

# **LEAKEY ISD: DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**

**Developed in cooperation with and approval by the District Site  
Based Decision Making Committee**

## **Introduction**

On May 1, 2023, the Leakey ISD Board of Trustees charged the administration to work with the District Site Based Decision Making Committee to develop a “District of Innovation Plan” as permitted by the Texas Legislature under HB 1842 (TAC Chapter 102).

The District of Innovation Plan, as developed, is intended to enhance the educational environment in Leakey ISD. The SBDM Committee that developed this plan is substantially composed of teachers. The ultimate goals of the plan are to advance innovative curriculum, instructional methods, community participation, governance of campuses, and parental involvement by eliminating onerous compliance requirements and focusing district resources on what matters most.

## **Committee charged with developing the District of Innovation Plan**

| Member              | Representation                  |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Katie Loughner      | Principal                       |
| Melissa Matter      | Teacher/Parent                  |
| Melanie Kring       | Teacher/Community Member        |
| Nina Martinez       | Staff/Community Member          |
| Renee Howard        | Teacher/Parent/Community Member |
| Danita Blasdel      | Staff-Non voter                 |
| Amanda Dean         | Assistant Principal             |
| Christopher Yeschke | Superintendent                  |
| Erin Fortner        | Parent                          |
| Morgan Blasdel      | Business Owner/Parent           |
| Vicki Goebel        | Dean of Students                |
|                     |                                 |
|                     |                                 |
|                     |                                 |
|                     |                                 |
|                     |                                 |

## **Term**

The term of the plan is for five years beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The committee will monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications.

## **Immediate Advantages Resulting From the Exemptions Sought**

- Hiring the best teachers / staff available.
- Providing greater flexibility in assigning teachers in hard-to-fill areas.
- Providing greater flexibility in ensuring new teachers will be effective in the classroom.
- Eliminating state reporting that takes time but delivers no advantage to the district.
- Eliminating unnecessary local notices that takes time but delivers no advantage to the district.
- Providing greater flexibility in meeting the requirements of mandated committees.
- Eliminating redundant requirements that serve no purpose.
- Improving teacher morale by eliminating bureaucratic rules.
- Streamline processes to allow local planning efforts take precedence over state compliance activities, eliminating hours of work that could be better spent on the needs of the district's students.

## **District of Innovation Plan: Areas of State Law Considered for Exemptions**

Leakey ISD will consider ALL permitted exemptions as described in the District of Innovation legislation (TAC 102) of 2020. The following items identify exemptions that the District will seek immediately. Leakey ISD reserves the right to examine and approve exemptions in all areas identified in statute or Commissioner rules.

## **Timeline:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| May 1 ,2023                             | LISD Board passes a resolution to consider a designation as a District of Innovation (DOI)   |
| May 15, 2023                            | District Site-Based Decision-Making Committee (DSBDMC) met to discuss possibility of being charged with development of DOI   |
| May 22, 2023                            | Board Conducts a Public Hearing to consider moving toward an innovation plan   |
| May 22, 2023                            | After the Public Hearing the LISD Board at their regular meeting <b>reviewed proposed DOI</b>  |
| May 22, 2023                            | Website has proposed plan posted on the District's Website at: <a href="https://www.leakeyisd.net/District/Department/2-Administration/43803-Untitled.html">https://www.leakeyisd.net/District/Department/2-Administration/43803-Untitled.html</a> |
| June 2023 Budget workshop               | <b>LISD Board reviewed proposed DOI</b>  |
| Day after the budget workshop June 2023 | <b>Notify the Commissioner of the intent to adopt the final version of the DOI</b>   |
| Day after the budget workshop June 2023 | <b>DSBDM Votes to approve the final version of the DOI Plan</b>  |
| June Meeting                            | <b>LISD Board Votes to approve the final version of the DOI Plan</b>   |
| Day after June meeting                  | <b>LISD notifies the Commissioner after the adoption by the SBDMC and LISD Board via the Link to adopted plan (no longer than 15 days from the date of adoption) and the Exemptions checklist (Figure 19 TAC §102.1307(d))</b>                     |

## **Current Statute and Proposed Changes for Leakey ISD**

### **Chapter 21: Educators Teacher Certification**

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.003

Leakey ISD will be exempt from the requirements which limit the district's ability to hire the best candidate for a job based solely on certification issues.

There are rare instances when an uncertified person is the best individual for the job. There are professionals from various academic or vocational fields that can be the best candidate to teach a particular course even if they are not yet certified to teach. LISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers.



## **Teacher Instructional Assignment**

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.003

Leakey ISD will be exempt from the requirements which limit the district's ability to assign staff to meet local needs.

Current requirements sometimes limit the ability of LISD to staff hard-to-fill positions. While LISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers, exemptions from these requirements will allow the district to meet its staffing needs. Examples of these exemptions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Allow an elementary certified teacher with expertise in early grades (e.g. 1st/2nd grade) to teach kindergarten.
- Allow a teacher certified to teach elementary reading to be the reading teacher of record for middle school students.
- Allow a teacher certified in middle school and/or high school mathematics to teach elementary grades such as fourth and/or fifth.
- Allow a teacher to teach one or two classes out of their certified field in an area or areas that the teacher has college course work and/or expertise.

## **Probationary Contracts**

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.102

### **Currently:**

The Texas Education Code mandates only allow for one year on a probationary contract for an experienced teacher, defined as one who has taught five of the last eight years, who is new to the district.

### **Proposed:**

Leakey ISD will be exempt from the limit on the maximum number of years an experienced teacher, new to the district, may be extended a probationary contract as outlined in TEC 21.102 (b) and (c).

- For the first-year teacher (and teachers with less than five years experience) the district will offer probationary contracts for a period of four years.
- For experienced teachers (those with more than five years experience in the past eight years) the district may extend the one-year probationary contract for a maximum period of three years.

This exemption will allow LISD greater flexibility to determine if the new/ experienced teacher will be effective in the classroom. A teacher may be offered a term contract or have their employment terminated earlier with administrative recommendation and board approval. This exemption is for teachers hired beginning July 1, 2020 and does not apply to staff members hired before this date.

## **Inter-District Transfers**

Statutory citation: TEC 25.036

### **Current**

Currently, 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.

### **Proposed**

Leakey ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident 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. 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. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in and or out of school), placement in disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, and following reasonable corrective measures, Leakey ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

### **Guidelines**

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students 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.

## **Class Size Ratio**

Statutory Citation: TEC 25.112

### **Currently:**

The Texas Education Code states that Leakey ISD will adhere to a 22:1 ratio of students to teachers in grades K-4 as listed in TEC 25.112.

### **Proposed:**

After the district has made a good faith effort to maintain the required 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, the district should not be required to seek an expedited waiver through the Commissioner's waivers process. Leakey ISD will continue to strive to meet the required 22:1 class size ratio for grades K-4. LISD central office administrators, campus administrators, and teachers will determine if classes exceeding the 22:1 ratio should be divided or allowed to exceed the TEC limit. The exemption will allow LISD flexibility and eliminate the requirement to seek an expedited waiver from the Texas Education Agency.

## **Notice of Class Size**

Statutory Citation: TEC 25.113

### **Currently:**

Any time the 22:1 ratio is exceeded Leakey ISD must inform parents of the excess to the state mandated limit.

### **Proposed:**

Leakey ISD will be exempt from the requirement to notify parents when class sizes exceed the 22:1 requirement. Parents who want information concerning their child's class size may ask for it at any time. In many cases, these required notifications cause unnecessary friction between parents and the school. As stated in the intent to seek exemption from the 22:1 requirement, LISD has no intention to exceed the state mandated limit. However, in the event that the 23rd student moves into the district, and absent a parent request for the information, the district should not be required to post a notification.

## **Chapter 37: Discipline; Law and Order Campus Behavior Coordinator**

Statutory Citation: TEC 37.0012

### **Currently:**

The Texas Education Code states that each campus designate a campus behavior coordinator.

### **Proposed:**

Leakey ISD will be exempt from the requirement for the campus. LISD utilizes an administrator approach for student discipline. The campus administration already serves as the "behavior coordinators" and it is unnecessary to designate one of them as such.

## **Student Discipline while in DAEP**

Statutory Citation: TEC 37.007c, 37.010b

### **Currently:**

The Texas Education Code states that a student placed in a District Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) who engages in documented serious misbehavior while in DAEP despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled. These "serious misbehaviors" include violent behavior, extortion, coercion (according to Penal Code 1.07), public lewdness, indecent exposure, criminal mischief, personal hazing, and harassment. This makes no provision for students who are assigned to DAEP but continue to disrupt the learning environment and/or fail to follow the rules to be expelled if the behavior continues despite documented interventions.



**Proposed:**

In addition to serious misbehavior, a student placed in a DAEP that engages in documented persistent misbehavior while in DAEP, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.

**Site-Based decision making/ SHAC**

Statutory Citation: TEC 11.251 28.004

**Currently:**

The Leakey ISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision-making process and the convening of the school health advisory committee and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements as set forth by the Texas Education Code in Chapter 11 and 28 are burdensome, time consuming and ultimately cause the direction of resources from the primary focus of schools: the education of students.

Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of this district, school and community as opposed to the broad brush of statutory requirements leveled down from a one size fits all approach as detailed in the TEC 11.251 and TEC 28.004. This innovative practice will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees, as well as make better use of community, parent and business members required to be on those committees, that is required by law and it will better serve this community.

**Proposed:**

In place of the Campus Improvement Teams and the SHAC, a single District Improvement Team committee will be established, meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the district/campus' success and most importantly, students' success. This committee will fulfill all the federal requirements for comprehensive needs assessments for each campus but will do it as a district committee. The committee will convene at least three times per year and generate direction of the district resources and efforts. This consolidation of committees will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multitude of needs as opposed to having one meeting after another throughout the year.

**Requirements and Configuration of the District/Site Based Management Committee**

Statutory Citation: TEC 11.251, 11.252, 11.253, 11.255

**Currently:**

Site-based decision making is a process for improving the educational outcomes at the campus and district level. Through a collaborative effort of a team of principals, teachers, campus staff, district staff, parents, and community representatives, educational outcomes are reviewed and evaluated to determine goals, strategies, and interventions to ensure improvement in student achievement. The



education code and board policy require members to address areas of planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, school organization as well as a host of other responsibilities identified in additional sections of the education code.

**Proposed:**

Benefit of Exemption Leakey ISD shall determine the processes and memberships of its site-based management committees. Leakey ISD acknowledges the importance of developing district and campus improvement plans based upon a comprehensive needs assessment. The district feels that claiming exemption from the specific mandates of these sections is a local issue and not a state mandate. The district also feels that it will provide for greater parental involvement and better-informed parents.

## **Long Range Energy Plan**

Statutory Citation: TEC 44.902

**Currently:**

The board of trustees of a school district shall establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the district's annual electric consumption by five percent beginning with the 2008 state fiscal year and consume electricity in subsequent fiscal years in accordance with the district's energy plan.

**Proposed:**

This exemption will allow LISD to avoid unnecessary redundancies. There is no research-based evidence supporting the arbitrary number of five percent and LISD has already embraced an aggressive energy management plan.

## **Calendar**

(EB Legal) CTEC §25.0811 Texas Education Code, Section 25.0811

**Currently:** Statute states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August.

**Proposed:** School start date is an area in which the district should be able to determine locally and on an annual basis to determine what is best for our community. Having the ability to modify the start date of school allows us the flexibility to balance semester days, align classes to college courses, and ease transitions by beginning school on a shortened week, when possible. An exemption from §25.0811 is requested.

## **Teacher Contract Days**

(DCB Legal) (DCB Local) (TEC 21.401)

**Currently:** Current education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 days.

**Proposed:** Decrease teacher contract days from 187 days to a decreased amount with no effect on teacher salaries in an effort to better align teacher contract days to the 75,600 minutes required of students. Leakey ISD will present a recommendation to the Board of Trustees every year regarding the number of contract days as a part of the total compensation and benefits program for the district, better reflecting immediate local district needs. Justification Reducing the number of contract days to a level that better aligns with the minutes required from students through the entire school year will better serve the community, the staff, and the students at Leakey ISD. The reduced contractual days would increase the daily rate the district pays teachers, enhances efforts at teacher recruitment, and improves teacher morale.



# BOARD's RESOLUTION TO CONSIDER A DESIGNATION AS DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

## Leakey Independent School District

### BOARD RESOLUTION TO CONSIDER DESIGNATION AS DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

At a lawfully called meeting on **May 1, 2023**, of the Leakey Independent School District Board of Trustees, the following Resolution was proposed and approved by the Board:

**Whereas**, Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district's most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

**Whereas**, the Leakey Independent School District's most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

**Now**, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Trustees of Leakey Independent School District, by adoption of this resolution, initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a District of Innovation.

**Be It Further Resolved** that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that after the public hearing, the Board of Trustees of Leakey Independent School District shall appoint a committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 1st day of **May 2023**, by the Board of Trustees.

---

Presiding Officer

---

Date

---

Secretary