



Leonard ISD
District of Innovation
Plan
2022-2027



Leonard ISD District of Innovation Overview

With the passage of House Bill 1842 in 2015 in the 84th Legislative Session, 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 This District of Innovation Plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the DEIC, and will notify the Commissioner of Education of any actions taken, including the date of adoption.

On January 14, 2022, the LISD District Improvement Committee met to discuss renewing the District of Innovation Plan and shared the benefits of this plan for our students, staff and community. The original LISD DOI plan was approved by the LISD Board of Trustees on March 8, 2017. These plans must be renewed at least once every five years. The current proposed plan for renewal was posted on the district website after the meeting for public viewing and comment for 30 days beginning on January 14, 2022. The Commissioner of Education was notified of the District's intent to renew and all of the other steps required for renewal were put in place. See Timeline of Events.

The committee members include:

Blaine Alexander	Business Representative
Sara Anderson	High School Paraprofessional
James Beebe	Jr. High Teacher
Misty Berry	Elementary Teacher
Mark Blackberby	Business Representative
Regina Blain	Elementary Principal
Alichia Brackett	Community Member
Katie Cook	Jr. High Teacher
Lisa Davis	Jr. High Teacher
Sarah Day	Intermediate Principal
Jacki Dennis	Special Education Teacher
Rebecca Duncan	Jr. High Counselor
Corrie Evans	High School Teacher
Ashley Hartley	Parent Representative
Tammy Hutchings	High School Principal
Lisa Jones	Curriculum Director
Jessica Lewis	Jr. High Paraprofessional
Kacie Littrell	High School Counselor
Justina Majeau	Intermediate Paraprofessional
Brad Maxwell	Superintendent
Vicki McAngus	Community Member
Emily McCarley	Intermediate Teacher
Kacie McCarley	Elementary Teacher
Erin McGill	High School Teacher
Debora Mitchell	Elementary Paraprofessional
Carla Murandu	High School Paraprofessional
William Onley	Junior High Principal
Sarah Shearer	Elementary Teacher

Amanda Songer
Nicole Taylor
Judy Williams
Nancy Zachary

Parent Representative
Intermediate Teacher
Elementary/Intermediate Counselor
School Nurse

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.

Timeline of Events

January 14, 2022 - The District Improvement Committee held a meeting to review the LISD District of Innovation Plan. The decision was made to renew the proposed plan which will be in effect from 2022-2027 unless rescinded, amended or renewed by the LISD Board of Trustees during that time. The plan was posted to the district website after the meeting for public viewing and comments for 30 days.

February 18, 2022 - The Commissioner of Education was notified of the board's intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan.

February 25, 2022 - The District Improvement Committee held a public hearing to consider the final version of the proposed plan and voted unanimously to approve the plan.

March 8, 2022 - The LISD Board of Trustees met and unanimously approved the Leonard ISD District of Innovation Plan during the school board meeting.

March 11, 2022 - LISD provided a copy of [link to] the current local innovation plan to TEA for posting on the agency website.

Leonard ISD Innovation Plan

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 **second Monday of August**. This strategy will allow first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction and create 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. This plan would provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to the needs of the community.*

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 Pre-Kindergarten through 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 PK-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 principal and superintendent approval.*
- 2. If the student/teacher ratio averaged across a grade level reaches 24:1, it must have both principal and superintendent approval. The school board will be notified along with the parents of students within that classroom.*

The goal of the district is to keep the 22:1 ratio or below, with the flexibility to exceed the cap to adjust to growth and budget expenditures if deemed necessary.

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.

The TEC requirements listed above do not consider the unique financial and/or instructional needs of districts. These statutes limit the flexibility a district may have to recruit, employ, and retain persons who have appropriate expertise, experience and/or industry certifications that make them qualified to fill various positions.

District Innovative Strategy

Non-CTE Subjects

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 or more courses in a related field of their current certification but for which he/she is not certified. Special Education and ESL/Bilingual teachers must 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.*

Out of state certified teachers should be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. 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 will have the capability to approve all requests. Staff hired under a local teaching certificate will benefit from the same rights/responsibilities as certified teachers within the district. Local certifications do not transfer to other school districts.

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

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 the 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 the 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.*

An individual with college teaching or industry experience and/or industry certification could be eligible to teach a course. 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 subject. The superintendent will have the capability to approve all requests and an uncertified employee would obtain an at-will agreement and are subject to the same review and renewal/non-renewal procedures as other at-will employees.

Under this exemption, teacher waivers, state permit applications or other applicable paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The district will not be required to provide parental notification as long as the teacher meets the district standards for local certification approval.

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 the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. Therefore, for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher, counselor, or nurse 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 allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

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.

6. Transfer Students

(TEC 25.036) (FDA LOCAL)

TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC 25.036 allows a student to transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in the state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history, academic performance, and attendance records are also evaluated. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

District Innovative Strategy

The district is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting a transfer student allowing the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year if the student violates district expectations of attendance, discipline, academic achievement, and/or falsifying documentation. This flexibility would allow the district to have the option of immediate revocation of a student's transfer status by the superintendent or designee if they violate the transfer policy at any time during the school year. This allows LISD to better utilize school resources for the benefit of the district.

For questions or to share input regarding the renewal of the proposed District of Innovation Plan, please contact Superintendent Brad Maxwell at maxwellb@leonardisd.net or at 903-587-2318.

