion. An employee working under a local innovation permit will work under a contract for professional non-certified employees that may be renewed annually. When possible, lesson plans will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.
- Employees working under the local innovation permit will have two years to obtain certification in the area which they are hired to work in. If they have not successfully completed this requirement or if they have reached the maximum number of attempts for the certification test in the area they were hired, their position will be reopened to be filled by a certified applicant. Current employees may reapply for the position, and the District has the option to retain this employee in that position if no certified or more qualified applicant applies for the opening. These requirements will apply to all future and current employees who have not satisfied certification requirements for the position for which they have been hired.

Employment Contracts – [TEC § 21.002, 21.102]

Current Law

Texas Education Code section 21.002 states a school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under: (1) a probationary contract, as provided by Subchapter C. Texas Education Code section 21.102 states a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Proposed

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Exemption from the current guidelines, will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired to Liberty-Eylau ISD.

Planning and Preparation Time – [TEC § 21.404; DL(LEGAL)]

Current Law

Texas Education Code section 21.404 provides that each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day, and during a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Proposed

The District is committed to providing each teacher with ongoing and consistent training and planning time to support student achievement. As a part of fulfilling this commitment, the District requires each teacher to participate in group planning and collaboration, such as but not limited to: grade level, department, Data Driven Instruction (DDI), and PLC meetings, for at least 45 minutes weekly or the required time period. In addition, flexible scheduling for planning and preparation time will allow the District to accommodate staffing shortages and times where all staff are required to perform duties outside of their routine day-to-day activities, including but not limited to mandatory testing days. The District will be able to combine the 45-minute requirement into one or multiple days resulting in longer planning and preparation periods for teachers and/or split the 45-minute requirement into smaller increments throughout an instructional day.

Counselor Work Time – [TEC § 33.006; DP(LOCAL)]

Current law

Texas Education Code Section 33.006 states that a school counselor must “spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor’s total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program developed under Section 33.005.” Further, “time spent in administering assessment instruments or providing other assistance in connection with assessment instruments, except time spent in interpreting data from assessment instruments, is not considered time spent on counseling.”

Proposed

Due to staffing limitations, this plan exempts the District from the statutory provision above that requires school counselors to spend at least 80 percent of the counselor’s total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program. This exemption directly supports the District’s commitment to high academic achievement. This innovation will be implemented by the District as follows:

- The District is committed to ensuring that the academic and emotional needs of all students are met. In order to accomplish this goal with limited staffing, the District must balance the roles of academic guidance, emotional support, and other administrative tasks in each counselor's workload.
- In addition to the role of providing student support through individual and crisis counseling, this exemption will allow the District to enhance the work of school personnel and parents through the counselor's role of guiding student goal setting and planning by promoting understanding of standardized test results and other assessment data.
- Additionally, through annual auditing, the counselor will support the District to inform accountability, action plans, time management, and systemic change. In doing so, the counselor will be useful in providing parent and guardian consultation to foster each student's educational, career, personal, and social development.

Removal of Unwanted Visitors – [TEC § 37.105; GKA(LEGAL, GKA(LOCAL))]

Current Law

Texas Education Code section 37.105 limits a school district's discretion as to how and when a person can be refused entry or ejected from a school district's property or school-related event. Under the law, an individual must first refuse to leave peaceably upon request and either (1) pose a substantial risk of harm to any person or (2) behave in a manner inappropriate for a school setting and be given, at a minimum, a verbal warning before they are ejected or refused entry, and the person persists in the inappropriate behavior. Upon ejection or refusal of entry, an individual must also be given notice of how they may appeal the ejection.

Proposed

Due to an increase in the prevalence of unruly visitors acting inappropriately for a school setting, this plan exempts the District from the statutory provision above that requires a verbal warning prior to ejection or refusal of entry. This exemption is in the best interests of the District and protects the District's commitment to providing a safe, stable educational environment and allows the District to avoid interruptions or interference with its daily operations. This innovation will be implemented by the District as follows:

- The District will allow designated staff members the authority to remove parents or visitors whose behavior is deemed inappropriate for a school setting without any prior warning or written notice.
- Following a parent or other visitor's ejection or refusal of entry from District property, administration will send written notice to the individual regarding the consequences and their right to appeal.