

Gladewater

Independent School District



Local Plan of Innovation

Gladewater ISD District of Innovation

Introduction

Gladewater ISD (the District) will continue to follow the Texas Education Code (TEC) in all other areas except for the specific exemptions outlined in this plan. If at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, the District will reconvene the Innovation Planning committee to explore possible revisions per District of Innovation guidelines in the TEC.

As we look to the future, the District must be positioned to maximize opportunities and minimize the barriers that could otherwise preclude us from doing our best work on our students' behalf. House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the unique needs of their student populations in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. As a District of Innovation, Gladewater ISD will have greater flexibility and freedom to make important educational decisions for our students at the local level.

Term of Plan

This plan of innovation will be in effect for 5 years and may be amended or terminated at any time by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Texas Education Code.

District of Innovation Timeline

April 12, 2023	Public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan.
April 13, 2023	Plan approved by a majority vote of the committee members.
April 15, 2023	Superintendent, on behalf of the board of trustees, notifies the commissioner of education of the boards' intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan.
May 15, 2023	The proposed local innovation plan presented to the board of trustees for approval by two-thirds of the membership.
May 22, 2023	Public meeting to consider the revised final version of the proposed plan.
May 23, 2023	Plan approved by a majority vote of the committee members.
May 24, 2023	Post adopted local innovation plan to the district website and provide TEA with a link for posting on the agency website.
June 26, 2023	The proposed local innovation plan presented to the board of trustees for approval by two-thirds of the membership.
June 27, 2023	The district notifies the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions by completing the agency form.
June 28, 2023	Post adopted local innovation plan to the district website and provide TEA with a link for posting on the agency website.

Board Approved June 26, 2023

June 24, 2024	Board of Trustees approved changes to the local innovation plan for the term of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2028 with the following items: First Day of Instruction; Teacher Contract Days; and Transfer Student.
July 9, 2024	The district notifies the commissioner of amended plan along with a checklist of approved TEC exemptions.

Planning Committee

In undertaking the creation of this plan for innovation, the Gladewater ISD Board of Trustees, appointed the District-wide Educational Improvement Council (DEIC) to act as the Innovation Planning Committee and to develop a local plan of innovation.

Innovation Planning Committee/DEIC

Dr. Sedric G. Clark	Superintendent – Ad Hoc, Non-voting Member
Glenda Hickey	Facilitator - Non-voting Member
Andy Reynolds	Teacher - Secondary
Betsy Thompson	Teacher - Secondary
Christy Shelley	Teacher - Secondary
Diane Clark	Teacher - Secondary
Jennifer Madding	Teacher - Elementary
Opal Smith	Teacher - Elementary
Shelby Burns	Teacher - Elementary
Dawn Easley	Teacher – Special Programs
Kristyl Hester	Teacher – Special Programs
Rubicela Dykema	Teacher – Special Programs
Beth Choice	Non-Teaching Campus Based
Debbie Henderson	Non-Teaching Campus Based
Felicia Chandarlis	Non-Teaching Campus Based
Kayli Dewoody	Non-Teaching Campus Based
Kim Dolece	Non-Teaching District
Becca Webber	Parent
Megan Jackson	Parent
Brittney Bonilla	Business
Katie Ellis	Business
Brandy Flanagan	Community

Board Approved June 26, 2023

District of Innovation Plan

Statute Recommended for Exemption

First Day of Instruction (TEC §25.0811)

Texas Education Code states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August except as provided by this section.

Proposed

Gladewater ISD, who does not qualify for any of the exceptions noted in the statute, would like the freedom to determine its own start date for school each year. This flexible start date allows the District to identify locally, each year, what best meets the needs of students, educators and the local community.

The District will not propose or adopt a calendar with less than the required number of operational and/or instructional minutes as set forth by the TEC.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

This law restricts flexibility in the design of annual instructional calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community.

Benefit of exemption:

- The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the month of August will enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in Gladewater ISD.
- Decreases regression in learning by shortening the time students are out of school in the summer.
- Provides continuous learning and maximizes student performance by providing shorter breaks throughout the school year.
- Balances the lengths of fall and spring semesters.
- Creates more instructional time before mandatory testing.
- Provides a school end date prior to the month of June that will enable the district to support students who need remediation.
- Balanced semesters will align with college semesters, allowing more opportunities for summer school, internships, and industrial certification opportunities.

Statute Recommended for Exemption

Teacher Certification

(TEC §21.003, §21.053)

TEC §21.003 (a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aid, 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. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

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.

Proposed

The current system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique instructional and/or financial needs of the District. These statutes make it difficult for the District to recruit, employ, and retain persons who have appropriate expertise, experience, and/or industry certifications that render them qualified to fill such positions.

Upon approval of the innovation plan, the District will maintain its current expectation and commitment to hire certified professionals and will continue to seek highly effective, certified educators for all teaching positions. However, where that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to issue a local teaching permit based on district certification criteria without requesting a permit or waiver from the TEA. The District can extend the employee a one-year local certificate approved by the superintendent.

The District will develop qualifications for persons hired for such positions and also will identify required professional development in the areas of student management, instructional strategies, curriculum, and more as determined by the supervising administrator.

Once a candidate has been found to fit these requirements, the principal will submit the written request to the superintendent with all of the individual's credentials for teaching in the specified field or class. If the Superintendent agrees that the individual will be an asset to students, the campus, and District, the superintendent will present the application to the Board of Trustees for board approval prior to the individual beginning employment in this new position. After thoroughly vetting candidates for hire, the District will consider the instructors hired for these positions to be appropriately qualified.

Board Approved June 26, 2023

In order to ensure high quality instruction, the District will provide the following support to candidates hired under a District of Innovation Permit:

- The campus principal and/or director will create a personal professional development plan for each teacher.
- The candidate will be supported through Professional Learning Community (PLC)/Cluster Meetings.
- When possible, lesson plans will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.
- Additional professional development and support for classroom management will be provided.
- A designated mentor will be assigned.
- Classroom observation opportunities will be available.

This innovation will allow Gladewater ISD to consider broader applicant pools and to broaden the District's course offerings. It will also allow Gladewater ISD to fill hard-to-staff positions while maintaining a high quality of instruction.

This exemption does not apply to administrators, teachers in special education, bilingual education or CTE courses that count for high school credit. In addition, the District will not seek exemptions from requirements imposed by state or federal programs. Gladewater ISD will continue to require these professionals to hold proper certification so as to best serve our students.

Statute Recommended for Exemption

Teacher Contract Days

(TEC §21.401)

Exemption from: TEC Section 21.401 – Current education law defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

A recent change in school law has converted required student instructional and attendance days to 75,600 minutes. This change has resulted in the possibility of decreasing the number of days students must attend school, but does not address a similar need to decrease the number of days required for teachers if a district deems it appropriate to do so.

Benefit of exemption:

- The proposal would better align the number of teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- Reduces teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries.
- The proposal would increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- Enhances teacher recruitment.
- Improves teacher morale.

Statute Recommended for Exemption

Transfer Student

(TEC §25.036)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan Under Texas Education Code §25.001: a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC §25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Gladewater 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, the student's disciplinary history records and attendance records are also evaluated by the Superintendent or designee. Transfer students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of 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 or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare occasions, Gladewater ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Category of innovation: Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees

Innovation strategies: Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer 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 their transfer.