

Livingston ISD
District of Innovation Plan
(HB 1842)

During the 84th Legislative Session, HB 1842 was passed in order to provide more local control in certain areas for public education school districts. HB 1842 provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. With this designation, LISD will be able to utilize the exemptions in Education Law to which charter schools currently are entitled. The district believes this is a great opportunity to create a plan based on our local needs that will grant opportunities for greater local control, increased flexibility governing education programming, and empowerment to innovate and think differently for the students, faculty, and community we serve. Districts are not exempt from statutes related to curriculum standards, graduation requirements, nor academic and financial accountability.

Terms of the District of Innovation Plan

The term of the plan renewal is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2021-2022 school year and ending at the end of the 2025-2026 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with statute. The District Advisory Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

Activation of the exemptions from the Texas Education Code (TEC) will most likely require the revision and/or addition of Livingston ISD local policies or Administrative Procedures. Any exemptions from TEC or amendments to the District of Innovation Plan will be reflected in local policy following board action pursuant to law.

Strategic Planning / Innovation Process Timeline

| | |
|------------------|---|
| May 22, 2017 | LISD Board meeting to approve original District of Innovation Plan. TEA notification of District of Innovation plan. |
| February 4, 2021 | District Advisory Committee meeting to approve renewal of District of Innovation Plan. |
| February 5, 2021 | District of Innovation Plan posting on district website for 30 days. |
| March 22, 2021 | LISD Board meeting to approve District of Innovation Plan renewal. TEA notification of plan renewal. |

1. **School Start Date**

(TEC 25.0811)

Currently:

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

Plan:

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, the district will have a flexible calendar option which may include an early start date. Students may begin earlier than the fourth Monday of August. This earlier start date will allow the opportunity for a more balanced first and second semester number of days of instruction and will accommodate current health concerns for COVID 19 response.

- Students will start school no earlier than August 1st.
- Teachers will report for contracted duty no earlier than one week before the start of school.

2. **Minimum Minutes of Instruction**

(TEC 25.081)

Currently:

Texas Education Code states that districts are required to provide 75,600 minutes of instruction.

Plan:

The District may develop a school calendar that will comply with the required 75,600 minutes of instruction for students who fall into the at-risk category and 71,400 minutes of instruction for non-at-risk students to mirror the Optional Flexible Year Program that is allowed by the state. The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction and hours within a school day will assist with personalizing student learning in order to better meet individual student needs. The district may include early release days and may designate more than five days to be used for staff development and teacher preparation. Time to collaborate within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at the campus level in addition to the need for mentoring support is a priority to provide innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and personalization for each student. Professional Development days will be strategically placed to maximize the professional development support for staff in planning for interventions and student needs.

3. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit

(TEC 25.092)

Currently:

Districts are required to award class credit to students based on “seat time”, rather than based on mastery of content..

Plan:

The District will not withhold academic credits from a student who misses class due to legitimate school sponsored activities. The District will promote student engagement and active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, as well as social and emotional development by encouraging more students to participate in such activities.

4. Teacher Probationary Contracts

(TEC 21.102)

Currently:

For experienced teachers hired new into the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Plan:

A one year probationary period is not always sufficient to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom because teacher contract renewal timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to the end of the current school year. For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years.

5. Teacher Certification Requirements

(TEC 21.003)

Currently:

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 submit a request to TEA. TEA then approves or denies this request for the district. In certain circumstances, a district can use a local one-year permit.

Plan:

In order to best serve LISD students with flexibility in scheduling and more options for student class offerings, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- The principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject(s) out of their field, or an out of state teacher to teach while completing the Texas credential requirements. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the exception and document what credentials the teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the requested assignment.
- An individual with experience in a Career Tech field could 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 superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to the students. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.
- The superintendent will report all teacher certification decisions to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment.

6. Teacher Appraisals

(TEC 21.352)

Currently:

The commissioner shall adopt a recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers. The criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior, including the performance of teachers' students.

Plan:

The District will allow teachers who have demonstrated high-quality performance the opportunity to be exempt from a full appraisal under certain circumstances that are locally established and approved by the Board of Trustees. These innovation strategies offer increased opportunities for more unannounced classroom walk-throughs, which are more reflective of what is happening in a teacher's classroom on a daily basis.

- All teachers will be formally evaluated at a minimum of once every three years using the state recommended T-TESS evaluation instrument. Teachers will be evaluated on a rotating basis every three years regardless of campus placement.
- Every classroom teacher will receive a minimum of 6 formal T-TESS walk-throughs per year, as well as regular district walk-throughs to provide curriculum fidelity and monitoring of student progress.
- Probationary teachers and locally certified teachers will be evaluated every year.
- All teachers will have a beginning of year goal setting conference and an end of year annual summative conference every year. This provision will include term contracted teachers who are on an evaluation rotation.

- Teachers who are not meeting the standards and expectations of the campus Principal may be returned to using the full T-TESS instrument at any time.

7. Class Size

(TEC 25.112, 25.113)

Currently:

Districts must maintain a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less for Kindergarten through fourth grade. Districts must complete and file a waiver with the agency if a class exceeds this limit.

Plan:

LISD supports the class size ratio and makes every effort to comply with the state's mandate. However, the flexibility to add a student in extenuating circumstances will provide ease in changing student groupings that are in the best interest of students. Flexible grouping is required when instruction is differentiated for each student. Additionally, when students participate in special programs there may be situations when classroom numbers exceed the state ratio requirements in order to accommodate the needs of the program.

- The superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees within 30 days of exceeding the class size ratio limit.