



Peaster Independent School District

Local Innovation Plan 2022-2027

INTRODUCTION

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On August 30, 2022, the Peaster Independent School District's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices that support local needs, including exemptions from certain mandates such as the uniform school start date and required minutes of instruction.
- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a District of Innovation Plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.

On August 30, 2022, the Board appointed a District of Innovation Committee ("Committee") comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on October 31, 2022 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation Plan ("Plan").

On September 12, 2023, the DOI committee, as appointed by the Board on August 30, 2022, met to review and discuss the amendments to the plan.

District of Innovation Committee Members:

<i>Dr. Aronda Green</i>	<i>Associate Superintendent replaced Lance Johnson</i>
<i>Dr. Rebecca Stephens</i>	<i>Director of Curriculum and Instruction replaced Stephanie McElroy</i>
<i>Becky Glenn</i>	<i>Principal, Peaster Elementary School</i>
<i>Jennifer Byrd</i>	<i>Principal, Peaster Intermediate School</i>
<i>Phillip Black</i>	<i>Principal, Peaster Junior High School replaced Steven Valkenaar</i>
<i>Doug McCollough</i>	<i>Principal, Peaster High School</i>
<i>Rebecca Williams</i>	<i>Elementary Teacher</i>
<i>Jackie Pilgrim</i>	<i>Elementary Teacher</i>
<i>Amanda McDaniel</i>	<i>HS Teacher</i>
<i>Liz Farmer</i>	<i>IS Teacher</i>
<i>Kristin Aleksick</i>	<i>HS Teacher</i>
<i>Jesse Martinez</i>	<i>HS Teacher</i>
<i>David Hart</i>	<i>Business Owner</i>
<i>Brandi Baldwin</i>	<i>Community Member</i>
<i>Tracey Cain</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Traci Hamlin</i>	<i>Parent</i>

TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning December 1, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

District Mission/Vision/Commitments/Goals

The Local Innovation Plan is guided by and aligned with the Board of Trustee's Mission, Vision, Commitments, and Goals:

District Vision

Growing Our Tradition of Excellence

District Mission

Peaster ISD prepares students for success in the 21st century by engaging them in rigorous and relevant learning opportunities that promote excellence. Our expectation is that all students and staff will achieve their potential and become independent lifelong learners.

District Commitments:

1. We are committed to learning daily, personal responsibility, leadership, growth and service for all students and staff.
2. We are committed to providing a safe, secure student-centered environment that upholds tradition, instills respect and builds character.
3. We are committed to maintaining excellence in a growing community grounded in respect, unity, compassion, faith and family.

PEASTER ISD GOALS

GOAL 1:

PEASTER ISD WILL PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH STUDENTS ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL LEARNING.

GOAL 2:

PEASTER ISD WILL EXHIBIT A CULTURE WHERE POSITIVE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IS VALUED WITHIN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

GOAL 3:

PEASTER ISD WILL BE A COMMUNITY WHERE POSITIVE, RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS ARE VALUE

Timeline of Events

August 30: Board holds public hearing to discuss possibility of pursuing District of Innovation Plan
Board takes action to pursue District of Innovation Plan
Board approves District of Innovation Committee members

September 7: District of Innovation Committee develops draft plan

October 31: District Advisory Committee votes and approves the final plan in a public meeting.

November 1: Innovation plan posted for public view/Board notifies Commissioner of intent to vote on Plan

December 1: Board votes on District of Innovation plan

December 2: District post plan to website

Areas of Exemption and 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:

- Uniform School Start Date - First Day of Instruction
- Educator Certification Requirement
- Probationary Contracts
- Student/Teacher Ratios and Class Size
- Teacher Mentors
- Campus Behavior Coordinator Designation
- Out-of-School Suspension for Students Below Grade 3
- Removal of Unwanted Visitors
- Transfer Students
- Bank Depositories
- Retire/Rehire Teacher

- Local School Health Advisory Committee
- Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs
- DAEP Placement for Possessing or Using E-cigarettes
- Armed Security Officer

Uniform School Start Date - First Day of Instruction - Texas Education Code §25.0811

Current Requirements: *First Day of Instruction* – A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August, no exceptions.

Proposed Flexibility: *Flexible Calendar* –Peaster ISD will waive the fourth Monday of August start date in an effort to create greater flexibility in the school calendar which will enable the district to be more responsive to students’ needs, and professional development needs, by balancing the amount of instructional time in the semesters, allowing teachers to better pace and deliver instruction, and providing training as needed throughout the school year.

Local Guidelines: The District Education Improvement Committee will provide input into the development of the school calendar, and the recommended school calendar is subject to Board approval.

Educator Certification Requirement - Texas Education Code §TEC 21.044, §21.003

Current Requirements: 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 certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

Proposed Flexibility:

a. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where 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.

b. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher, or an individual who holds a current bachelor’s degree, to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.

c. An individual with experience and appropriate certifications and/or licensure in the content of an elective course could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or elective course through a local teaching certificate. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Examples: an experienced homebuilder teaching a

building trades course, a licensed corrections officer teaching a criminal justice course, or a retired CPA teaching an entry level accounting course.

d. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, and may be subject to increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.

e. Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful. The Superintendent will notify the board during August Board meeting or upon hiring each school year of those in an alternative certification program or not in compliance with TEC 21.053

Probationary Contracts - Texas Education Code §21.102b

Current Requirements: Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed Flexibility: Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to three years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in PISD. This will allow PISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

Student/Teacher Ratios and Class Size Texas Education Code 25.112, 25.113, Sec. 25.112 (a)

Current Requirements: Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class Innovation

Proposed Flexibility: As a fast-growth district, Peaster ISD carefully analyzes growth predictions to make responsible staffing decisions to support engaging instruction in the classroom.

PISD recognizes the value of reasonable class sizes in elementary grade levels and will continue with the priority to maintain a student-to-teacher ratio of 20:1 per Pre-Kindergarten-4th grade homeroom class. Local considerations will include timing of enrollment of new students, consistency of instruction for students in the grade level, availability of high-quality applicants, and availability of space and resources.

When a class exceeds the 22:1 limit, the Texas Education Code requires districts to obtain board approval and apply for a waiver through the Texas Education Agency. This flexibility will eliminate the requirement of the waiver process and support student success through allowing local decisions regarding the division of classes, disrupted instruction, and/or finding quality

applicants.

Professional Development / Mentor Teachers TEC §21.451; TEC §21.458

Current Requirements:

TEC §21.451 prescribes staff development requirements for educators. These requirements impede the District's ability to provide timely professional development to employees based on newly emerging issues, data, and student needs.

TEC §21.458 sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees. This provision states that the District may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, despite the fact that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. The District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers in need of assistance. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers.

Proposed Flexibility: The District will exercise local discretion in determining the areas of need, content, duration, and frequency for professional development for its instructional and non-instructional staff. The District will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.

Behavior Coordinator Exemption - Texas Education Code § 37.0012

Current Requirements: State law requires districts to name one individual per campus to serve as a behavior coordinator. This requirement can create inefficiencies and limit the effectiveness of our administrators. The burden of placing this on one person is not sustainable, and the possible delays it creates for staff, students, and families should be avoided.

Proposed Flexibility: Local Guidelines and Innovations Strategies: Peaster ISD is seeking a more collaborative approach to behavior management where the principal may delegate the duties to campus administrator(s) to best serve the needs of students and families.

Removal of Unwanted Visitors Texas Education Code §37.105

Current Requirements: For unruly guests at school functions or events, a school district must first give a warning before he or she is ejected. Upon ejection, the guest must also be given notice of how he or she can appeal the ejection. Texas Education Code §37.105 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 the person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person; or the person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting. Prior to refusing entry or ejecting any person, the administrator, resource officer, or

peace officer must issue 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 the person persists in that behavior. In addition, at the time a person is refused entry or rejected, the district must provide written notice regarding the appeal process.

Proposed Flexibility: PISD will make all reasonable attempts to diffuse situations in the case of unruly guests, at school and District functions and events; however, in the case of situations where immediate action must be taken, the District would allow designated staff members the authority to remove an attendee whose behavior is deemed inappropriate without warning or written notice regarding the appeal process.

Transfer Students Full Year Requirement- Texas Education Code 25.036

Current Requirements: (a) Any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may 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 or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

(b) A transfer agreement under this section shall be filed and preserved as receiving district record for audit purposes of the agency.

Proposed Flexibility: The District shall be exempt from state law requiring a transfer to be for a one-year period. Therefore, the Superintendent and Campus Administration may revoke a student's transfer at any time during a school year if the student does not maintain acceptable levels of attendance, academic achievement, and compliance with the District's Student Code of Conduct as defined in FDA (LOCAL). In addition, students who have been accepted as a transfer student may have such status revoked by the Superintendent and Campus Administration at any time, including when the student has been assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.

School District Depository Contracts Texas Education Code §45.205, §45.206

Current Requirements: The depository for the District shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. A district and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for two additional two-year terms. Per S.B. 754, passed by the 85th Texas Legislature, effective September 1, 2017, TEC §45.205 will allow the District to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year terms. The contract term and any extension must coincide with the district's fiscal year. An extension is not subject to the requirements of TEC 45.206, 45.205 and 45.

Proposal Flexibility: Peaster ISD utilizes services provided by the bank on a daily basis. PISD will continue to use the local depository for the District without rebidding. At the end of each two-

year term, the District and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for multiple additional two-year periods. The District must review the contract to ensure the best value and support for the District, and obtain Board approval for each of the two-year periods. Nothing in this process would hinder the District's ability to undertake bidding at the end of any of the two-year periods. The District believes it can operate most optimally if it is not limited to two or even three additional two-year extensions of its depository contract, allowing the Superintendent and Board of Trustees more time for planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the District's educational goals.

Retire/Rehire Minimum Salary - Texas Education Code 21.002, 21.402, 21.415

Current Requirements: Currently, all districts, when hiring a retired educator must pay them their salary based upon the TEA minimum salary pay scale; in addition, the districts are required to pay a TRS surcharge.

Proposed Flexibility: PISD would like the opportunity to hire an eligible retired educator and pay them below the TEA minimum pay scale while also paying the required TRS surcharge. We believe that by hiring an eligible retired educator our students, campuses, and district will reap the rewards of having a veteran educator who is still involved and passionate in the education process. In addition, the district will be able to have an experienced educator at a significantly less cost than had we paid them based upon the TEA minimum pay scale plus the TRS surcharge. Thus, by hiring an eligible retired educator PISD will be adding value in the schools and will be making sound fiscal decisions for our district's stakeholders

Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education Instruction Texas Education Code §28.004

Current Requirements: Sec. 28.004 of this code requires The Board of Trustees of each school district shall establish a local School Health Advisory Council to assist the District in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the District's health education instruction. This section requires the establishment of a School Health Advisory Council and outlines the duties of this council.

Proposed Flexibilities: The District takes exemption from the requirement to establish a School Health Advisory Council and the subsequent duties of that council. The District will utilize the District and campus improvement committees to seek feedback regarding health-related curriculum, food service, budget, and other related items as needed.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs Texas Education Code §37.008(7)

Current Requirements: TEC §37.008(7) states that a DAEP employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements established under Subchapter B, Chapter 21. This statute limits the District's ability to be innovative when providing a DAEP setting when needed.

Proposed Flexibilities: The District takes exemption from Sec. §37.008(7). Since there will be a limited number of students assigned to DAEP and all academic responsibilities and resources

are provided to the student by his/her teacher of record for each course, an additional certified teacher is not required. The campus administrator will ensure that DAEP staff have the support necessary to properly supervise the students assigned to the program and will lend assistance of teachers with specific certification as needed.

DAEP Placement for Possessing or Using E-Cigarettes Texas Education Code §37.006

Current Requirements: Effective September 1, 2023, TEC §37.006 mandates the following:

(b) Subject to the requirements of Section 37.009(a), a student shall be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program as provided by Section 37.008 if the student:

...

(2) commits the following on or within 300 feet of school property, as measured from any point on the school’s real property boundary line, or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off of school property:

...

(C) sells, gives, or delivers to another person or possesses or uses or is under the influence of:

...

(C-1) possesses, uses, or is under the influence of, or sells, gives, or delivers to another person marihuana, as defined by Section 481.002, Health and Safety Code, or tetrahydrocannabinol, as defined by rule adopted under Section 481.003 of that code;

(C-2) possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.081, Health and Safety Code;

The above language allows no flexibility, other than the mandatory mitigating factors provided in TEC §37.001. Previously, districts could handle student misconduct regarding e-cigarettes and/or vape pens pursuant to their respective Codes of Conduct or Student Handbook. The statute essentially creates a zero-tolerance, automatic DAEP placement for students.

Benefits

Proposed Flexibilities:

- a. Relief from the statute will allow the District to develop its own discipline matrix as it relates to the above instances of misconduct.
- b. Relief from the statute will enable the District to provide students a “second chance” if found with e-cigarettes, vape pens, or other related paraphernalia.
- c. Relief from the statute will enable the District to offer students a lesser consequence for violating the above statute, such as detention, in-school suspension, or another appropriate consequence.

Local Guidelines: Possession of Tobacco products, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and any component, part or accessory for an e-cigarette device may receive the following consequences (not including offenses listed under C-1):

- 1st Offense- 5 days ISS
- 2nd Offense- 10 days ISS
- 3rd Offense- 30 days DAEP

Exemption: (TEC §37.006; TEC §37.008); Related Board Policies: FO(LEGAL); FOC(LEGAL)

ARMED SECURITY OFFICER Texas Education Code § 37.0814

Current Requirements: House Bill 3 which amends §37.0814 of the Texas Education Code to require at least one armed security officer to be present during regular school hours, excluding a good cause exception from the requirement, and claims a good cause exception from compliance due to the availability or lack thereof funding or personnel.

Proposed Flexibilities: District is unable to comply with TEC §37.0814 and therefore claims a good cause exception from compliance due to the availability or lack thereof funding or personnel who qualify to serve as a security officer.

- The Board authorizes and directs the Superintendent to develop an alternate standard with which the District is able to comply, which may include providing a person to act as a security officer who is a school marshal, or a school district employee or a contracted employee who has completed school safety training in accordance with Texas Government Code § 411.1901 and carries a handgun on school premises in accordance with Texas Penal Code § 46.03(a)(1)(A) and as defined in CKE (LOCAL).