



“Opportunity, Innovation & Excellence”

# District of Innovation Plan

*May 12, 2021*

## **I. Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session provides district the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On February 13, 2017, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation. Districts of Innovation may be exempted from several state statues and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students.
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statues including curriculum, graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

## **II. Term**

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is for five years; therefore, the plan shall commence with the 2021-2022 school year and conclude at the end of the 2025-2026 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan. The current plan is going to expire in 2021-2022.

### **III. Timeline of Events**

#### ***Week of February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

- Inform faculty of intent to apply for District of Innovation.

#### ***Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

- Posted District of Innovation presentation information on the RCISD website.

#### ***Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

- Regular Board Meeting for Public Hearing at 6:00 PM to review and discuss the possibility of becoming a district of innovation.
  - Action to Consider: Board of Trustees to consider approving a resolution to become a District of Innovation.
  - Action to Consider: Board of Trustees to consider approving the members of the District of Innovation Committee.

#### ***Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

- RCISD Administration- Initial meeting of the District of Innovation Committee.

#### ***February 27<sup>th</sup> – April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

- Post the District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days.

***Monday, April 10th, 2017***

- Regular RCISD Board of Trustees Meeting to consider approving the District of Innovation Plan and approve the 2017-2018 school calendar.

***Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021***

- Action to Consider: Board of Trustees to consider approving members of the District Site-Based Committee to develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the district as a District of Innovation.

***Wednesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021***

- District Site-Based Committee Meeting to develop and pass plan.

***May 17<sup>th</sup> – June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021***

- Post District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days.

***July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021***

- Regular RCISD Board of Trustees Meeting to consider approving the District of Innovation Plan.

## **IV. Innovations**

To achieve the District's Vision and Mission, the District needs the flexibility to exert local control, at both the District and campus levels, to:

- Promote innovative ideas regarding District/Campus governance.
- Local control on Teacher Certifications Requirements.
- Modify the school day.
- Modify the school year.

Promoting innovative ideas regarding campus governance and teacher certifications will help build strong supports for students, schools, and the community. Finally, modifications in the scheduling of the school year and the school day will allow for more time for innovative student enrichment opportunities as well as more time for professional development of staff.

## **V. Innovation Plan**

### **A. District Calendar**

Exemption from TEC 25.0811 state that a school district may not begin instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

**Proposal:** To best serve the students of Reagan County ISD, we propose to create a school calendar which serves the needs of our local community. We propose moving the mandatory date earlier than the fourth Monday. Waiting to start classes until the fourth Monday in August forces semester to be significantly unequal in length, with the second semester being approximately four weeks longer than the first semester. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable our district to better balance instruction in each semester as well as adjusting the school calendar if we have a COVID outbreak.

## **B. Teacher Certification and Probationary Contracts**

### **Probationary Contracts- Exemptions from TEC 21.102(b)**

TEC 21.102(b) states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

**Proposal:** This period may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of year classroom and student data. Upon exemption from the TEC 21.102(b), all new contract employees will be eligible to the probationary period up to three years, allowing more time for the district to thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

## C. Teacher Certification

### **Exemption from TEC 21.003(a) TEC 21.053, TEC 21.057**

TEC 21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. 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.

This system is burdensome and does not consider 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 as a teacher 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 or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

**Proposal:** The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, 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. Reagan County ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but not limited to CTE and languages other than English. Special Education and ESL teachers will continue to be required to hold a standard teacher certificate. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certificate.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and providing more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

#### **D. Class Size**

TEC 25.112 limits the class size for K-4 grades to a maximum of 22:1. The district has the option to apply for a waiver in the event one of our classes exceeds this ratio.

Proposal: An exemption from class size would eliminate the time and paperwork required to file the waiver with TEA. The district does not intend to consistently exceed the 22:1 ratio. If the student/teacher ratio for all sections of a grade level reaches 23:1 per campus, the district will start the process to add a teacher.

## **E. Discipline Options**

### **Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**

TEC 37.0012- Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator on each campus. The person is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposal: To best serve the needs of students and staff in Reagan County ISD, we propose the District abstain from designating only one person as the Campus Behavior Coordinator.

Reagan County ISD's elementary campus and high school campuses currently have two administrators; one principal, and one assistant principal, who by job description, serves in this capacity already. Our middle school campus is our smallest campus with one principal and counselor. Our District believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just on person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration regarding student discipline, as outlined in the Reagan County ISD's Student Code of Conduct.

## **F. Flexibility in Scheduling**

TEC 25.082 required that a school day shall be at least seven hours (420 minutes) each day including intermissions and recesses. While there is already a waiver process in place to

request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum for the school year.

**Proposal:** Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling. The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction will assist with providing teachers with a professional learning community and/or collaboration opportunities.

### **G. Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates**

To best serve our local Reagan County ISD community, staff, and students, Reagan County ISD includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a two-thirds majority vote for the Reagan County ISD Board of Trustees.

## **VI. Local Innovation Plan Committee Members**

### **District Representatives:**

Eric Hallmark, Superintendent of Schools

Susan Gunnels, Chief Financial Officer

Kent Coker, Director of Special Education

Trish Soto, Elementary Principal

Kalum McKay, Middle School Principal

Ashley Weatherby, Instructional Coach

Cherie Venable, High School Counselor

Silvia Knight, Elementary ESL Teacher

Tiffany Pullig, Middle School SPED Teacher

Cruz Rodriguez, High School Teacher

JL Mankin, Business Owner

Garry Goff, Community Member

Carmen Vasquez, Parent

Clint Crow, Parent

RGHS Student Representative

