



District of Innovation Plan

FINAL VERSION FOR APPROVAL

District of Innovation Overview:

The District of Innovation concept, passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas’ open enrollment charter schools.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

Local control: Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.

Customization: Districts can create an innovation plan for a level of school (e.g., only high schools), grade level, or a single campus.

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, including exemptions from mandates such as:

- School start date
- 90% attendance rule
- Class-size ratios
- Site-based decision-making processes
- Certain student discipline provisions
- Use of planning and preparation periods
- Teacher appraisal requirements

The Lockhart Independent School District believes that this level of local control would add flexibility and empower our district to think and act in innovative ways to meet our district goals, which are listed below.

1. Create a collaborative culture of contagious ambition.
2. Expect all staff to embrace growth opportunities.
3. Empower students to seize opportunities to achieve at high levels.

Term

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is five years. The District of Innovation Plan was adopted on April 10, 2017 with the term from August 1, 2017 to August 1, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. In the Spring of 2022, the District began the process to renew the District of Innovation plan. The term of the renewal will commence August 1, 2022 to August 1, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

2021-2022 District Advisory Committee

Brittany	Madkins	Navarro	Teacher
Melinda	McCormick	Navarro	Teacher
Vanessa	Chapa-Gibson	Navarro	Campus Administrator
Scott	Lloyd	LHS	Teacher
Dalia	Perez	LHS	Teacher
Willie	Henderson	LHS	Paraprofessional
Lupita	Narvaez	LHS	Campus Administrator
Matt	Buehner	LHS	Teacher
Leo	Vazquez	LHS	Teacher
Krystal	Evans	LHS	Teacher
Brandi	Hurt	Bluebonnet	Teacher
Katlin	Stephens	Bluebonnet	Teacher
Carter	Wisian	Bluebonnet	Instructional Aide
Gregory	Foster	Pride	Teacher
Angelica	Garcia	Plum Creek	Paraprofessional
Roxy	Acosta	Plum Creek	Teacher
Jenna	Dubose	Plum Creek	Teacher
Courtney	Ramirez	LJHS	Teacher
Rachel	Huggins	LJHS	Teacher
Ryan	Shinto	LJHS	Teacher
Chess	Long	LJHS	Campus Administrator
Jana	Tafoya	LJHS	Teacher
Nicole	Laurence	Clear Fork	Teacher
Kayla	Garcia	Clear Fork	Teacher
Brenda	Hammers	Clear Fork	Paraprofessional
Siobhan	Manasco	Carver	Teacher
Brenda	Soto	Carver	Teacher
Karen	Nixon	Carver	Campus Administrator
Jasmin	Corley	ABS	Teacher
Jessica	Martinez	ABS	Teacher
Joanna	Villiarreal	ABS	Campus Administrator
Stephaine	Camarillo	Central	District Administrator
Kenneth	Elliot	Central	District Administrator
Heather	Pederson	Lockhart	Parent
Joseph	Cantu	Lockhart	Community Member
Emilia	Aviles	Lockhart	Parent
Dulce	Acosta	Lockhart	Parent / Community Member
Melissa	O'Keefe	Lockhart	Parent / Community Member
Bethany	Estrada	Lockhart	Parent
Liza	Castillo	Lockhart	Parent / Nonprofit Organization

District of Innovation Plan:

Connection to District Goals:

Goal 1: Create a collaborative culture of contagious ambition.

Goal 2: Expect all staff to embrace growth opportunities.

Goal 3: Empower students to seize opportunities to achieve at high levels.

The Lockhart Independent School District recognizes that we are a district experiencing rapid student growth. We also recognize that the methods which previously met student needs may no longer support all students achieving at their highest levels. Changes in student demographics and shifting pedagogical frameworks that best support future-ready students require a paradigm shift for all school districts across Texas and across our country. As an organization, we must all confront areas in which we can grow so that we may better serve our students. As an organization, we must also model collaboration with our school community and demonstrate actions for what it means to be ambitious. The district of innovation designation serves as a rallying call for our community that clearly and proudly demonstrates our belief that our community can be a better decision-making body for students when it has the freedom to exercise local control over the decision-making process and policies that govern us.

We must be able to maximize our responsiveness to our community's vision for the future. As we begin turning our community's goals for their children into reality, we must be positioned to minimize the barriers that could otherwise preclude us from doing our best work on their behalf. Our work will require LISD to evolve, to think differently about critical systemic components such as how we are organized, how we evaluate our staff, how we spend our time with students and staff, how we recruit and retain top talent, and how we grow continually as a learning organization. To think differently, we must respond differently. Leveraging the freedom and flexibility afforded as a District of Innovation will assure we are empowered to do so.

Exemptions

Teacher and Principal Evaluations

Exemption from: TEC §§ 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541

Related Board Policies: DNA (Legal), DNA (Local), DNB (Legal), DNB (Local)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan: LISD believes that all staff members can and must continually improve in their role of supporting student achievement. In fact, LISD goal #2 states that we expect all staff members to embrace growth opportunities. Teachers and principals should be evaluated fairly and assessed on the entire scope of their job functions. While student learning is the ultimate measure of teacher and principal effectiveness, multiple metrics should be utilized. We believe that our current state-required evaluation tool, T-TESS, places too heavy an emphasis on STAAR scores. We are equally concerned that our current systems will require the district to give additional assessments in subject areas that do not have a STAAR test simply for the sake of testing to use on a teacher's evaluation. Further, evaluations should target progress made on reaching local goals and aspirations identified by individual faculty.

Local Guidelines and Innovation Strategies: LISD intends to use the T-TESS and T-PESS for the 2017-2018 school year, removing the portion of the evaluation related to only using STAAR scores and/or STAAR growth to rate the teacher's role in student achievement. In subsequent school years a new appraisal systems may be developed by a committee consisting of but not limited to teachers and administrators.

School Calendar

Exemption from: TEC § TEC 25.0811

Related Board Policies: EB (Legal), EB (Local)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan: The Texas Education Code requires that students may not begin school before the fourth Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to begin school earlier

The waiver process was eliminated several years ago, mandating that all schools begin school no earlier than the fourth Monday of August, with no exceptions. This requirement inhibits the District's flexibility to develop a calendar that best meets students', staff, and community needs. Research has found that a catalyst to accelerating student learning and improving teacher practice is allowing for structured time for educators to prepare, lesson plan, and receive professional development. Other benefits of this flexibility include having balanced semesters that allow for finals prior to the Christmas break and for the completion of the K-12 school year that allows high school students the ability to attend summer college courses.

Local Guidelines and Innovation Strategies: The school calendar will be designed so that the semesters are balanced, with the first semester ending at Christmas break. The school calendar will allow for timely and meaningful staff development. Before the school year begins, teachers will have ample professional development and teacher preparation and planning time. The calendar will provide for designated time after the first quarter for professional development and possible flex time to make up for professional development attended during the summer months and/or Saturday professional development.

Teacher Certification

Exemption from: TEC §§ 21.003, 21.053, 21.057

Related Board Policies: DBA (Legal), DK (Legal), DK (Local), DK (Exhibit)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan: Current statute requires that all teachers be fully certified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA)/State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), regardless of previous work experience and/or demonstrated knowledge and skills in their area of specialty. Although it is possible to seek an emergency certificate, certification is dependent upon TEA approving the request. This process is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time

TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

LISD needs the ability to make a local decision regarding who is best-suited to teach our children. While the District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and make attempts to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question, when that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. LISD needs flexibility in order to hire for “hard to fill” positions at all levels, Pre-K-12. LISD aspires to continue growing programs offering students career and technology industry certifications. In order to position our students for the most opportunities, at times, it may be appropriate to be flexible with teaching candidates who possess the knowledge and skills that would benefit the students of LISD, but who do not possess a Texas teaching certification.

Local Guidelines and Innovation Strategies: LISD is seeking flexibility with certification requirements for all courses excluding core courses, i.e.: Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. To bolster classroom management skills of non-SBEC certified teachers, LISD shall implement a mentorship and intensive training program for all new hires lacking SBEC certification that must be no less than one year in length. New hires must have proper industry certification or comparable industry experience. Administration/hiring panels may determine what level of education, certification, or industry experience must be present.

Exemption from: Lockhart ISD seeks exemption from all permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed by HB 1842, 84th Session of the Texas Legislature, excluding TEC 25.112 and TEC 25.113, regarding maximum class size.

Related Board Policies: All LISD Legal and Local Board Policies, excluding those policies which specifically address the provision of the Texas Education Code for which a District of Innovation Plan may not provide for an exemption under § 12A.004(a).

Manner in which statutes inhibit the goals of the plan: It is in the best interest of Lockhart

ISD to maximize our adaptability in meeting the needs of our ever-changing demographics. In order to adapt in a timely manner, we also need the flexibility to minimize barriers that preclude us from the necessary adaptations. The provisions of the Texas Education Code which the Texas Legislature considered and did not limit for exemption all place additional burdens on LISD and prevent quick adaption by the District to implement the District's goals.

Requesting full local control by relieving the District from the encumbrances of all permissible statutes places the responsibility for improvements into the hands and minds of our local educators and community members. Indeed, these stakeholders have the most to gain from our improvement efforts as they pinpoint and strategically act upon the immediate needs of our students each and every year. LISD will phase in implementation of the Local Innovation Plan, beginning with exemption from TEC §§ 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541, 25.0811, 21.053, 21.057, and 21.003, as discussed above.

Local Guidelines and Innovation Strategies: LISD will phase in implementation of the Local Innovation Plan, beginning with specific exemptions addressed in this plan above, i.e., TEC §§ 21.352 (local role regarding appraisals), 21.3541 (appraisal and professional development system for principals), 25.0811 (first day of instruction), and 21.003 (certification).

LISD will implement an enhanced local policy development process that is rigorous, transparent, and inclusive of stakeholder input when seeking any further exemptions and changes to the District of Innovation Plan. The process for approving future changes to the District of Innovation Plan shall include a committee made up of teachers, district staff, and community members. Any new changes would be presented by this committee, to the District Advisory Committee and then to the Board of Trustees. Future policy changes that require an exemption from a provision in the Texas Education Code must be approved by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the membership of the Board of Trustees.

Once District of Innovation status is achieved, LISD will voluntarily continue to comply with all current provisions of the Texas Education Code and related regulations, as well as all current District legal and local policies that are not specifically addressed in this plan. Unless and until the LISD Board of Trustees takes action to enact a particular exemption from the Texas

Education Code and related regulations, there will be no change in the District's compliance with state laws and local policies. If and when, during implementation of this Local Innovation Plan, the Board of Trustees takes action to activate an exemption under HB 1842, the fact that LISD is enacting an exemption as a District of Innovation will be clearly noted in the legal and local policies affected. A list or index of exemptions enacted as a District of Innovation will be kept in Policy AF (LOCAL) – INNOVATION DISTRICTS.

