



## **District of Innovation Plan**

## **District Mission and Vision**

Giddings I.S.D. began a process to redefine and revise its Mission and Vision during the 2016-2017 school year. Input from a wide range of stakeholders including students, parents, community members, administrators, teachers, and other staff members resulted in the following framework:

**Giddings I.S.D. will prepare all students with the academic, leadership, and interpersonal knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, the military, and a career in the 21st Century.**

**Students will gain the Knowledge and Skills necessary for success:**

### Academic Skills:

- Core Academic Knowledge
- Problem Solving
- Academic Communication
- Financial Literacy
- Technology Literacy
- Real World Application
- Inquisitiveness
- Life Long Learning

### Leadership & Interpersonal Skills:

- Decision Making
- Interpersonal Communication
- Commitment
- Work Ethic
- Self-Discipline
- Motivation
- Team Work
- Time Management

**Attainment of these skills will be enabled by:**

A School Staff who is committed to:

- Continuously Improving
- Leading by Example
- Being Enthusiastic
- Holding Oneself and Others Accountable
- Being a Partner in the Education of All Students
- Being Supportive and Respecting Others
- Being Committed to Student Success
- Being Compassionate

Students who are committed to:

- Being Good Citizens
- Ensuring Their Own Educational Success
- Seeking Opportunities for Success
- Helping Others Reach Success
- Respecting Others
- Being Open Minded
- Seeking Support
- Showing Appreciation
- Being Self Disciplined

A Board, Parents, and Community who are committed to:

- Providing the Necessary Resources
- Providing Support to Students and Staff
- Showing Mutual Respect
- Being Active at School Activities
- Ensuring Open Lines of Communication
- Holding Their Own Students and the School Accountable

## **District of Innovation – Introduction & Background**

The 84th legislature passed House Bill 1842, which allows traditional independent school districts flexibility which had previously been reserved for Texas' open enrollment charter schools. For a school district to obtain this flexibility, the Districts must seek designation as a "District of Innovation." On Thursday, January 18, 2018, the Giddings I.S.D. Board of Trustees initiated this process by adopting a resolution to pursue a District of Innovation designation.

Texas school districts must develop and adopt an innovation plan to receive the designation as a District of Innovation. In developing the local district plan, Districts of Innovation are provided with flexibility in several areas of statute, which allows for greater local control in decision-making related to educational programming and operations. The increased autonomy and flexibility afforded by the District of Innovation designation allows school districts to make educational decisions that best meet the needs of their students and schools.

It is important to note that, although there is much flexibility that may be achieved through the development of a local district plan, Districts of Innovation may not be released from statutes that address curriculum, assessment, graduation requirements, or academic and financial accountability.

Flexibility and local control is needed to fulfill the stakeholder's vision, mission, and goals for Giddings I.S.D. This flexibility and local control at the district and campus levels will create the following benefits:

- Site-based decision-making procedures that allow for an increase parent feedback in District and campus decision-making processes;
- An instructional calendar to address the learning needs of students;
- A contract calendar for teachers that allows the District to appropriately address their professional learning and instructional delivery needs;
- Teacher contract policies that afford Giddings I.S.D. leadership adequate time to appropriately appraise teacher effectiveness with the purpose of ensuring optimal teaching and learning in every classroom, every day;
- Transfer policies that ensure that Giddings I.S.D. is able to ensure a positive, supportive, and safe learning environment for our students.
- A teacher appraisal system that aligns to the standards, expectations, and instructional priorities in Giddings I.S.D.;
- An innovative practice for addressing teacher certification that will allow Giddings I.S.D. to enhance any area of the curriculum

## **Timeline and Plan Development**

The district administration followed the following timeline for development of the plan:

January 18, 2018 – The Board of Trustees adopted a Resolution to consider the development of an innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code, Title 2, Subtitle C, §12A.005.

January 22, 2018— The Board of Trustees held a public hearing to consider whether the district should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the district as a district of innovation.

January 22, 2018 – The Board of Trustees appointed members of the District Improvement Committee to develop a local innovation plan.

January 23 – February 25, 2018 – The Giddings I.S.D. Administrative Team discussed and planned a process for ensuring stakeholder input in the development of a local innovation plan.

February 26, 2018 – The Giddings I.S.D. District Improvement Committee met to discuss and develop a District Plan for Innovation. The committee investigated and identified areas of the Texas Education Code the District should modify to better serve Giddings I.S.D. students and fulfill the stakeholder’s vision, mission, and goals for the District.

March 20 – April 18, 2018 – The Giddings I.S.D. District of Innovation Plan was posted on the district’s webpage.

April 18, 2018 – The Giddings I.S.D. sent a notice to the Commissioner of Education of the Board’s intention to vote on the adoption of the proposed plan.

April 19, 2018 – The Giddings I.S.D. District Improvement Committee held a public meeting to consider the final version of the plan and held a vote on the approval of the plan.

April 19, 2018 – The Giddings I.S.D. Board of Trustees voted on the adoption of the District of Innovation Plan.

By May 4, 2018 – The District notified the Commissioner of Education of the approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions on the required TEA form and shall provide the Texas Education Agency with a copy of the plan.

## **Committee Members**

Sarah Borowicz-GIS Principal	Michelle Meyer-Paraprofessional
Virginia Cantu-GES Teacher	Saundra Morris – GMS Teacher
Roger Dees-GISD Superintendent	Alisha Nicks-GES Teacher
John Dowell-Parent	Alisa Niemeyer-GES Principal
Brooke Eckert – GIS Teacher	Cheri Oltman – GMS Teacher
Josh Eckert – GMS Teacher	Donna Orsag-Community Representative
Ami Fromme – GHS Teacher	Harriet Parks-GES Teacher
Glenda Furry-Parent	Charlotte Penn-GMS Principal
Mike Furry-Business Representative	Suzanne Peschke-Community Representative
Karen Hester-GES Counselor	Gary Pietsch-Parent
Shane Holman-GISD Assistant Superintendent	Mitch Pope-GES Assistant Principal
Deanna Jaeger – GHS Teacher	Cheyanna Rimes-Parent
Collena Janzi – GIS Teacher	Angela Rodriguez-Parent
Brandi Lowe-Parent	Chad Rood-GHS Principal
Mark Jones-Business Representative	Nevonne Sempe' – GMS Teacher
Sandra Jones – GHS Teacher	Hope Siegmund-GMS/GHS Nurse
Carol Kieschnick – GHS Teacher	Mary Shelton – GIS Teacher
Sandra Lopez-Business Representative	April Wiechering-GES Teacher
Angela Mauck – GIS Teacher	Melinda Zoch-Parent
Candance Maxwell – GMS Teacher	

## **Term of the Plan**

The Giddings I.S.D. District of Innovation Plan shall remain in effect for the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years.

The District shall provide a copy of the plan to the Texas Education Agency and shall post the current plan on its website no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day after the District modifies or renews the plan of innovation.

# **Innovations**

## **Site-Based Decision-Making Committee Membership**

Giddings I.S.D. currently follows the guidelines set forth by the state in which District and campus-level planning and decision-making committees must include representative professional staff, including, if practicable, at least one representative with the primary responsibility for educating students with disabilities, parents of students enrolled in the District, business representatives, and community members. Professional staff in the District shall nominate and elect the professional staff representatives. The committees shall include a business representative without regard to whether the representative resides in the district or whether the business the person represents is located in the

District. Community members must reside in the District and must be at least 18 years of age. A parent who is an employee of the District is not considered a parent representative on the committee. A parent is not considered a representative of community members on the committee. TEC §11.251

#### Benefit of Exemption

While there are concentrated efforts to ensure that all required stakeholders are represented, due to the size of our community and availability of local businesses, it is often a difficult task to secure appropriate community and business representatives for each committee. The required committee membership limits the degree of parent involvement in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the limited number of professional staff-members available to serve makes it unnecessary to nominate and elect members. Flexibility in TEC §11.251 and §11.252 allows the District and campuses to establish committee membership that ensures that the most effective decisions are made, opportunities are provided for greater parental involvement, and the process for nominating and electing professional staff members is more efficient.

#### Innovation Strategy

Giddings I.S.D. remains committed to valuing all stakeholders in the design of the educational programming and will continue to remain transparent with all campus and District planning and decision-making processes. The chair of each District- and campus-level planning and decision-making committee will have flexibility in determining the membership of the site-based decision-making team.

- The committees shall include representative professional staff and parents of students enrolled in the District.
- Membership opportunities will be extended to business representatives and community members each year.
- The committee chair shall use several methods of communication to ensure that community residents and area businesses are informed of the committees, are provided the opportunity to participate, and shall solicit volunteers.
- Two-thirds of the professional staff representatives on each committee must be classroom teachers.
- Each campus committee shall include at least one campus-level non-teaching professional representative.
- The district committee shall include at least one campus level non-teaching professional representative from each campus.
- Representatives shall serve two-year terms and shall not be limited as to the number of consecutive terms they may serve on the committee.
- Vacancies for staff representatives for the campus and district committees shall be voted on each year.

#### **School Start Date**

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

### Benefit of Exemption

Giddings I.S.D. would benefit from modifying the school start date by allowing the district to align the school calendar and school holidays with the instructional needs of the district and the priorities of the local community. Beginning school earlier than the fourth Monday in August will provide the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, allow students will be able to enroll in college courses or college camps that start early in June, and allow the district to better balance the number of instructional days in each semester.

### Innovation Strategy

Giddings I.S.D. will determine on an annual basis the local starting date of the first semester, not to precede the second Monday in August of any year. The ability to modify the start date of school allows the District the flexibility to balance semester days, align classes to college courses, and ease transitions by beginning school on a shortened week. Changing the first day of instruction does not alter the University Interscholastic League (U.I.L.) restrictions for the first day of practice for athletic and fine arts programs. Giddings I.S.D. will continue to comply with the U.I.L. calendar for commencement of summer practices. The District will continue to meet the 75,600 instructional minutes requirement for students and will not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15. The superintendent will develop the annual calendar with input from the District Improvement Committee and submit it to the Board of Trustees for approval.

## **Teacher Contract Days**

Current education law in Chapter 21 requires that an educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service. TEC §21.401

### Benefit of Exemption

Flexibility in this area will allow Giddings I.S.D. to continue providing days spread throughout the year for teachers to have additional planning time focused on student needs and refining their practice, as well as time for professional learning related to student growth and outcomes during the year, while affording teachers expanded time to pursue selected professional learning activities during the summer months.

### Innovation Strategy

To align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students, the District will have the option to reduce the number of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries. On an annual basis, the Giddings I.S.D. Superintendent will recommend a teacher contract day calendar to the Board of Trustees for approval, using authority established in DK(LOCAL). The number of teacher contract days must be inclusive of all instructional days and a minimum of seven professional development days.

## **Maximum Term for Probationary Contracts**

For experienced teachers who are new to the District, the probationary contract 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. §21.102

### **Benefit of Exemption**

A one-year probationary contract period is often not enough time to evaluate a new teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Currently, contracts for Giddings I.S.D. teachers occur in April, which demands that employment decisions must be made with very little time for mindful completion of teacher summative appraisals, which occur in the last month of instruction.

### **Innovation Strategy**

For experienced teachers who are new to the District and have been employed as 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 in Giddings I.S.D.

## **Inter-District Transfers**

Under Texas Education Code §25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the District, but TEC §25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year. TEC §25.036

### **Benefit of Exemption**

Giddings I.S.D. maintains a transfer policy under FDA(LOCAL) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfers, the Superintendent or designee shall consider availability of space and instructional staff and the student's disciplinary history, attendance records, and academic records, including, but not limited to, course grades and state-mandated assessment scores. The District shall follow applicable state and federal law when considering the transfer request of a student with a known disability, including a student who receives special education services. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. TEC §25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. In some circumstances, a transfer student's behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, a transfer student's attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard.

### **Innovation Strategy**

Non-resident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students in Giddings I.S.D. may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year if 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.

## **Teacher Appraisal Process & Performance Criteria**

Giddings I.S.D. is currently utilizing the T-TESS evaluation instrument produced by TEA. While we believe that many components of this assessment tool are beneficial, we believe that the district would benefit from flexibility of modifying the scope and timelines of T-TESS to fit the needs of the district and its teachers. An exemption from state law is not strictly necessary to utilize a local appraisal system under TEC §21.352. However, local models are required to contain the items described by TEC §21.351 related to the recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers.

### **Benefit of Exemption**

The timeline and scope of T-TESS including Student Learning Objectives is not conducive to providing support to the teachers who are new to the district or to experienced teachers who have the greatest need. Specifically, appraisers spend so much time utilizing the system for teachers who continue to perform at the proficient level or higher and are not allowed adequate time to assist teacher who are not proficient or are new to the district. In addition, we believe the Student Learning Objectives are subjective and time consuming without providing a proportional amount of value to the appraisal process. As a result, they will not be part of our locally developed appraisal process. Therefore, the district would benefit from relief from the requirements of TEC §21.352.

### **Innovation Strategy**

The District will modify the T-TESS evaluation model to meet the needs of the district with the following parameters.

- All teachers will complete the T-TESS self-evaluation and goal setting at the beginning of the year.
- All teachers will have a summative conference prior to the last day of the regular school calendar.
- Teachers who are new to the district must have a formal T-TESS classroom observation during their first five years in the district.
- Teachers who have taught in the district for more than five years and have not scored proficient, accomplished, or distinguished on all T-TESS Domains on their prior T-TESS appraisal must have a formal T-TESS classroom observation during the next school year.
- Teachers who have taught in the district for at least five years and have scored proficient, accomplished, or distinguished on all T-TESS Domains on their prior appraisal must be appraised every three years. Their prior T-TESS appraisal will carry forward as their formal classroom observation in the years that they are not appraised. If needed, a principal may waive this exemption at any time.
- The District will not utilize the T-TESS Student Learning Objectives. However, all teachers will set a SMART Goal for the overall mastery of their students on grade level/subject area TEKS and monitor their progress toward meeting that goal with formal classroom assessments, Unit Assessments, and/or District Benchmark Assessments. Teachers will report the progress of students meeting their SMART Goal at the summative conference each year.

## Teacher Certification

Currently, 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 as provided by Subchapter B. of TEC 21.003. For a teacher to provide instruction for a course that is outside of his/her certified teaching field, the District is required to submit a request to TEA. An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate. A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom. TEC §21.003, §21.053

### Benefit of Exemption

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 instruct a course outside of his/her certified teaching field. Giddings I.S.D. would benefit from the flexibility to hire full time employees with appropriate experience as determined by local criteria or assign existing staff with appropriate experience as determined by local criteria to instruct classes for which we do not have and are unable to find teachers who are certified in high needs teaching fields. Adding to the benefit of this exemption is the flexibility that would be afforded to the District in the implementation of House Bill 5, which added significant emphasis for the need to expand college and career opportunities for students. However, this call for increased opportunities does not adequately accommodate the special challenges faced by school districts as they seek to employ individuals with certification in specialized areas of instruction. Districts must often compete with industries that pay substantially more than education. In addition, industry professionals interested in education often face increased costs from participation in alternative certification programs. An example of an area where this exemption would be useful is with hiring professionals to teach health science courses because it is particularly difficult to find educators who meet the certification specifications required to teach these classes. The District's desired and most sought-after option would be to hire a qualified applicant with the appropriate TEA certification. While this exemption would be exercised in a limited way for specific situations, it would allow the District to recruit teachers with a strong knowledge base, including individuals from certain trades and /or vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experience.

### Innovative Strategy

A campus principal may submit a request for a district permit to the superintendent for an educator who meets one of the following locally determined criteria:

1. College teaching experience in a related field; or
2. Industry experience in a related field; or
3. TEA educator certification to teach a subject in a related content area; or
4. Any combination of work experience, training, education, or industry related credentials related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching.

All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught. Once suitability for employment or assignment has been confirmed, the campus principal will make a request for a district permit to the superintendent and will make all credentials available to the superintendent. District permits will only be issued for vacancies when there are less than 45 days before the first day of instruction and will be issued for a one-year time period.

If needed, the superintendent will have the authority to recommend the hiring of an individual to the Board of Trustees using a district permit and the employee will be employed on a probationary contract. If needed, a principal will have the authority to assign a teacher to teach a course using a district permit. If approved, the educator will be eligible to teach the course(s) through a district permit which will be issued for a one school year time period. A teacher certification waiver, state permit application, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. An educator who is hired under a district permit through the exemption to TEC §21.003 is not be subject to TEC §21.053. Furthermore, the District is not released from requirements of TEC §21.057 related to parental notification.

***Please note that Giddings ISD special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.***