



## **Grand Saline ISD**

### **District of Innovation Plan**

#### **Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- Flexibility: Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates.
- Local control: Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- Autonomy: District submit a District of Innovation Plan to the commissioner of education, but commissioner approval is not required.

#### **Term**

The term of this Plan is for five years, beginning February 1, 2023 and ending January 31, 2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint the same committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan.

#### **District Goals**

- Promote the academic and social success of enrolled students from PK through 12th Grade for on-time graduation and provide an exemplary instructional program for all students that is rigorous, engaging, and fully aligned that accommodates the learning needs of at-risk students & special populations to provide the opportunity to graduate college and be career ready.

- Increase state and federal assessment passing rate in Reading and Math to meet STAAR Progress Measures and performance levels for all students by providing effective instructional strategies and interventions.
- Promote Community Engagement and Parental Involvement to increase partnerships in the education process to improve student achievement.
- Recruit, support, and retain teachers and principals who are dedicated to providing a quality education to our students and their families.
- Educate all students in a learning environment that is safe and secure.

## **Areas of Innovation**

### **1. Teacher Certification**

**(TEC 21.003) (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT, DBA LEGAL, DBA LOCAL)**

#### Current law

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or 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 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.

#### Plan

Although it is possible to seek an emergency certificate, certification is dependent upon TEA approving the request. The current statute limits the ability to hire teachers in highly specialized or hard-to-fill areas such as Career and Technical Education, STEM, and Science and Technology courses. In all instances, the District would require appropriate documentation of sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience with the approval of the Superintendent.

The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The District is committed to hiring individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where 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.

The District seeks flexibility to hire professionals in hard to recruit and retain areas, as well as core content areas. This would include, but not limited to areas such as Career and Technical Education, STEM, Science and Technology courses, if certified teachers are not available. This exemption permits these professionals to meet standard designated by the State of Texas and permits the District to obtain the same weighted funding as would be available should the

professional hold a traditional teaching certification for the course.

- Certified Educators would be allowed to instruct sections of a core or non-core subject/course outside of the SBEC documented certification.
- Educators would be allowed to instruct one grade level above and/or below their certified level in their content area.
- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. The District will maintain the documents at the local level.
- Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.
- The Superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment, individual parent notice regarding the teacher certification will not be provided.
- Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

## **2. Student/Teacher Ratio and Class Size**

**(TEC 25.112, TEC 25.113) (EEB LEGAL, EEB LOCAL)**

### Current Law

TEC 25.112 states that public school districts are prohibited from enrolling more than 22 students in grade Pre-K-4

### Plan

Grand Saline has found this class size mandate to be problematic given recent year student enrollment trends occurring both at the beginning and during the school year. By claiming exemption from TEC 25.112 and 25.113, the district can locally determine and establish local criteria to determine appropriate student class size ratios as they pertain to instruction and budgetary goals.

### **3. School Start and End Date** **(TEC 25.0811 and 25.0812) (EB LEGAL, EB LOCAL)**

#### Current Law

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15th. The current process 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.

#### Plan

Relief from the statute will allow Grand Saline ISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days. Also, relief from the statute will enable Grand Saline ISD to align the district calendar with local universities, partnering school districts and STAAR timeline. This plan would provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

### **4 Inter-district Transfer** **(TEC 25.036) (FDA LEGAL, FDA LOCAL)**

#### Current Law

TEC 25.036 states a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

#### Plan

Grand Saline ISD 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 Board shall consider availability of space and instructional staff and the student's disciplinary history, academic progress, and attendance records. 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 one year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program or expulsion. In addition, the students attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standards. In these rare cases, Grand Saline ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment. Local-Nonresident 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 assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsions. In addition, students not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

## **5. Local School Health Advisory Council (TEC 28.004)**

### Current Law

TEC 28.004 requires a district to convene School Health Advisory Committee meetings four times annually.

### Plan

In a small district such as Grand Saline ISD, many of the same staff members and community members are asked to sit on multiple committees thus limiting their ability to effectively serve on those that meet at the same time, or require several meetings throughout the year. As a small district, committee members are intimately aware of the needs of the District's students and are often able to review and revise the District's plan in a single meeting. This should be a matter for the local board of trustees and the committee members to determine how often they need to meet in order to ensure that student health needs are met. By gaining exemption from this requirement, the Grand Saline ISD SHAC shall meet at least once per year and only schedule additional meetings as the need arises.

## **6. Required Professional Development (TEC 21.451) (DMA LEGAL, DMA LOCAL)**

### Current Law

TEC 21.451 states that staff development provide by a school district to an educator other than a principal must be; conducted in accordance with standard developed by the district; and designed to improve education in the district.

### Plan

Grand Saline ISD faculty are well trained to identify social indicators such as sexual harassment, bullying, and suicide. In addition, the faculty/staff clearly understand the requirements of FERPA. Mandating training in these areas annually only serves to add redundancy to back to school work that can be better utilized in preparing for the students to return. Each year more mandatory trainings are put into place without the addition of hours or funding to implement them. Grand Saline ISD agrees with the importance of each of these areas of training such as sexual harassment, bullying, suicide prevention, FERPA, etc. However, the District needs the flexibility to allow our faculty and staff to implement the knowledge they have been given through these repeated trainings. This will also allow for more time for implementation of the trainings on each campus and allow time for assessing the effectiveness of local plans. It is with that understanding that we seek exemption from annual compliance retraining in the areas listed below. Instead, these trainings will occur during new teacher orientation for new staff to the district as well as a refresher

occurring in a preset three-year cycle for all staff, as determined by the district. Future mandatory trainings that are assigned will be handled in a similar fashion.

- A. The district will set up and maintain records for all employees. Employees will participate in formal training every three years in the following areas as mandated by law:
  - 1. Sexual harassment
  - 2. Bullying prevention for teachers, administrators, and staff
  - 3. Child abuse, sexual abuse, and other maltreatment of children
  - 4. FERPA
  - 5. Suicide prevention
  - 6. Anaphylaxis and Auto-Injectors
  - 7. Blood Borne Pathogens
  - 8. Diabetes Overview
  
- B. All teachers, faculty, and staff new to the district will complete the compliance training during the first year of employment in the district.
  
- C. District and campus administrators may assign compliance training to an employee or group of employees as needed during the three year cycle.

## **7. Professional Employee Contractual Days (TEC 21.401) (DC LEGAL, DC LOCAL)**

### Current Law

TEC 21.401 defines a professional employee contract (teacher, counselor, or nurse) as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 work days.

### Plan

This exemption would allow Grand Saline ISD to reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries to better align with the instructional day calendar. It is understood that all current district employee required professional development guidelines will still be met. This exemption would allow the district to better align professional employee contract days to the 75,600 instructional minutes required of students.

## **Board Appointed DOI Committee**

Brenda Miller  
Lori Hooton  
Katie Gilbreath  
Tina Core  
Michael Mize  
Reed Starnes  
Teri Bedford  
John Abbott  
Jim Lamb  
Ricky LaPrade  
Michael Martin  
Michelle Countryman

## **Timeline for Approval of District of Innovation Local Plan**

September 19, 2022

GSISD Board of Trustees consider to adopt a resolution to move forward with a District of Innovation Plan.

October 17, 2022

Public hearing is held by the Board for District of Innovation Plan.

November 14, 2022

GSISD Board of Trustees approves DOI Committee to develop a plan.

December 1, 2022

DOI Committee meets to consider recommendations for DOI plan.

December 9, 2022

DOI plan is posted online for 30 days and sent to the commissioner.

January 11, 2022

Public Hearing is held to discuss and approve DOI Plan.

January 23, 2022

GSISD Board of Trustees consider adopting proposed plan.

January 24, 2022

District notifies commissioner of the approved plan, sends to TEA and posts plan on the district website.

