
WOODVILLE ISD - DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN



Revised Draft for Renewal – February 16, 2022

DAC Public Meeting – March 28, 2022

Approved by WISD Board of Trustees – May 16, 2022

DAC Public Meeting to Consider Amendments to DOI Plan – August 4, 2023

Approval by WISD Board of Trustees of Amended DOI Plan – August 21, 2023

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 (TEC). This distinction provides opportunities for increased local control over district operations and increased flexibility in academic programming to positively impact student achievement. It also empowers district leaders to innovate and transform systemically to improve the quality of services benefitting all educational stakeholders.

In order to best serve our students and align our learning to district goals, Woodville ISD developed a five-year District of Innovation Plan originally approved by the WISD Board of Trustees on May 30, 2017. This plan was in effect for a period of five years and expires in July 2022. The District Advisory Committee has reviewed and revised the plan to be renewed for another five-year period. We believe that the newly revised plan as outlined in this document will allow greater local consideration for the factors that uniquely impact the students of Woodville ISD.

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning August 1, 2022 and ending July 31, 2027, unless terminated or renewed by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The plan will be formally reviewed annually and may be amended at any time by the District Advisory Committee with the approval of the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas Education Code section 12A.007.

Note: While the law provides for flexibility through exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC), districts are not exempt from statutes related to curriculum, graduation requirements, academic accountability, or financial accountability.

WISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(District Advisory Committee)

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Position</u> |
|---------------------|---|
| Lisa Meysembourg | Superintendent |
| Ashley Weatherford | Director of Curriculum and Instruction |
| Terry Young | Director of Special Programs |
| Piper Ayres | Director of the Special Ed. Cooperative |
| Allison Mosley | Elementary Principal |
| Amy Leggett | Elementary Assistant Principal |
| Bridgette Stott | Elementary Teacher |
| Rhonda Kelley | Elementary Teacher |
| Bonnie Trammel | Intermediate Principal |
| Charlotte Champagne | Intermediate Assistant Principal |
| Laura Cox | Intermediate Teacher |
| Paula Willmon | Intermediate Teacher |
| Gina Greaff | Middle School Principal |
| DeWayne Armstrong | Middle School Assistant Principal |
| Laura Whigham | Middle School Teacher |
| Angela Moses | Middle School Counselor |
| Rusty Minyard | High School Principal |
| Emily Bryan | High School Assistant Principal |
| Cathy D'Entremont | High School Teacher |
| Pam Minyard | High School Teacher |
| Janay Wigley | High School Teacher/CTE Coordinator |
| John Thornsberry | Community Partner – Methodist Church |
| Jay Abernathy | Community Partner – Baptist Church |
| Michael Hadnot | Community Partner – Ministerial Union |
| Paula Jones | Community Partner – Mayor |
| Sondra Williams | Business Representative |
| Krystal Tolar | Business Representative/Parent |
| Kendall Coleman | Business Representative/Parent |
| Chris Martin | Business Representative/Parent |
| Crista McClure | Parent |
| Lauren Conner | Parent |
| Kevin McQueen | Parent |

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With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and the State Board of Education.

School Start and End Date

Exemption from: TEC 25.0811; 25.0812

Related Board Policies: EB (LEGAL)

Current Statutes

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Challenge Created by Current Statutes

These statutes allow 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.

Innovation Strategies - Local Alternative Standard

WISD will continue collaborative local processes to create an annual academic calendar that aligns with the goals of balancing academic grading periods, considers local community and county events that impact student attendance, and includes regular professional learning opportunities for district personnel. The District will also work collaboratively with partnering school districts and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) to align academic calendars to benefit students participating in programs and/or activities provided through shared services, cooperatives, and other academic consortiums.

District & Campus Level Planning

Exemption from: TEC 11.251; 11.252; 11.253; & 11.255

Related Board Policies: BQ (LEGAL)/(LOCAL), BQA (LEGAL)/(LOCAL), BQB (LEGAL)/(LOCAL)

Current Statutes

TEC 11.251, 11.252, 11.253, and 11.255 state that each campus and district shall have an improvement plan developed, evaluated, and revised annually with specific requirements related to the development and monitoring of the plan.

Challenge Created by Current Statutes

Under these statutes, the campus and district improvement plans must include ten compliance components and the improvement planning committees must hold at least one public meeting each year. The nature of the components indicated in the standards

references often make the campus and district improvement plans cumbersome compliance documents rather than workable guides for actionable goals.

Innovation Strategies - Local Alternative Standard

The district has a history of collaboratively involving multiple stakeholders in the processes of annually assessing campus and district needs while also establishing and monitoring short and long-term goals. WISD will continue to move forward with our collaborative improvement plans being reflective of action-oriented tasks and measurable goals. The documents, however, will no longer restrict and overburden the content of the plans to encompass the previously included items relative only to compliance rather than relevant actions aimed at progress toward established goals.

Probationary Contracts

Exemption from: TEC 21.102(b)

Related Board Policies: DCA (LEGAL)

Current Statute

TEC 21.102(b) states that a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year and may be renewed for a maximum permissible probationary period of three school years for teachers new to the profession. Additionally, for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

There are times when teachers' probationary programs have not sufficiently prepared them for success in the classroom and/or when their experiences in other districts have not equipped them for the level of performance expected by Woodville ISD. In these cases, the limit on the probationary period forces the district to terminate probationary contracts rather than offer term contracts to teachers who need a longer probationary period for further development.

Innovation Strategies - Alternative Local Standard

The district will continue to invest in orientation and development of teachers new to the profession and those new to the district. In Woodville ISD, an individual new to the profession will have up to a four-year probationary period and an individual new to the district, (but not to the profession) will have up to a two-year probationary period in the district. This allows the district to extend the opportunity for teachers to demonstrate the level of mastery expected by Woodville ISD. This will assist the district in retaining teachers in whom the district has invested valuable time and resources. It does not, however, require an extended probationary period. Campus and district administrators will retain the option to make annual employment decisions based on teacher proficiency and potential.

Teacher Certification

Exemption from: TEC 21.003; 21.051; 21.053; 21.055; 21.057; & 37.008(a)(7)

Related Board Policies: DBA (LEGAL)/(LOCAL); DK (LEGAL)/(LOCAL)

Current Statutes

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.

TEC 21.051 requires an individual to have completed at least 15 hours of field-based experience that includes instructional or education activities before a school district can employ the individual as the teacher of record.

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 for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC 21.055 identifies the criteria a school district must comply with before issuing a school district teaching permit including solicitation of consent from the Commissioner of Education for core subject area certification.

TEC 21.057 requires that the district provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

TEC 37.008(a)(7) requires teachers assigned to the District's Alternative Education Program be certified in accordance with Chapter 21 of the education code.

Challenge Created by Current Statutes

The identified sections relate to the certification of educators, and provide that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds the appropriate certificate or permit 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, a district may request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency; 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 as a teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time; the district is required to submit to the commissioner the names, qualifications, and teaching assignments for anyone issued a local teaching permit; if a teacher is not certified, the district may issue a teaching permit to employ the individual but again requires notice to the commissioner; the district is required to submit written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than thirty consecutive instructional days.

The indicated statutes do not take into account the size, location and unique financial and instructional needs of Woodville ISD. While Woodville ISD strives to offer a market competitive salary for teachers, as a small rural school district it is not within the District's means to lead the scale of competitive salaries as compared to surrounding districts. This limits the ability of the District to recruit and retain highly effective personnel.

Additionally, Woodville ISD strives to offer freedom and flexibility to teachers in creative ways, including but not limited to, the opportunity to teach courses that they are passionate about and that align with student interests and strengths. This, however, may not always align with the teacher's area of certification and primary teaching assignment.

Woodville ISD values CTE and STEM related courses that offer students opportunities to explore and earn certifications that lead to workforce development and/or continuing post-

secondary education. The current certification requirement limits the ability of the district to recruit and hire individuals with demonstrated subject matter expertise, such as professional work experience, formal training and education, relevant industry license, certification, or registration, or any combination of these.

Finally, Woodville ISD seeks to cast a broad net with teacher recruitment beyond the state of Texas, yet this is hindered by the statute's failure to acknowledge the validity of out-of-state teaching certifications.

Innovative Strategies - Alternative Local Standard

The district will maintain high standards for teacher qualification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the positions available in Woodville ISD. However, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the subject area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position. Positions most likely to be filled with locally certified personnel include, but are not limited to, Career and Technology Education (CTE), Languages Other Than English, and STEM.

Teachers with industry experience, out-of-state certifications, and native languages other than English with qualified education and experience could be eligible to be employed as a teacher in Woodville ISD pending local certification requirements.

Additionally, teachers may be granted opportunities to teach courses outside of their standard certification area to teach to their passions and fulfill student interests.

Teachers with out-of-state certifications will be required to maintain a valid teaching certificate with a plan to achieve a Texas teaching certification within prescribed timelines.

The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful, including teaching mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development and/or other instructional supports as needed.

The district will issue local teaching permits for personnel based on locally established qualification requirements. Teacher certification waivers, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The district will maintain records on all teachers employed under local teaching permits for review upon request. Employees' credentials will continue to be available upon review through traditional processes under the Public Information Act.

Emergency Clause – In the event that a teacher position is vacated after the start of the school year, the District may hire the best applicant for the position with the intent to re-evaluate the details of the position at the end of the same school year.

Prekindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size Reporting Requirement

Exemption from: TEC 25.111; 25.112; & 25.113

Related Board Policies: EEB (LEGAL)/(LOCAL)

Current Statutes

TEC 25.111 requires that each school district employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance.

TEC 21.112 and TEC 25.113 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for prekindergarten through 4th Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. In addition, school districts are required to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to the class size limits.

Challenge Created by Current Statutes

The process to solicit a class size waiver from TEA inputs unnecessary bureaucracy, as the Agency rarely denies a school district's request for a class size waiver. Moreover, in many cases the District is able to modify schedules or a shift in student population allows for the class to return to the 22:1 ratio before the waiver is approved by TEA.

Innovative Strategies - Alternative Local Standard

Decisions regarding appropriate student to teacher ratios will be made at the local level, taking into consideration the age and grade level of the students, the subject matter of the class, the needs of individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members.

WISD believes that a low student to teacher ratio is in the best interest of all students and works to maintain the 22:1 ratio for grades prekindergarten through 4th and a 25:1 ratio in grades 5th through 12th. WISD will begin each school year in accordance with the staffing guidelines set by the District as stated above.

In the event that any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees. A TEA waiver request will not be filed when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio and notification to parents will not occur unless the ratio exceeds 22:1 for more than one grading period.

Inter-District Transfers

Exemption from: TEC 25.036

Related Board Policies: FDA (LEGAL)/(LOCAL)

Current Statute

TEC 25.036 allows a district to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district; however, a transfer term is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

WISD maintains a policy that requires an annual application/renewal policy for interdistrict transfers. In approving transfer requests, the following criteria are evaluated in consideration of each applicant: availability of programs and services; the student's disciplinary history; work habits, attendance records; the student's grade reports; and STAAR and/or EOC performance history. Transfer students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the District. The one-year commitment in accepting transfer students prohibits the District from taking action to revoke the transfer during the school year.

Innovative Strategies - Alternative Local Standard

Woodville ISD will eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer students in the following circumstances:

1. Violation(s) of the student code of conduct constitute persistent (documented over time) misbehavior; warrants suspension, placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.
2. Student attendance falls below the TEA truancy standard despite due diligence on behalf of campus leadership.

Non-residents accepted as transfer students may have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year under the circumstances outlined herein.

Counselor Work Time

Exemption from: TEC 33.006(d) – (h)

Relevant Board Policies: DP LEGAL, LOCAL

Current Statute

TEC 33.006 subsections (d) – (h) places restrictions on the duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, requires policy adoption and annual review by the school board, and limits contracting options with counselors in the District.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

WISD wishes to maintain flexibility in its school counseling and guidance program by waiving compliance with the requirement of TEC 33.006(d) that a counselor spend 80 percent of total work time on duties identified by statute, as well as removing burdens imposed by subsections (e) – (h) related to policy adoption, annual review, and counselor employment contracts. The requirements of TEC 33.006(d) – (h) impede the District's ability to meet the ever-changing needs of its students and school operations by restricting the ability of WISD counselors to fulfill other important roles throughout the District, including but not limited to, student discipline, RtI, special education and 504 monitoring, scheduling, student assessment, etc.. While it is still the intent and goal of WISD that its certified counselors focus on the school counseling program, temporal restrictions and time logging/tracking requirements, which would be necessary to confirm strict adherence to an 80/20 duty allocation, are an ineffective use of employee time and impedes the District's ability to use its counseling staff in a variety of roles to best serve the needs of WISD students and community.

Innovation Strategies – Local Alternative Standard

The District will exercise local discretion in determining the additional duties fulfilled by certified counselors in the District, by taking into account each individual counselor's professional education, certifications, experience, and knowledge, and will also consider the specific needs of the students and staff on each campus. In addition, WISD will determine how counselors allocate their work time to perform all duties, including those duties that are not identified in TEC 33.006, enabling the District to meet student needs and address local challenges as they arise.

Following Amendments Approved 8-21-2023

Mandatory DAEP Placement-E-Cigarettes, Unrelated to THC

Exemption from: TEC 37.006(a)(2)(C-2)

Current Statute

HB 114 amended Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code to require school districts to place students found in possession of an e-cigarette (vape) in the District's Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) effective September 1, 2023.

Challenge Created by Current Statutes

The recently adopted legislation eliminates school district discretion in administering discipline for students in possession of an e-cigarette (vape) at or near school.

WISD's DAEP provides services to four schools districts in the surrounding areas with a total of 26 available seats. With high frequency of vape offenses statewide, the District anticipates that compliance with the recent amendment to Chapter 37 will force WISD to fill its DAEP seats with low-risk students. The District acknowledges that the statute provides the authority to move students with vape offenses between in-school suspension (ISS) and DAEP when the DAEP is at capacity; however, the inconsistency in the educational environment is detrimental to student progress and creates unnecessary paperwork and burden on the administrators and teachers providing instruction in the ISS and DAEP.

Innovation Strategies - Local Alternative Standard

WISD will maintain its current disciplinary practice and assign disciplinary consequences to students for non-THC, e-cigarette offenses in accordance with the District's discipline practice. Currently, the discipline guidance advises that administrators place a student in ISS on their first e-cigarette offense. If there is a subsequent e-cigarette offense from the same student, the guidance advises that the student be placed in DAEP, subject to consideration of the mandatory mitigating factors and administrator discretion. The District will continue to place students in DAEP for THC related e-cigarette offenses consistent with Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code.

WISD evaluates and may amend its disciplinary guidance; therefore, the innovation plan does not restrict administrator discretion in issuing placement consistent with guidance. Rather, the innovation plan will permit WISD to be exempt from the mandatory DAEP placement for non-THC, e-cigarette offenses and allow for local discretion.

Refusal of Entry/Ejection of Unwanted Visitors

Exemption from: TEC 37.105

Relevant Board Policy: GKA(LEGAL)

Current Statute

Texas Education Code section 37.105 includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate for the school setting. The standard requires a district to maintain a record of each verbal warning issued, including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued, and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property, the district must provide the person with written information explaining how to appeal. Each school district must adopt a policy that uses the district's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal unless the appeal is granted sooner.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

The statutory requirements create voluminous paperwork and can prevent an administrator from ensuring a safe and secure educational environment due to the procedural requirements in 37.105.

Innovation Strategies – Alternative Local Standard

To further ensure the safety and security of students and staff at WISD, the district will not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities, nor will WISD be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to district property/facilities or removed from district property/facilities.

The district currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal of entry or removal from district property/facilities. WISD will attempt to continue to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities in situations where the administrator on site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so; however, the notice may not be provided at the time the individual is being refused entry or removed from WISD property. Any appeal regarding the denial of entry will be processed in accordance with the district's existing grievance policies.

Suspension Below Third Grade

Exemption from: TEC 3.005(c)

Relevant Board Policy: FOB (LEGAL)

Current Statute

Currently, the Texas Education Code provides that a student who is enrolled in a grade level below third grade may not be placed in out of school suspension, unless the student engages in an offense related to weapons, a violent offense, or selling, giving, or delivering drugs and/or alcohol.

Challenge Created by Current Statute

The law provides no flexibility to respond appropriately to safeguard the educational environment when students engage in persistent, disruptive misbehavior.

Innovation Strategies – Alternative Local Standard

With the written consent of the Superintendent, campus administrators will be provided the authority to suspend students below third grade out of school for no more than three days when the students are not responsive to other disciplinary consequences and continue to materially disrupt the educational environment. This innovation will allow for school-based decision-making, assist in maintaining an orderly learning environment for all students, and grant school administrators the authority to promote a safe and secure learning environment for all students.