

# Wolfe City ISD



## District of Innovation

**March 2022-March 2027**

WCISD Board of Trustees Approved 2017-2022 DOI Plan: March 23, 2017

DOI Renewal Drafted: November 17, 2021

DOI Renewal Posted: December 14, 2021

WCISD Board of Trustees Approved 2022-2027 DOI Plan: January 25, 2022

## **I. Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed in 2015 in the 84th Session of the Texas Legislature, in part amended Chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to create Districts of Innovation. The designation allows school districts to be exempt from certain sections of the TEC, providing more flexibility and control in locally meeting the needs of students and the communities served. Traditional independent school districts now have many of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools. In order to have these opportunities, a district must adopt an innovation plan as set forth in Texas Education Code 12A. Wolfe City ISD has the opportunity to design a plan according to the needs and resources of our district while maximizing local control.

## **II. Terms**

By law, the term of the designation as a District of Innovation may not exceed five years. The term of the original Wolfe City District of Innovation Plan began on March 22, 2017, and ends on March 22, 2022, unless rescinded or renewed by the Board in accordance with law, or terminated by the Commissioner of Education.

As determined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the District of Innovation Plan is five years. Thus, the Renewal of the District Innovation Plan begins on March 23, 2022, and ends on March 23, 2027.

## **III. WCISD Mission**

To wholly develop each individual student - mentally, physically, spiritually and socially - to full capacity, so that all students may be able to develop thinking skills, to acquire and apply knowledge and to create within themselves, a sense of self-worth and self-discipline. This statement of mission is fostered by the belief that these skills and attributes are essential for students to become productive, responsible, participating members of our democratic society.

## **IV. Process**

On August 30, 2021, WCISD campus leaders held elections as needed for members on the Campus and District Improvement Committee(s). Additionally, the campus administrators selected parents and local community members to be selected for that team. The Committee members were to serve on the District and Campus Improvement Plan, School Health Advisory Committee, Building Programmatic Committee, and the updated District of Innovation Committee. The committee met on November 17, 2021 to discuss and draft a renewal to the District of Innovation Plan (DOI). The committee researched Texas education codes in which the district could benefit from modifying in order to make the education process more effective/efficient for Wolfe City ISD. On December 13, 2021, the District-Level Committee established under TEC 11.251 held a public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and approved the plan by a majority vote of the committee members. The plan was posted on the District web page on December 14, 2021 for 30 days before the Board of Trustees voted on the plan on January 24, 2022.

## **V. Timeline for 2021 DOI Renewal**

### **October 13, 2021**

- Set an intended adoption date (date of a future board meeting to have DOI adopted)
- Date set for January 24, 2022 Board Meeting

### **November 17, 2021**

- District of Innovation Committee Meeting to amend current plan for renewal
- Notify the commissioner of education of the board's intentions to vote on adoption of the proposed plan

### **December 13, 2021**

- The District-Level Committee established under TEC 11.251 holds a public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and approves the plan by a majority vote of the committee members

### **December 14, 2021**

- Post the proposed DOI on our website for at least 30 days

### **January 24, 2022**

- Board of Trustees votes on DOI Renewal. Required is a 2/3 vote to accept the plan on the intended adoption date, and will remain effective for 5 years
- WCISD posted the boards approved plan on the website

### **January 25, 2022 -February 10, 2022**

Within 15 day of approval, the district notifies the Commissioner of Education of the approval of the District of Innovation Plan and the mandated form will be filed in accordance with 19 TAC 102.1307(d) and provides required documentation to the complete process

## **VI. Wolfe City ISD Innovation 2021 Committee Members**

Anthony Figueroa	Superintendent/Committee Chair/Parent
Vic Lemieux	Technology Specialist
Ginger White	Elementary Principal
Melanie Williams	Middle School Principal/Parent
Shawn Poe	High School Principal/Parent
Sheila Gardner	Director: Curriculum and Instructional Technology
Billy Eldridge	Director: Special Populations/Parent
Jamie Williams	ES/MS Counselor/Parent
Annie Smith	High School Dean of Academics /Parent
Selena Reyes	Elementary Teacher
Melia Garner	Elementary Teacher/Parent
Misti Gardner	Elementary Teacher/Parent
Lisa Tisdale	Middle School Teacher/Athletic Coordinator/Parent
Alissa Davis	Middle School Teacher/Parent
Destiny Kopp	High School Teacher/Band Director
Darren Anderson	High School Teacher/Director: Athletics
Vikki Stine	Parent/Community Member

**VII. Potential Benefits**

- Local Control – Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- Customization – Wolfe City ISD can create an innovation plan that is specific to our District.
- Autonomy – Districts must submit a District of Innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.
- Flexibility – Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices in areas that may include:
  - School Start Date
  - Teacher Certification
  - Teacher Certification for Career and Technology Education
  - Teacher Contract Days
  - Teacher Probationary Contracts
  - Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator
  - Inter-District Transfers
  - Teacher retire/rehire Salary

**VIII. Action Items**

**1. First Day of Instruction**

**TEC Code Requiring Exemption**  
TEC Sec. 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. TEC Sec. 25.0811 allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.  
(TEC 25.0811) (EB (LEGAL), (LOCAL))

**District Innovative Strategy for First Day of Instruction**

Improve student success through the flexibility in the calendar by having the option to set the calendar locally. This strategy will allow first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction and creating more instructional time before STAAR/EOC exams. More balanced semesters will also align with college semesters as well as allow more opportunities for summer school, internships and industrial certifications. In addition, starting earlier will also accommodate new and innovative education programs during summer. The possibility exists for calendars to be set individually for each campus if the educational need arises as well.

## 2. Teacher Contract Days

### TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC 21.401 requires a teacher who is on a 10-month contract to work a minimum of 187 days. (TEC 21.401) (DCB (LEGAL), DCB (LOCAL))

### District Innovative Strategy for Teacher Contract Days

In an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students, the district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries.

## 3. Teacher Probationary Contracts

### TEC Code Requiring Exemption

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.

**District Innovative Strategy for Teacher Probationary Contracts:** Due to the unique nature of WCISD, our initiatives and processes, this period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. Upon exemption from TEC §21.102(b), all contract employees will be subject to the probationary period set out in TEC §21.102(c), in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

## 4. Teacher Certification

### TEC Code Requiring Exemption

TEC Sec. 21.003 requires 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.

TEC Sec. 21.053 mandates a teacher must present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding and prohibits the District from paying an educator if he or she does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC Sec. 21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.

### **District Innovative Strategy for Teacher Certification for Non-CTE Subjects Grades 6-12**

In order to best serve Wolfe City 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, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for a local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach up to three subjects in a field outside of their current certification for which he/she is not certified. All teachers at grades PK-5 will be fully certified. Special Education and Bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

### **District Innovative Strategy for Teacher Certification for CTE Subjects Grades 6-12**

The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach **(A) Career and Technical Education (CTE)** and **(B) Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Mathematics (STEM) courses**. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and promote students' ability to obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. In addition, if the teacher meets the applicable local certification requirements, the teacher will not be required to present certification before being hired. Flexibility to establish its own CTE teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- Greater number of CTE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach CTE courses. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the individual possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed CTE subject. The Superintendent must approve all requests.

As long as a teacher meets the applicable Non-CTE or CTE requirements above, the district will not be required to provide parental notification.

Benefits to the district and students include:

- Allowing the district to have more flexibility to hire the best candidate for each position
- Allowing more flexibility in campus scheduling
- Providing more class offering options
- Increasing opportunities for students to earn recognized industry certifications

## **5. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption**

TEC 37.0012 restricts local decision making by requiring one person to be designated as the Campus Behavior Coordinator. This requirement limits the campuses from allowing the person most suitable to address the children's needs to make disciplinary decisions.

### **District Innovative Strategy for Campus Behavior Coordinator**

The WCISD elementary and middle campus are located in a common facility where the elementary and middle school principals and the shared school counselor are located. In this setting, it is beneficial for  
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each of these staff members to work with the social and emotional development of the students, which includes changed behavior through disciplinary action. Wolfe City ISD will not name one campus behavior coordinator per campus. Rather, the district will allow decisions to be made based on the needs of the individual student and situation to determine the most appropriate professional staff member to work with the student to promote social and emotional growth. In addition to exempting the district from the application of TEC§37.0012, any authority, responsibility, or duty granted to a CBC by law or WCISD Board Policy shall be exercised by other appropriate school officials.

## 6. Inter-District Transfers

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption**

Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Wolfe City ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district.

### **District Innovative Strategy for Inter-District Transfers**

Non-resident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if: the student is unable to maintain a discipline record free of persistent and/or repetitive misbehaviors, the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

## 7. Retire/Rehire Minimum Salary

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption**

Texas Education Code Education Codes regarding Employment Contracts and Employee Pay  
21.002, 21.402, 21.415

### **District Innovative Strategy for Retire/Rehire Minimum Salary**

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. Wolfe City ISD 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 Wolfe City ISD will be adding value in the schools and will be making sound fiscal decisions for our district's stakeholders

### **Summary**

It is noted that through the annual review process, further innovations and exemptions may be needed to advance the work of the District in meeting the needs of students, and amendments may be necessary. As other districts across the state pursue this process and implement plans through this provision for additional flexibility and more local control, new ideas for innovation may emerge that have great applicability in WCISD. We hope that through the natural course of having more autonomy and freedom to think innovatively that all students across the state will be able to take advantage of these key learnings.