

I. Term of Plan

As determined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the District of Innovation Plan is five years. Thus, the plan will begin in April 2017 and end in April 2022 unless terminated by the Board of Trustees. The District Improvement Committee will monitor the Local Innovation Plan annually and provide feedback to the Board in regards to the effectiveness of the plan.

II. Innovations

Calendar (EB Legal, Local) (TEC §25.0811)

Under current Texas state law, “a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August” (TEC 25.0811).

Innovation Strategy

School start dates is an area in which the district should be able to determine locally and on an annual basis to determine what is best for our community. Having the ability to modify the start date of school allows us the flexibility to balance semester days, align classes to college courses, and ease transitions by beginning school on a shortened week.

Class Size Waiver (EEB Legal) (TEC §25.112, §25.113, §25.111)

State law requires that a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class §25.111. If classes are going to exceed this cap, a waiver is required from the Texas Education Agency. If approved, the district must then notify parents by specifying the class for which an exception from the limit imposed by Section 25.112(a) was granted; (2) state the number of children in the class for which the exception was granted. (§25.113, 1-2).

Innovation Strategy

Lone Oak ISD is a growing district with one elementary campus that has reached capacity. As we look to build a new facility, the number of students per class is anticipated to exceed the 22:1 ratio dictated by law. In the event the cap of 22:1 is exceeded, the superintendent will report these findings to the board. If class sizes in grades kindergarten thru fourth grade reach a 25:1 ratio, the superintendent will report to board and the district will notify parents. Lone Oak ISD is committed to keeping class sizes at or below the current 22:1 ratio. Therefore, we will continue to look at avenues to reduce class sizes, but need to have the flexibility to exceed this cap during the expansion process.

Probationary Contracts (DCA Legal) (TEC §21.102)

For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. A one year probationary period is not a sufficient amount of time to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. Currently, contracts for Lone Oak ISD employees occur in March which demands that employment decisions must be made with very little time for evaluating teacher effectiveness and prior to state assessment results.

Innovation Strategy

For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the first day of employment with Lone Oak ISD.

Teacher Certification (DBA Legal, Local, DK Legal, Local, Exhibit) (TEC §21.003)

As a small school district it is sometimes difficult to find qualified applicants for certain fields. When an applicant is unavailable it occasionally becomes necessary for a teacher to teach outside their certified teaching field. In order for a teacher to teach outside their teaching field, the district is required to submit a request to TEA. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Another area in which flexibility would benefit Lone Oak ISD would be the ability to hire employees, with industry experience, for innovative, dual credit, or new classes in which we are unable to find certified teachers for a position.

Innovative Strategy

In order to best serve Lone Oak 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:

a) The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one or more courses in a field for which s/he is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify him or her to teach the proposed courses.

b) An individual with college teaching or industry experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certificate. The campus principal would make a request to the superintendent and make all credentials available. The superintendent would have the capability to hire this person on a local certification and the employee would obtain an at-will contract.

III. Summary

The Local Innovation Plan results from the collaboration between multiple stakeholders. The needs of the District were investigated, and the plan created allows Lone Oak ISD the flexibility to make local decisions to best educate our students.