



Leonard ISD District of Innovation Plan



Leonard ISD District of Innovation Overview

With the passage of House Bill 1842, traditional independent school districts now have many of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools. In order to have these opportunities, a district must adopt an innovation plan as set forth in Texas Education Code 12A. Leonard ISD has the opportunity to design a plan according to the needs and resources of our district while maximizing local control.

Potential benefits of Leonard ISD becoming a District of Innovation –

- Local Control – Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- Customization – Leonard ISD can create an innovation plan that is specific to our district.
- Autonomy – Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.
- Flexibility – Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools in areas that may include:
 - School Start Date
 - Class Size Waiver
 - Teacher Certification
 - Teacher Contracts
 - 90% Attendance Rule
 - Other Identified Areas

The term of this District of Innovation Plan is valid for a period not to exceed five (5) calendar years and is effective upon Board approval and notification of the plan to the Texas Education Agency. This District of Innovation Plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the DEIC, and will notify the Commissioner of Education of any actions taken, including the date of adoption.

Leonard ISD Mission Statement

The Leonard Independent School District will partner with parents and the community to create lifelong learners who are academically and socially prepared to be productive citizens. We are proud to provide a safe, respectful learning environment where all children are challenged through stimulating learning experiences to achieve their dreams. At LISD, we are investing in the future of our students.

On November 15, 2016, the Leonard ISD Board of Trustees appointed the LISD District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC) to serve as the District of Innovation Committee which is composed of teachers, staff, administrators, parents, business leaders, and community members.

The committee members include:

Julie Burnett	Elementary Principal
Greg Connelly	High School Teacher
Sarah Day	Intermediate Principal
Arthur Green	High School Teacher
Kari Hudson	Elementary Teacher
Jeff Johnson	District Technology/Federal Programs Director
Chris Kitts	School Resource Officer
Bethani Knight	Intermediate Teacher
Jessica LaCook	Parent Representative
Kacie Littrell	Junior High Counselor
Casey Long	Parent Representative
Chris Mason	High School Principal
Brad Maxwell	Assistant Superintendent
Emily McCarley	Intermediate Teacher
Carlisle Mott	Business Representative
Matthew Moyer	High School Teacher
Susan Perkins	Elementary Teacher
Mark Scoggins	Junior High Teacher
Michele Scoggins	Junior High Teacher
Larry Thompson	Business Representative
Karla Walker	Elementary Teacher
Jami Watson	Community Representative
Trevor Williams	Intermediate Teacher
Kristi Wortham	Elementary Teacher
Brenda Wrenn	High School Counselor
Lillian Xanthus	High School Teacher
Nancy Zachary	School Nurse

1. First Day of Instruction

(TEC 25.0811) (EB (LEGAL), (LOCAL))

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC Sec. 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. TEC Sec. 25.0811 allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

District Innovative Strategy

*Improve student success through the flexibility in the calendar by having the option to begin instruction for students no sooner than the **third Monday of August**. This strategy will allow first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction and creating more instructional time before STAAR/EOC exams. More balanced semesters will also align with college semesters as well as allow more opportunities for summer school, internships and industrial certifications. In addition, starting one week earlier will also accommodate new and innovative education programs during summer.*

2. Submitting Class Size Waivers

(TEC 25.111, TEC 25.112, TEC 25.113), (EEB (LEGAL), BF (LEGAL), and EHAA (LEGAL))

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC Sec. 25.111 requires each school district to employ the number of teachers necessary to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each group of 20 students.

TEC Sec. 25.112 requires Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio (22:1). When a class exceeds this limit, the district's board of trustees must approve a request for a waiver within 30 days after the class size was exceeded. A waiver request must then be filed with the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency.

Along with the waiver, TEC Sec. 25.113, requires that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Oftentimes soon after the waiver process is completed, students move out of the district dropping the ratio back into compliance.

District Innovative Strategy

The District will strive to keep class sizes at or under 22:1, with the flexibility to go above 22:1 if needed. This flexibility will eliminate the requirement of the waiver process and improve student success by not having to potentially split a class mid-year which disrupts instruction. In addition, Leonard ISD will not be forced to hire new teachers not accounted for in the current Local Board's adopted budget. The Innovative strategy will change the policy regarding the K-4 class size ratios as follows:

1. If the student/teacher ratio averaged across a grade level needs to go over 22:1, it must have both administrator and teacher approval.

2. If the student/teacher ratio averaged across a grade level reaches 24:1, it must have both administrator and teacher approval. Parents of all students in each affected class, and the School Board will be notified.

3. Teacher Certification

(TEC 21.003) (DK (LEGAL), DK (LOCAL), DK (EXHIBIT), DBA (LEGAL), and DBA (LOCAL), (TEC 21.053), (TEC 21.057)

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC Sec. 21.003 requires 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.

TEC Sec. 21.053 mandates a teacher must present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding and prohibits the District from paying an educator if he or she does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC Sec. 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 during the same school year.

District Innovative Strategy

Non-CTE Subjects Grades 6-12

In order to best serve Leonard ISD students by allowing more flexibility in scheduling and more course offerings, decisions on certification will be handled locally. For grades 6-12, in all subjects except Special Education and ESL/Bilingual, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for a local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field of their current certification but for which he/she is not certified. All teachers at grades PK-5 will be fully certified.

Related Fields

English: English, Reading, Speech, Debate, Journalism, any other English course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in English.

Social Studies: History, Government, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, any other Social Studies course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit.

Science: Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biology, Earth Science, Physics, Chemistry, any other Science course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in Science.

Fine Arts: Art, Music, Theater Arts, Dance, any other Fine Art course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in Fine Arts.

Mathematics: Mathematics, Engineering, Statistics, Accounting, any Mathematics course accepted by SBOE for graduation credit in Mathematics.

The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed subject in the related area. The Superintendent must approve all requests.

To assist the teacher that a local certificate is enacted, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field, whenever possible.

CTE Subjects Grades 6-12

The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Mathematics (STEM) courses. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and promote students' ability to obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. In addition, if teacher meets the applicable local certification requirements, the teacher will not be required to present certification before being hired. Flexibility to establish its own CTE teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.*
- Greater number of CTE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students.*
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.*
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach CTE courses.*

The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the individual possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed CTE subject. The Superintendent must approve all requests.

As long as a teacher meets the applicable Non-CTE or CTE requirements above, the district will not be required to provide parental notification.

4. Teacher Probationary Contracts

(TEC 21.102) (DCA (LEGAL))

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC Sec. 21.102 requires that experienced teachers that are new to the district cannot have a probationary contract period that exceeds one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

District Innovative Strategy

TEC Sec. 21.102 does not allow sufficient time to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to state assessment results. Therefore, for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years which will ensure that students are being taught by highly effective teachers.

5. Teacher Contract Days

(TEC 21.401) (DCB (LEGAL), DCB (LOCAL))

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC 21.401 requires a teacher who is on a 10-month contract to work a minimum of 187 days.

District Innovative Strategy

In an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students, the district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries.

Leonard ISD District of Innovation Timeline

Monday, October 24, 2016

Administrative staff meeting to learn about the District of Innovation process

Tuesday, November 15, 2016

5:30p.m. Special Board Meeting – LISD School Board approved resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of pursuing a District of Innovation designation.

5:45p.m. Public Hearing – Public hearing was held to explain and discuss information related to possibly becoming a District of Innovation.

6:00p.m. Regular School Board Meeting – The LISD School Board approved a motion to pursue a local District of Innovation plan.

The Board approved the members of the District of Innovation Committee as being the current members of the District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC).

Thursday, December 1, 2016 – 3:45p.m. in LHS Library

Initial meeting of the DEIC / District of Innovation Committee

Tuesday, December 13, 2016 – 3:45p.m. in LHS Library

Second District of Innovation Committee meeting by DEIC

Tuesday, January 3, 2017 – 2:00p.m. in LHS Library

DEIC / District of Innovation Committee meeting #3

Wednesday, January 25, 2017

Post the District of Innovation Plan on the LISD website for 30 days

Notify Commissioner of Education of LISD Board's intention to vote on adoption of the proposed local innovation plan.

Wednesday, March 1, 2017 - 3:50p.m. in LHS Library

DEIC conducts Public Hearing on proposed plan

DEIC votes on local innovation plan

Wednesday, March 8, 2017 – Regular School Board Meeting

Board will consider approval of the Leonard ISD District of Innovation plan

No Earlier Than Thursday, March 9, 2017

Update all policy changes with TASB

Notify Commissioner of Education of Approval of Innovation Plan and file the mandated form pursuant to 19 TAC 102.1307(d).