Westhoff Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan

2022-2027

Local Innovation Committee Members

David Kennedy	Superintendent
Donna Striedel	Elementary Teacher
Dustin Kenne	Junior High School Teacher
Lesli Sturm	Parent
Sue Hilbrich	Community Member

District of Innovation Timeline

February 2017	Adopt Board Resolution (February 15) to pursue District of Innovation.
February 2017	Public Hearing (February 15) concerning District of Innovation. Appoint District of Innovation Committee.
March 2017	Provide District of Innovation Plan for review. Post on district website for 30 days (March 20-April 18).
April 19, 2017	Approve District of Innovation Plan.
April 20, 2017	Notify the Texas Education Commissioner of the District of Innovation Plan.
March 23, 2022	District of Innovation Plan posted to school website.
April 28, 2022	Public Meeting held regarding renewal of District of Innovation.

I. Introduction

The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842, allowing Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and thus permitting exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In an effort to transform systematic improvement to allow for more local control, Westhoff ISD seeks to become a District of Innovation. Applied exemptions fall under the Texas Education Code statutes and associated TASB Local and Legal Board Policies EB (School Year) and EC (School Day).

A district committee met in February and March of 2017. This committee was comprised of various district, teachers, and community members. Based on the

input from these individuals and direction provided by the Board of Trustees, the committee proposes the following District of Innovation Plan.

II. Term

This plan will be in effect from August 1, 2022 through July 31, 2027. This plan may be amended or terminated at any time by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Texas Education Code.

III. Exemptions Requested in Texas Education Code

A. Operation of Schools and School Attendance (TEC Section 25.081)

As authorized in the education code, for each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students. Westhoff Independent School District is aware if time requirements are not met, funding will be reduced proportionally. Flexibility in the number of required minutes of instruction will allow the district to:

- Accommodate inclement weather and/or natural causes of disruptions to the school day.
- Address decreased attendance because of severe illness and/or contagions.
- Compensate for any other widespread community disastrous conditions that might interfere with our students getting to school.

B. First Day of Instruction (TEC Section 25.0811) EB (LEGAL)

Under current education code, districts may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the district to:

- Balance the amount of instructional time in the fall and spring semesters.
- Provide additional opportunities to schedule timely and meaningful staff development throughout the calendar year.
- Better pace and deliver instruction.

C. Last Day of School (TEC Section 25.0812)

As provided in the education code, a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15. The last day of school may be altered to:

- Allow students more time for remediation and test-taking skill development.
- Give the district options for how to structure the Final Exam Schedule.

D. School Day Interruptions (TEC Section 25.083)

The board of trustees of each school district shall adopt and strictly enforce a policy limiting interruptions of classes during the school day for nonacademic activities such as announcements and sales promotions. Changes to this requirement would allow for:

- Emergency notifications during the school day.
- Remedial tutoring or test preparation.

E. Teacher Certification (TEC Sections 21.003, 21.0031, 21.053, 21.057) DBA(LEGAL)

Under current education code, 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 by Texas Education Agency (TEA) and/or State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC). 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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

The District will continue to first seek qualified applicants with a TEA certification for all teacher positions. However, if a satisfactory candidate is not available a procedure would be implemented permitting the Superintendent to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject outside of their certification or permitting the District to employ an uncertified person on an at-will basis or contract. Upon written request from the Human Resources Department or a Campus Principal, a qualified individual may be eligible to teach any course through a local teaching certificate. The superintendent may hire an eligible person on a local certification on an at-will basis or under a contract. The District shall develop minimum required qualifications for persons hired in the above manner and will also require certain professional development in the areas of student management, instructional strategies, curriculum and parent engagement. Notwithstanding the foregoing, all certification requirements will remain in place for special education and primary ESL (bilingual) teachers.

Changes to this requirement would allow:

- When it is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position. Westhoff ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers to better meet the educational needs of our students. This will greatly expand the District's hiring capability. Westhoff ISD will continue to prioritize obtaining certified candidates for all positions as available.

F. Grievance Policy (TEC Sections 26A.001(a)-(c), (e), 26A.002, 26A.003) DGBA LEGAL/LOCAL; FNG LEGAL/LOCAL; GF LEGAL/LOCAL

Under current education code, districts are required to adopt a grievance policy. This policy, among other things, significantly extends the timelines currently provided for under the district grievance policies.

Changes to this requirement would allow for:

- Westhoff ISD to resolve issues equitably, timely and at the lowest level possible. The district believes its current grievance policies are effective and achieve the goals of resolving complaints.
- Westhoff ISD will not adopt a new policy contemplated under TEC 26A but will continue to process complaints pursuant to its currently adopted grievance policies.

G. Instructional Plans and Course Syllabus (TEC Section 26.0062) FA LEGAL

Under current education code, districts are required to adopt a policy that mandates the posting of instructional plans and course syllabus on the district's website each semester. The policy also requires teachers to provide the instructional plan or syllabus to district administration, and the parent of each student enrolled in the class prior to the beginning of the semester.

Westhoff ISD believes in effective and timely parent communication, especially regarding the instruction provided to students. As the district offers a range of classes at various levels, maintaining and providing each instructional plan or syllabus on the district's website prior to the semester beginning creates an administrative burden. This practice will further restrict the district's flexibility in the instruction offered to district students. Further, the district's teachers provide instructional information to parents and issue syllabi to students, depending on campus, within the first few days of the school year, typically covering the topics and expectations for the entire year. Under this law, the district would be required to provide the same information to its parents multiple times throughout the year, unnecessarily

duplicating these communications.

Westhoff ISD will not adopt a policy that requires the district to post instructional plans or syllabi on its website or provide such documents to parents prior to the beginning of the semester. However, the District maintains it will ensure that parents are informed of the instruction being provided to their students and will provide additional information, as necessary, if parents request.

H. Library Materials (TEC Sections 33.026, 33.027(b), (d), (f), (g), and (h)) EFB LEGAL/LOCAL

Under current education code, districts are required to adopt a policy for the acquisition of library materials which includes procurement or acceptance of donated library materials. The policy, among other things, requires the Board to approve all such library materials, allows the public to review a list of prospective library materials 30 days prior to final approval, and sets timelines by which the list of prospective library materials must be considered at a Board meeting.

TEC 33.027(b), (d), (f), (g), and (h) requires the school district to respond to challenges to library materials under certain timelines and to conduct reviews of the challenged library materials in specific ways. Westhoff ISD is committed to ensuring that students of all ages have access to library materials that are appropriate and academically relevant. Further, Westhoff ISD is confident in the campus librarians, in conjunction with campus administration, to review and select such library materials.

The Board of Trustees will not adopt a policy requiring Board approval of library materials. Board review can be utilized when necessary and any donated library materials will be received in compliance with Board Policy CDC Legal/Local. The Board of Trustees will not adopt a policy consistent with TEC 33.027, as the District already has procedures in place to process and timely respond to any library material challenge. The District will continue to operate under those procedures.

I. Teacher Planning Period (TEC Section 21.404) DB LEGAL

Under current education code, each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes in each two-week period for instructional preparation including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During that time, a teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

The District will continue to provide daily planning periods lasting no less than 45 minutes a day, for a total of no less than 450 minutes in each two-week period. Planning periods may be scheduled for the beginning or end of the work day, regardless of students' instructional day. Teachers may be required to complete mandatory professional development or team activities, including but not limited to professional learning committee (PLC) committee meetings, during their planning period, provided that teachers will not be required to complete other duties or attend mandatory meetings during their planning periods for more than 90 minutes during any given week.