

Rice I.S.D.
District
of
Innovation Plan
2017-2021





Rice I.S.D.

District of Innovation Plan



I. Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions for certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On January 18, 2017, The Rice Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of the plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and community. On February 15, 2017, the Board appointed a District of Innovation Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District stakeholders including teachers, principals, and administrators.

II. Term

The term of the Plan is for no more than five years 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 the flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

III. Innovations

The District proposes flexibility in the following areas:

A. Class Size Requirements for Kindergarten through Grade 4

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 25.111, TEC 25.112 and TEC 25.113

Policies that may be affected: EEB(Legal), BF(Legal), and EHAA(Legal)

TEC 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of teachers certified to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance except as provided by section 25.112. TEC 25.112 prohibits a school district from enrolling more than 22 students for Kindergarten-fourth grade classes, unless a school district receives an exemption through the TEA waiver process. TEC 25.113 requires a district to notify parents of waiver or

exemptions to class size limits as stated within the Code. According to these statutes, districts are required to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for Kindergarten through fourth grade. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency.

Historically, these waivers are never rejected by TEA. This proves to represent an unnecessary step for the education for our students. Additionally, a letter must be sent home to the parents of each student in the class informing them that a waiver has been filed. This statute does not take into consideration the impact of students moving into the district throughout the school year. The desire is to provide for lower class sizes, but also realize the expected growth experienced by the district.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

- Locally monitor and maintain appropriate class size without the necessity of class waivers;
- Maintain a class to student ratio of 22:1; and
- Allow for flexibility for hiring personnel as we face exponential growth.
- Notify parents of class sizes exceeding 22:1 and explain plans to meet student needs

B. Teacher Certifications

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 21.003a

Policy that may be affected: DK Legal

TEC 21.003a states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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 his/her certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

- For grades 7-12, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.

- Whenever possible, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.
- The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

C. Probationary Contracts

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 21.102b

Policy that may be affected: DCA(Legal)

Texas Education Code Section 21.102b states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment within the district. Many times, this period is not sufficient enough to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since the teacher contract deadlines demand employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of the end of year classroom and student data.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

By providing an additional year of probationary status, the campus and district administration can:

- Better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness;
- Ensure fit for the district and campus culture; and
- Provide an opportunity for teacher growth.

D. Student Discipline

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 37.007c, and 37.010b

TEC 37 states that a student placed in DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may not be removed from class and expelled. "Serious misbehavior" includes: (1) Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;(2) Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat;(3) Conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Penal Code 1.07; or(4) Conduct that constitutes the offense of: a. Public Lewdness under Penal Code 21.07; b. Indecent exposure under Penal Code 21.08; c. Criminal mischief under Penal Code 28.03; d. Personal hazing under Penal Code 37.152; or e. Harassment , under Penal Code

42.07(a)(1) of a student or district employee. If the student is expelled, the board or its designee refers the student to the authorized officer of the juvenile court for appropriate proceeding in the Family Code Title 3 (Juvenile Justice Code).

The Texas Education Agency makes no allowances for students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental to the educational environment to be expelled.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

- A student in DAEP placement who engages in documented serious misbehavior (as defined above) while in the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled.
- A student in DAEP placement who engages in documented persistent misbehavior while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.

E. School Calendar

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 25.0811

Policy that may be affected: EB(Legal)

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August.

The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed that it was hurting tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the students or the community.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

- Rice I.S.D. students will begin school August 14, 2017.
- Teachers will begin August 7, 2014.

F. Teacher Contract Days

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 21.401

Policy that may be affected: DCB(Legal) and DCB(Local)

TEC 21.401 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days. Due to low property values, it is difficult for Rice I.S.D. to compete with neighboring schools in the area of teacher salary.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

This plan reduces teacher contract days from 187 to 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule would make our salaries more competitive.

- This plan will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- This plan should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with neighboring districts.
- This plan will significantly improve teacher morale.
- This plan will provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

Rice I.S.D. District of Innovation Committee Members

Lynn Jantzen-Superintendent

Amy Harvell-Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

Kristel Hise-Rice High School Assistant Principal

Robert Allen-Rice Intermediate Middle School Principal

Kelly Walters-Rice Elementary Principal

Ronda Walling-Business Manager

Jennifer Welch-Rice Elementary Teacher

Melinda Briggs-Rice Intermediate Middle School Teacher

Elizabeth Stamper-Rice High School Teacher

Cindy Black-ESL District Coordinator

Timeline

Wednesday, January 18, 2017-Regular School Board Meeting

- Board of Trustees approved a resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation.

Wednesday, February 15, 2017-Regular School Board Meeting

- Public Hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation
- Approve a motion to pursue local District of Innovation Plan
- Approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee

Friday, February 24, 2017-Initial Meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

Tuesday, March 7, 2017- Meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

Thursday, March 23, 2017 -Meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

Wednesday, March 29, 2017 -Final Version of Proposed District of Innovation Plan presented to the School Board

Thursday, March 30, 2017 -Final Version of Proposed District of Innovation Plan posted to the Rice I.S.D. Website

Friday, March 31, 2017 -Final Version of Proposed District of Innovation Plan sent to the Commissioner

Thursday, April 13, 2017-Edited Final Version Reposted on Rice I.S.D. Website