

# **LEFORS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## **Local Innovation Plan**

### **Local Innovation Plan Committee Members**

- Ashley Brauchi - Superintendent
- Valerie Word - Principal
- Melissa Pletcher- Teacher
- Tjaeden Swires - Teacher
- Holly Winegeart- Teacher
- Jason Solis - Teacher
- Chelsea Goodwin- Teacher
- Rachel Mize- Parent
- Matthew Honeycutt - Parent
- Brandon Word - Parent
- Carmen Hendrickson - Community
- Melanie Ray - Community

### **Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed the 84th Texas Legislature, during Regular Session 2015, permits eligible Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In accordance with 19 TAC § 102.1303 On July 11, 2016, the Lefors Independent School District's Board of Trustees (to be known as "Board") passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

The Local Innovation Plan Committee ("Committee") is comprised of district administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. The Committee met on November 18, 2024 to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan ("Plan").

### **Term**

The term of this Plan is for five years, beginning November 21, 2024 and ending November 21, 2029, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with TEC §12A.006 and §12A.008. The Committee will annually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modification to the Plan on or before January 1st of each year of implementation. Following adoption by the Board of Trustees, the Lefors ISD Local Innovation Plan for District of Innovation designation will be reported to the Texas Education Agency.

## **Innovations**

The district proposes flexibility in the following areas:

### **Teacher Certification - TEC §21.003, DBA (LEGAL), DBA (LOCAL)**

*Texas Education Code Section §21.003 (a) states that 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 of permit issued as provided by Subchapter B. 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 form the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.*

The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CATE) and Science, Math, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (STEAM), Foreign Language, History, and English Language Arts courses. The District would also like to honor candidates with Bachelor's degrees and certifications from bordering states as fully certified teachers eligible for a Texas Probationary teaching contract in our District and remain eligible for the period of time outlined in District policy DCA (LEGAL) for Probationary Certificate. This provision would mirror the DCA (LEGAL) policy term of one year with the District's option to extend two additional years.

#### **Our plan:**

To allow flexibility for hiring certified personnel, Lefors ISD will

- Make all decisions on teacher certification and assignments locally.
- Notifications of district teaching permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.
- The campus principal may submit in writing to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not fully certified in Texas according to SBEC guidelines.
  - Notification must include the reason for the request and document which qualifying credentials the teacher holds, justifying the out of certification assignment.
- The campus principal may consider the following criteria as minimum qualifications for eligibility to contractually hire certified personnel under a district teaching permit:
  - Professional work experience in related field exceeding 5 years
  - Formal training, professional work certification, or registration in related field
  - Combination of work experience, training, and education
  - Demonstration of successful working experience with students
  - Equal or similar out of state certification

- Teacher certification waivers, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.
- Any employee hired under this local district teaching permit must comply with the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements outlined in the Lefors ISD School Board policy for Personnel located in "Section D."
- Any employee hired under the local district teaching permit must be appraised according to the same teacher appraisal system outlined in district policies DNA and DNB (LOCAL).

## **Calendar - TEC §25.0811, TEC §25.0812, EB (LEGAL)**

*Texas Education Code §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. Texas Education Code §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15th.*

*House Bill 2610 signed into law during the Regular Session of the 84th Legislature in 2015 permits school districts to operate a full school year as defined by 75,600 minutes. Section §25.081 (e) of the bill defines a full instructional day as 420 total minutes.*

Districts are no longer afforded the flexibility through a waiver to alter the start and end dates of the school calendar. Also school districts are not afforded the flexibility intended in HB 2610 to bank minutes of instruction to be used when an emergency or bad weather event happens within the district's regular approved calendar. It is the intent of Lefors ISD to build and operate a calendar that best serves the instructional needs of our students and meets the needs of our community. This flexibility will allow the district to evaluate these needs annually and make the best decision for the well being of our students and community.

### **Our plan:**

To allow for the flexibility in the calendar start and end dates and to use the minutes earned within the district with flexibility, Lefors ISD will:

- Provide flexibility in school start and end dates
  - This will allow Lefors ISD students to improve academic success by balancing the instructional time evenly between semesters
  - This will allow Lefors ISD teachers the proper instructional time to pace the first and second semesters.
  - This will promote Lefors ISD additional time within the first semester for transitioning students in grades K, 6, and 9.
- Lefors ISD's instructional calendar will not begin school any earlier than the 2nd Monday in August.
- Provide flexibility in "banking" minutes for emergency situations
  - This will allow Lefors ISD to define a full instructional day, given the school day is under 420 minutes but greater than or equal to 330 minutes, in the

event of a late start or early release for students due to an unforeseen circumstance.

- Lefors ISD will maintain the school calendar year as 75,600 minutes but will use these minutes with the flexibility outlined in the plan to account for the maximum instructional time while limiting the impact on parents and community.

## **Contract Service Days (TEC §21.401)**

*TEC §21.401 (b) states that an educator under a 10-month contract must provide 187 days of service.*

With the passage of §25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision, given the district does not reduce the annual pay of the employee's contract.

### **Our Plan**

To allow flexibility in the contractual days for certified personnel, Lefors ISD will:

- Maintain the current salary schedule for all certified employees
- Annually the Board will consider the certified salary schedules as part of the regular budgeting process.
- Annually the administrative staff will evaluate the number of contract days needed for certified staff in that school year and shall set the number of calendar work days prior to September 1st of the contract year.
- Lefors ISD will not reduce the annual salary of certified staff, except in accordance with TEC§21.4021 (Furloughs) which the district is not seeking exemption.

## **Inter-District Transfers (TEC §25.036)**

*TEC §25.036 (a) states that any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year, may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in the state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer. (b) a transfer agreement under this section shall be filed and preserved as a receiving district record for audit purposes of the agency.*

Under this current Texas Education Code, 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.

### **Our Plan**

To allow flexibility for inter-district transfers, Lefors ISD will:

- Maintain a transfer policy under FDA (LOCAL) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to fill out an application each year.
- Create a “Transfer Committee” to evaluate transfer requests, deny or recommend transfer requests, monitor current transfer students, and revoke transfers if needed throughout the year.
- When approving transfer requests, availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student’s disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records will be evaluated.
- In rare circumstances, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program or expulsion, student may warrant services we are unable to provide with current staff or student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare circumstances, transfer status may be revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year.

### **DAEP Program Exemption (TEC 37.008)**

*TEC 37.008 states that each school district shall provide a disciplinary alternative education program that provides for the students who are assigned to the disciplinary alternative education program to be separated from students who are not assigned to the program.*

With the passage of TEC 37.008, students in the DAEP program may not be housed on the same campus as students who are not in the DAEP program. Due to this, Lefors ISD must contract with a nearby school district with a DAEP program that is 15 miles away granted that they have room. The location of placement of students should be a local decision. This exemption would allow flexibility of student placement.

### **Our Plan**

To allow students that are placed in the DAEP program to be housed and educated on our campus.

- Students can be housed and educated in the same area as students placed in In-School Suspension (ISS).
- Allow their teachers to have access to them to help them with their work and lessons preventing the student from getting further behind academically.

### **DAEP Placement for E-Cigarettes (TEC 37.006(a)(2)(C-2))**

*TEC 37.006(a)(2)(C-2) requires that a student be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education placement (DAEP) if the student possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.08 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.*

With the passage of TEC 37.006(a)(2)(C-2), students found with an e-cigarette or any vape product or any part of such a device. The law requires that students be placed in DAEP for 10-25 days in DAEP if the device contains nicotine and 45-90 days if the device contains Tetrahydrocannabinol (TCH). An exemption of this requirement allows Lefors ISD to distinguish between a student's possession of an e-cigarette or vaping product that contains nicotine from one that contains Tetrahydrocannabinol. An exemption allows for the District to determine appropriate local consequences for the possession of such devices.

### **Our Plan**

To determine if the e-cigarette or vape product contains nicotine or Tetrahydrocannabinol to issue appropriate consequences.

- Possession, use, selling, giving or delivering to another person an e-cigarette or vape device that contains any amount of nicotine or THC will remain a mandatory DAEP offense.
- The local guidelines for possession, use, selling, giving or delivering to another person an e-cigarette or vape device that contains nicotine or THC will be addressed in the Lefors ISD Student Code of Conduct and approved by the Board of Trustees annually.

### **School Health Advisory Council (TEC 28.004)**

*TEC 28.004 requires that a local school board to establish a local school health advisory council (SHAC) to assist a district in ensuring that local community*

*values are reflected in the district's health education instruction and are required to meet four times a year.*

With the passage of TEC 28.004, Lefors ISD must have four SHAC Meetings per year. As a small district, council members are intimately aware of the needs of Lefors ISD students. SHAC currently must post agendas in advance, record meetings, and post meeting minutes and recordings within 10 days of the meetings. We believe that two meetings per year will be sufficient to review and revise the District's Wellness Plan, review health education material and develop the annual report for the Board of Trustees.

### **Our Plan**

To require only two SHAC meetings per year to review and revise the District's Wellness Plan, review health education material and develop the annual report for the Board of Trustees.

- SHAC will meet once in the Fall and once in the Spring.
- The Lefors ISD SHAC will not record the meeting and the agendas and minutes will be made available upon request.

### **Implementation**

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities for academic success. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campus leaders and grade level teacher leaders. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.

## Signature Page

### Innovation Plan Committee Members:

<u>Ashley Brauchi</u>	- Ashley Brauchi
<u>Valerie Word</u>	- Valerie Word
<u>Melissa Pletcher</u>	- Melissa Pletcher
<u>Kristin Campos</u>	- Kristin Campos
<u>Holly Winegeart</u>	- Holly Winegeart
<u>Jason Solis</u>	- Jason Solis
<u>Chelsea Goodwin</u>	- Chelsea Goodwin
<u>Rachel Mize</u>	- Rachel Mize
<u>Matthew Honeycutt</u>	- Matthew Honeycutt
<u>Brandon Word</u>	- Brandon Word
<u>Carmen Hendrickson</u>	Carmen Hendrickson
<u>Melanie Ray</u>	- Melanie Ray

By signing this document, I agree to the terms of this Plan and support its implementation in Lefors ISD. As a member of the Local Innovation Plan Committee, I agree to monitor and provide feedback to the Board, no less than annually. Feedback will comprise edits, deletions, additions, and approval based on stakeholder's input and recommendations.