



Gregory-Portland Independent School District Amendment to District of Innovation Plan

District Site Based Decision Making (DSBDM) Committee Approved Plan: January 2017

Board of Trustees Adopted Original Plan: February 16, 2017

District Site Based Decision Making Committee Approved Amended Plan: January 16, 2020

Board of Trustees Adopted Amended Plan: March 30, 2020

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On November 12, 2019 the Board of Trustees was informed that the Gregory-Portland ISD District of Innovation (DOI) Plan would be reviewed and revised. Items to be considered by the DSBDM committee to include in the DOI Plan included: 1) School Start Date; 2) Educator Certification; 3) Probationary Contracts; 4) Class Size Ratios; 5) Student Transfers; 6) Alternate Group Health Coverage; 7) 90 Percent Attendance Rule; 8) Minimum Minutes of Instruction and School Day Length; 9) Discipline; 10) Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator. On January 16, 2020, the DSBDM committee reviewed plan additions and revisions for consideration to submit to Board of Trustees. Board of Trustees consider amendments recommended by DSBDM committee on January 20, 2020. Proposed amendment posted on the Gregory-Portland ISD website for community input for at least 30 days. On March 23, 2020, Board of Trustees consider approving amendments to current Gregory-Portland ISD DOI Plan.

TERM

The amendment adopted by the Board of Trustees will adhere to the same term as the original Gregory-Portland ISD DOI Plan that took effect on February 17, 2017. The G-PISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time. The original DOI Plan is hereby incorporated into this Amendment by reference.

INNOVATIONS

The original Gregory-Portland ISD DOI Plan exempts the District from compliance with Texas Education Code (TEC) § 25.0811(a) governing school start dates. In addition to this original exemption, the Gregory-Portland ISD proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following additional areas:

Educator Certification

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

Currently

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request for a limited period of time. These laws limit the district's ability to hire teachers to fill hard-to-fill, high demand dual credit and career and technical /STEAM (applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts & Mathematics) courses when high quality certified teachers are not available.

TEC § 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate before employment with a school district, and prohibits the district from paying an educator without a valid certificate.

TEC § 21.057 requires a school district to provide notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

Innovation Plan

Gregory-Portland ISD will continue its quest for highly effective educators in every classroom. In order to best serve the students of the district, decisions on certification will be decided locally. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefits of such dual credit, career technical/STEAM and other course offerings at the discretion of the superintendent, the district seeks to establish its own local qualification requirement in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. When and if, after reasonable attempt to fill a position with a certified educator the district is unsuccessful, the district will have flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors, university professors in specific content areas or other individuals with experience in the area in question. The district shall establish local criteria for training and locally certifying individuals under a District Teaching Certification. In doing so, parental notification of "inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers" would no longer be necessary. The exemption would also allow internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area to be considered. Non-certified teachers working under a District Teacher Certification will be employed at will or under a non-certified contract. An employee working under a District Teaching Certification will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers and will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.

Probationary Contracts

(TEC §21.102(b)) (DCA LEGAL)

Currently

TEC § 21.102(b) states that a probationary contract 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 with the district. Five months is not enough time to determine evaluate effectiveness for newly hired staff (who qualify for Chapter 21 contracts) before contract recommendations are due in the Spring.

Innovative Plan

Experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses (5 years of experience in last 8 years) hired in Gregory-Portland ISD after the adoption of this Amended DOI Plan shall be issued two consecutive probationary contracts. This will allow sufficient time to evaluate the employee's effectiveness in the classroom and allow for professional development to enhance professional growth.

Inter-District Student Transfers

(TEC §25.036) (FDA LEGAL, FDA LOCAL)

Currently

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year and mid-year revocation is not permitted based on student discipline, attendance, or academic performance. Being granted a transfer to the district is a privilege and not a right; however, the district currently cannot remove transfer students based on failure to meet expected standards.

Innovative Plan

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfers may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the school year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. Students that fail to meet the districts academic performance standards as well as meet the state's 90% attendance standard for a course may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

Alternate Group Health Coverage

(TEC §22.004(i))

Currently

Gregory-Portland ISD currently participates in TRS ActiveCare Health Insurance and is prohibited from offering additional or alternative group health coverage to employees that may provide better coverages at lower costs. The high cost of TRS ActiveCare Health plan premiums has created financial hardships for employees with some staff opting not to have health care coverage offered by the district due to the high percentage of their income that the monthly premiums would consume.

Innovative Plan

Increased local control of the group health benefits plan would allow Gregory-Portland ISD to be responsive to employee and community needs by offering alternative group health coverage in tandem with TRS ActiveCare.

Ninety Percent Attendance Rule

(TEC §25.092) (FEC LOCAL)

Currently

State law conditions course credit on a student's attendance for at least 90 percent of the days on which the class is offered. The law currently requires the district to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery. The law limits student access to internships, non-traditional extracurricular experiences, field-based experiences, and enrichment opportunities.

Innovative Plan

Gregory-Portland ISD would be able to offer innovative learning opportunities to the at-risk students to earn credits. Flexibility in this area supports the district's goal of educating the whole child. Students attain valuable learning from extra/co-curricular activities that currently count against the student's 90% attendance availability if a student has to miss part of the traditional school day. This exemption will allow the district to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow G-PISD administrators to award credit to students that have demonstrated mastery of the content, rather than because they have attended a certain number of school days.

The plan would simultaneously provide rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the district by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. G-PISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption.

Relief from this statute does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. This provision also in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with TEC §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with TEC §28.0216.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction and Length of School Day

(TEC §25.081) (EC LEGAL, EB LEGAL)

Currently

TEC §25.081 requires districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction or 7 hours each day (including intermissions and recess). The law also allows school districts and charter

schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity.

Innovative Plan

Relief from TEC §25.081 could potentially allow for individual campus flexibility, independence and creativity while adding opportunities for teacher professional development and collaboration. Relief would also allow for individualized, flexible opportunities for Alternative High School Students as well as reduced number of minutes for Early Childhood students without the need for a TEA waiver. The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction 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, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time which will accommodate additional professional development/collaboration opportunities for teachers to perfect their craft, deepen their content knowledge and analyze student data.

Campus Behavior Coordinator

(TEC §37.0012) (FO LEGAL, FO LOCAL)

Currently

TEC § 37.0012 requires that a person on each campus be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37. At our secondary campuses, one individual is designated as the Campus Behavior Coordinator to manage discipline for 1,100-1,350 students. It is necessary to have additional administrators authorized to handle student discipline and provide notice to parents about disciplinary incidents

Innovative Plan

Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses the opportunity to allow multiple campus administrators to perform student discipline tasks. Campus administrators will fully understand and get to know the students in their caseload rather than sourcing all discipline matters to one employee designated as the campus behavior coordinator. While it is imperative that all employees work together and be informed as to the discipline that is occurring on a campus, it is just as crucial for students to depend on an administrator they know and trust in all facets of their education, including their discipline.