



Gainesville Independent School District Local Innovation Plan

The District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemption from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code.

As a District of Innovation, Gainesville ISD will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

Process

On November 28, 2016 the Gainesville ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the district as a district of innovation. Following the public hearing the GISD Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to initiate the process of designation of a District of Innovation under HB 1842 to increase local control over GISD operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. During the meeting on November 28, 2016, the GISD Board of Trustees appointed a District of Innovation District Advisory Committee comprised of district leadership, teachers, community members and a GISD Board representative.

District of Innovation Committee Membership

- Dr. Jeffrey Brasher, Superintendent of Schools
- David Glancy, Director of Secondary Curriculum/Interim GJHS Principal
- Paula Moore, Director of Human Resources/Federal Programs
- Alyce Greer, Director of Finance
- Pablo DeSantiago, Principal – Thomas A. Edison Elementary
- Melissa Hutchinson, Principal – Gainesville High School
- Kelly Stogner, Teacher – W. E. Chalmers Elementary School
- Tracy Henry, Teacher – Robert E. Lee Intermediate School
- Zach Terry, CTE Teacher – Gainesville High School
- Constance Condie – Parent/Community Member
- Phil Neely – GISD Board of Trustees

The DOI Committee met on December 7, 2016 to discuss innovative ideas, review data and to determine the focus areas for the school district. On December 14, 2016 the committee reconvened to finish discussing the components of the plan and to review the first draft of the plan to be submitted to District Site Based Team for approval.

Term of GISD District of Innovation Plan

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning February 28, 2017, and ending February 28, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this DOI plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board of Trustees will appoint a 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. Gainesville ISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Innovations

Gainesville ISD proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

- “Ninety Percent Rule” for class attendance
- Length of the School Day
- Earliest Possible School Start Date
- State Certification Requirements for Teachers and other Educators
- Certified Employee Contract Rights (Second Probationary year for teachers hired under 5 of 8 rule and suspensions without pay)
- Class Size K-4

"Ninety Percent Rule" for class attendance	
Texas Education Code §25.092	FEC (Legal)
Rationale: This would provide flexibility for students who:	
*are unable to attend class in the traditional brick and mortar building because of illness or family concerns	
*would benefit from a different time structure to the school day	
*would benefit from an accelerated program in place of the traditional classroom setting	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003 (b)(1)(A) innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement.	
Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students by promoting engaged learning through innovative methods, locations and times for instruction, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. To ensure that students are placed appropriately in the new options and receiving the optimal experience, we will implement a process through which counselors and administrators are able to evaluate a student's potential success in these new program options. Students taking traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the 90% attendance requirement as it currently exists.	

Length of School Day	
Texas Education Code §25.081	EC (Legal)
Rationale: Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:	
Individual campus flexibility, independence and creativity	
*Additional opportunities for teacher professional development and collaboration	
*Reduced number of minutes for campuses without the need for a TEA waiver	
*Individualized, flexible opportunities for School within a School Program (Leopard Pride)	
While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:	
*Limiting the number of shortened school days to no more than two per year	
*There should be guidelines to establish minimum/maximum school day lengths	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(B) Modifications to the school day or year	
Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the ability to make creative decisions regarding professional development and teacher collaboration time. Flexibility in this area will also give the district the ability to consider options for individualized plans for students who have life circumstances that prevent them from attending traditional high schools (e.g. full time work, pregnancy/parenting, etc.)	

Earliest possible school startA27:J43 date	
Texas Education Code §25.0811	EB (Legal)
Rationale: Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:	
*First semester complete before Winter Break; instructional pacing is more beneficial	
*More instructional days before State Assessments; flexibility for different types of learners and learning needs	
*More professional development opportunities during the school year for teachers	
*Full days for professional development opportunities as opposed to half days	
*Flexibility the first week of school - Students may not have a full week	
*The calendar could be more aligned with college schedules, providing our students with additional opportunities	
While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:	
*Cost of starting school early (e.g. cooling cost in August) should be considered	
*All Administrative regulations and policies would be followed in relation to extreme heat during recess.	
*Adjustments to professional development calendar would need to be addressed	
*Start date should be no earlier than August 15th and preferably no earlier than the third week of August	
*Preference that student snot have a full week the first week of school	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(B) Modifications to the school day or year	
The current law that prohibits the district from starting school before the third Monday of August forces the district into a calendar that has minimal opportunity for teacher professional development, requires the semester to end after the winter break, and provides negligible time for summer school before state mandated assessment re-takes in the summer. Starting school even one week earlier can help minimize the negative impacts the district sees in these areas. Starting early will allow for creative scheduling that allows for more intentional teacher professional development throughout the school year and also allows students to have a schedule that is more conducive to their learning.	

Certified employee contract rights (Specifically second probationary year for teachers hired under 5 of 8 rule and suspensions without pay)	
Texas Education Code §21.102	DCA (Legal)
Rationale: By exempting the District from this law, the District:	
*will have the flexibility of hiring a probationary teacher for a second year to provide form more growth and coaching when the teacher is hired under the 5 of 8 rule.	
Innovation: TEC Ch.12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees	
Exemption from this requirement will provide campus administrators and hiring officials with the time needed to fully assess and support a teacher before making decisions regarding moving the employee from a probationary contract when that employee has only been with the district one year. This flexibility from some of the provisions of Chapter 21 of the Education code will allow the district to approach some employment issues in ways that best meet the needs of the district and students .	

State Certification requirements for teachers and other educators	
Texas Education Code §21.003, §21.053	DBA (Legal)
Rationale: By exempting the District from this law, the District:	
	*will have the ability to hire experts in their field even if they don't yet have a teaching certificate
	*will have the flexibility in hiring "hard to fill" positions
	*will have the flexibility to hire those with industry expertise (e.g. HB 5 courses)
Innovation: TEC Ch.12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees	
Exemption from this requirement will provide much needed flexibility to hire the most qualified candidate for teaching positions. With an increasing number of innovative courses created after implementation of HB, finding exceptionally qualified applicants in specific fields who are also certified teachers is increasingly difficult if not impossible. This flexibility will allow the District to hire individuals who best meet the needs of the students and provide the content knowledge our students need to enter an increasingly innovative world.	

Class Size K-4	
Texas Education Code: TEC §25.112 §25.113	FEB (Legal)
Rationale: By exempting the District from this law, the District:	
	*will have the flexibility to exceed the 22:1 ratio when struggling to find Highly Qualified and Certified teachers for certain areas (i.e. Bilingual).
	*will eliminate the need for the district to send required notification to parents when the 22-1 ratio has been exceeded. The Campus Principal will be responsible for communicating with parents regarding the best educational setting for each student.
	*will eliminate the need for the district to complete the class-size waiver process with TEA.
Innovation: TEC Ch.12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees	
Exemptions from this requirement will provide campus administrators, with the input of parents, to make the best educational placement for students. Currently with the high demand for Bilingual certified teachers and the struggle for Gainesville ISD to hire the number of teachers needed, students are being denied access to the Bilingual program. This local flexibility will provide campus administrators and parents to make the best placement decisions for students. District administration will not be required to complete the process of submitting documentation to TEA requesting a class-size waiver.	

Timelines

GAINESVILLE ISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE	
November 28, 2016	GISD Board of Trustees holds Public Hearing regarding District of Innovation
November 28, 2016	GISD Board of Trustees votes to adopt Resolution to initiate consideration for being designated as a District of Innovation
November 28, 2016	GISD Board of Trustees appoint the District of Innovation Team (DIT) to develop a Local Innovation Plan (LIP)
December 7, 2016	District of Innovation Team (DIT) meets to discuss innovative ideas, review data, determine focus areas for the school district and begin plan development.
December 14, 2016	DIT meets to continue plan development and refine focus areas.
December 19, 2016	GISD Board of Trustees votes to formally pursue or decline the opportunity to become a District of Innovation.
December 19, 2016	GISD posts Local Innovation Plan on Gainesville ISD Website
January 23, 2017	GISD Board of Trustees votes to notify Commissioner of its intention to vote on adopting final Local Innovation Plan
February 15, 2017	GISD District Site Based Team hosts public meeting to consider final version of the GISD Local Innovation Plan
February 27, 2017	GISD District of Innovation Team will present the final Innovation Plan to the Board of Trustees for approval with 2/3 vote
February 28, 2017	GISD sends approved GISD Local Innovation Plan to Commissioner of Education for final approval.

Implementation and Policy Expectations

The Local Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which Gainesville ISD will operate in order to provide improved student opportunities. This plan sets out the laws from which GISD seeks relief so that it can develop more innovative programming and better meet the needs of its stakeholders. While this Plan sets out those parameters, it does not and cannot establish the full scope of innovative practices within GISD. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate district, campus, departments and committees in order to fully realize the work of the Innovation Committee.

Adjustments to GISD Board Policy will be researched, developed and presented to the Board of Trustees where appropriate. It is the expectation of the Innovation Committee that all Board Policy language will reflect the spirit of the Committee work and honor the parameters and limitations expressed in this Plan. Policy development resulting from this Local Innovation Plan will be provided to the Committee for review and feedback before the policies are presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration. After policies resulting from this Plan are adopted, it is

the expectation of the Committee that future revisions to these specific policy provisions, if any, will be reviewed by Committee members prior to Board review to ensure alignment with the work of the Committee.