



**WICHITA FALLS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**District of Innovation Plan  
2022-2027**

**Approved by the WFISD Board of Trustees  
May 16, 2022**

**Draft version placed on website  
March 10, 2022**

In accordance with Texas HB 1842, the District Advisory Committee recommends the following plan to be in effect from May 31, 2022 – May 31, 2027

## **Board of Trustees**

Mike Rucker, President

Elizabeth Yeager, Vice President

Tom Bursey, Secretary

Dale Harvey

Mark Lukert

Katherine McGregor

Bob Payton

## **District Administration**

Michael S. Kuhrt, Superintendent

Dr. Peter Griffiths, Associate Superintendent

## **Previous Executive Summary for 2017-2022**

House Bill 1842 passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. Wichita Falls ISD developed its first innovation plan that was approved and passed by the WFISD Board of Trustees on April 11, 2017 to become effective for the school years of 2017-2022.

In order to maximize opportunities for all WFISD students, an innovative committee was created in the spring of 2016. The district was awarded the DOI status for the years of 2017-2022. The DOI status has allowed WFISD to have more local control and flexibility for the last 5 years to ensure staff was better equipped to make decisions that are in the best interests of the students as well as allow the flexibility to provide an exceptional learning experience to all students.

The effort was managed by a local innovation committee comprised of district and community stakeholders. The committee, after months of work, proposed exemptions in the following areas:

- School Calendar
- Teacher Certification
- Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade-90 Percent Rule
- Student Discipline-Campus Behavior Coordinators
- Minimum Minutes of Instruction
- Teacher Appraisal System

During the 2020 school year, The District Advisory revised the plan to readdress the First Day of Instruction.

Original Innovation Committee Members who served during 2016-17 and developed the initial plan are as follows:

Jennifer Faulkenbery	Teacher
Letitia Pert	Community Member
Angelica Perkins	Teacher
James (Jim) Price	Community Member
Lisa Martischnig	Teacher
Alan Rainey	Community Member
Roberto Rodriguez	Community Member
Amy Simmons	Teacher
Matthew Capps	Dean of West College of Education, MSU
Tracey Goodman	Teacher
Diann Taylor	Retired Administrator
Carol Sales	Interim CEO of the Arts Council, Wichita Falls Inc.
Jared Jacobs	Teacher
Denise Williams	Retired WFISD
Krista Kaspar	Teacher
Sarah Chisum	Teacher
Bethlyn Eby	Teacher
Ferran Kaspar	Teacher
Michael Tayntor	Teacher
Lisa Kowalick	Teacher
Larry Fox	Teacher
Stephanie Robles	Assistant Principal
Shannon Cunningham	Assistant Principal
Angela Vaughn	Counselor
Debby Patterson	Director of School Administration

## **Current Executive Summary for 2022-2027**

Currently, WFISD is in the process or renewing the DOI status to make sure that the district continues to employ some of the same opportunities until 2027. Although not submitting the same exemptions in the original plan, some exemptions remain the same and two additional exemptions have been added.

The committee responsible for the review, feedback and approval of the renewal plan are members of the District Planning Advisory Committee. This Council includes stakeholders from the district and community. The current local innovation plan was reviewed at the February 10 and March 10 meetings in which present DAC members provided specific feedback on the components of the plan.

The 2021-22 DAC members and District support team:

## **INNOVATION PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Ashley Parson** Parent

**Dittika Gupta** Parent

**Susan Grisel** Community Representative

**Paul Reyes** Community Representative

**Steve Sims** Business Representative

**Marcus McGee** Business Representative

**Sarah Chisum** Teacher, Crockett Elementary

**Gloria Alexander** Teacher, Farris Early Learning Center

**Brittany Owens** Teacher, Sheppard Elementary

**Renaë Dickens** Teacher, Haynes Elementary

**Melinda Alexander** Teacher, Milam Elementary

**Debbie Curry** Teacher, Brook Village Early Childhood Center

**Ferran Kaspar** Teacher, Barwise Middle School

**Renaë Bates** Teacher, WFHS

**Larry Krugle** Teacher, CEC

**Joyce McCurdy** Teacher, Kirby Middle School

**Travis Blackwell** Teacher, McNeil Middle School

**Donnell Thomas** Teacher, Hirschi High School

**Loy Studer** Teacher, Rider High School

**Gena Ayers** Milam Elementary Administration

**Summer Bynum** McNeil Middle School Administration

**Polly Birkhead** McNeil Middle School Non-Instructional Professional

**Frank Tarver** Fain Campus Specialist Instructional Support

**Carla Burgess** McNeil Middle School Paraprofessional Staff

**Dayna Hardaway** District Administration

**Julian Garcia** Wichita Falls High School Student

**Marcella Hilmi** Wichita Falls High School Student

**Isabella Groves** Rider High School Student

**Tate Caswell** Rider High School Student

**Akansha Ranbhise** Hirschi High School Student

**Polet Garcia** Hirschi High School Student

## **Renewal Requirements**

Local innovation plans must be renewed every five years. In the fall 2021, Administration reviewed the requirements for renewal of the Local Innovation Plan and developed a timeline towards Board of Trustees consideration and renewal. The Texas Education Code outlines parameters for Districts to renew the Local Innovation Plan that include:

- Communication to Commissioner of Education of Wichita Falls ISD's intent to vote on adoption of the Local Innovation Plan.
- Draft Plan posted for 30 days on the public website
- Public Meeting/Hearing for members of the public to hear details of the plan
- Approval of the District Planning Advisory Council
- Board of Trustees Adoption of Local Innovation Plan
- Communication to the Commissioner of Education with final Local Innovation Plan link posted to the website

## **Timeline of Events**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| February 10 | Review and make any corrections, deletions or additions to the plan.  |
| March 10    | Finalize plan and post for minimum of 30 days   |
| April 12    | Board notify commissioner for the intent to vote to renew the DOI with any modifications  |
| May 5       | DAC to hold public meeting of DOI plan. DAC approve the plan  |
| May 16      | Board to approve plan   |
| By May 31   | Complete notification of the commissioner of the date the plan received Board approval. Post plan to website and within 15 days provide link to TEA for posting on the agency website |

## **District of Innovation Plan**

Wichita Falls Independent School District prides itself on providing a high-quality education, for all of our students, while always looking to our future in areas to improve. This is evident in our Core Beliefs that state our commitment to:

- Providing equal access to a quality education for every child that enters our District regardless of race, sex, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- Doing everything possible to ensure student success, by not accepting excuses for anything less.
- Creating schools that provide a high-quality foundation in academics and strong support for emotional needs and character development.

- Providing a rigorous, relevant college preparatory curriculum as well as high-quality career and technology programs.
- Allocating resources to ensure equity for all students to reach their full potential.
- Providing students, the opportunity to perform to their full potential and ensuring that there is no discernable difference between the achievement levels of students by race, gender, or economic status.
- Basing academic decisions on quality research and reliable, pertinent data.
- Ensuring that quality instruction takes priority over all other functions.
- Providing a safe and secure environment for our students and staff.
- Maintaining the integrity of all support systems.
- Operating a workplace where all employees are valued while striving to be the employer of choice.
- Ensuring that every classroom has a caring and effective teacher.
- Ensuring that campus and district administrators demonstrate strong leadership and management skills.
- Holding all employees accountable for student success and student well-being.
- Encouraging and actively promoting engagement opportunities for all students and their families.
- Partnering with community members, businesses and institutions to enhance student achievement.

With a focus on what is best for the students of WFISD, the District of Innovation Committee has reviewed the current plan and want to delete, add and renew exemptions on the innovative plan for the district. Following are the areas for which WFISD plans to implement exemptions and provide areas of innovation.

## **Areas of Innovation**

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

- School Calendar
- Teacher Certification
- Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade-90 Percent Rule
- Student Discipline-Campus Behavior Coordinators

- Student Discipline-Suspension for Homeless
- Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

## ***RENEW***

### **1. T.E.C. Section §25.0811 First Day of Instruction (Uniform School Start Date)**

*Section §25.0811 FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.*

Restricting the school start date to the fourth Monday in August operationally challenges Wichita Falls ISD because the required 75,600 instructional minutes must be scheduled between the fourth Monday in August and early June. The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the need of the students, the schools, and the community. WFISD will not start school earlier than August 10 for students and August 3 for teachers, not including new teacher training.

Benefit of Exemption:

Having the flexibility to establish a school start date prior to the fourth Monday in August will enable the District to:

- provide the District the flexibility to determine locally, on an annual basis, what start and end dates best meet the needs of students, schools, and the community. For example, the district may start with a shortened week at the beginning of school to ease transition for students, families and staff
- better balance the amount of instructional time available in each semester, providing classroom teachers the opportunity to deliver more equitable learning experiences for students in the fall and spring semesters, and to complete the first semester prior to the winter break
- provide more instructional time prior to the administration of spring state assessments and minimize lost instructional time after the conclusion of state assessments
- provide additional time at the conclusion of the school calendar for provision of remedial instruction prior to summer administration of state assessments required for grade level promotion or graduation
- utilize flexibility to schedule student breaks/holidays, professional development or other options during the school year
- complete the school year prior to the end of May to allow for increased flexibility in scheduling graduation and allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness

## ***RENEW***

### **2. T.E.C. Section §21.003 (a); T.E.C. Section §21.053 (a)-(b); Certification Required**

*Section §21.003 CERTIFICATION REQUIRED and Section §21.053 (a) A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.*

*Sec. 21.053. PRESENTATION AND RECORDING OF CERTIFICATES. (a) A person who desires to teach in a public school shall present the person's certificate for filing with the employing district before the person's contract with the board of trustees of the district is binding.*

*(b) An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate*

T.E.C. Section §21.003 and T.E.C. Section §21.053 requiring appropriate state certification for all teaching positions, inhibits the District's ability to fill certain teaching positions having very limited certified candidate pools.

Benefit of Exemption:

In the event a district cannot locate an appropriately certified teacher for a hard-to-fill position, WFISD would like exemptions in the area of Career and Technical Education and in the Bilingual and Foreign Language programs. Local qualifications will allow the district to recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experience.

Local Guidelines:

\*The District will establish Local Criteria, such as years of experience, qualifications, and industry certifications, to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate.

\*Principals, along with the CTE, Bilingual, and/or Foreign Language departments, will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual. The Superintendent will notify the Board before beginning employment.

\*WFISD may provide a minimum of 20 hours of classroom management training for uncertified CTE, Bilingual, or Foreign Language teachers who are approved to teach.

## ***RENEW***

### **3. T.E.C. Section §25.092; Minimum Attendance for Class Credit of Final Grade**

*Section §25.092 Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (a) Except as provided by this section, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 1*



*may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.*

Benefit of Exemption:

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. While WFISD believes strongly in student attendance, there may be a variety of ways to allow students to show mastery of a given course despite unforeseen circumstances that caused their attendance to fall below the 90% barrier. Flexibility allows for instructional delivery methods including virtual learning models and flexibility to support students unable to attend class due to extenuating circumstances.

## ***NEW ADDITION***

### **4. T.E.C. Section §37.005; Suspension**

Section §37.005 restricts the use of out of school suspension for a student who is designated as homeless. This at-risk factor stays a designation for an entire school year although the student may find adequate housing after the school year starts. The district would like to identify the students who do not have adequate housing and continue to apply restrictions set by the code. If adequate housing for the student is determined to be available and used by the student, and Campus and District administration, and our Homeless Liaison verify the housing situation, the district might use out-of-school suspension as a discipline technique.

Benefit of Exemption

Out-of-school suspension can be an effective deterrent for behavior. The district would like to have the option available for homeless students who have adequate housing.

## ***NEW ADDITION***

### **5. T.E.C. Section §37.105; Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification (New in 2020)**

*Section §37.105 Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification (a)A school administrator, school resource officer, or school district peace officer of a school district may refuse to allow a person to enter on or may eject a person from property under the district's control if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and:*

*(1) The person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person: or*

- (2) *The person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and:*
- a. *The administrator, resource officer, or peace officer issues a verbal warning to the person that the person's behavior is inappropriate and may result in the person's refusal of entry or ejection; and*
  - b. *The person persists in that behavior.*

Benefit of Exemption:

Texas Education Code §37.105, applies to rejecting unruly guests from campuses and school events. In 2017, the Texas Legislature changed the law on how school administrators can eject unruly guests from school events. This applies to parents and community members, not students. Under the law, the guest must be given a warning before he or she is ejected. Upon ejection, the guest must also be given notice of how he can appeal the ejection. WFISD would allow designated staff members the authority to remove parents or visitors whose behavior is deemed inappropriate without warning or written notice.

## ***RENEW***

### **6. T.E.C. Section §37.0012; Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**

*Section §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator (a) A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other administrator selected by the principal. (b) The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter.*

Benefit of Exemption:

Texas Education Code §37.0012 constrains campus governance by requiring one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.0012 allows WFISD campus principals to divide and/or delegate campus behavior coordinator duties to assistant principals as needed and appropriate. WFISD's approach to discipline is becoming more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration regarding student discipline.