

ROCKSPRINGS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN: LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN: 2017-2022 Amended (8/10/2021)

The purpose of this local innovation plan is to outline and articulate the approaches undertaken by the Rocksprings Independent School District to increase innovation. Intentionally, the RISD Local Intervention Committee evaluated and isolated opportunities that would allow the district to persist in pursuit of unparalleled results through flexibility and greater local control. This increased flexibility and local control is provided to Texas public schools through realizing the designation as a District of Innovation.

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The Origin

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session, HB 1842 was passed in order to provide the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to afford more flexibility and local control for innovative practices. RISD feels this is a great opportunity for our local district to create a plan based on the needs of our students and community that will remain in effect for the next five years (2017-2022).

District of Innovation may be exempt from a number of state statutes and will have:

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

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum, graduation requirements, academic and financial accountability.

In order to be qualified for the designation of District of Innovation, a school district's most recent academic performance rating must at least be acceptable.

Term: The Rocksprings ISD Local Innovation Plan will begin upon the Board of Trustees' approval and continue for 5 years from the date of approval. (On June 13, 2017 the Rocksprings ISD Board of Trustees approved the plan by a simple majority when it need to be a super majority. On July 18, 2017 the Rocksprings ISD Approved the District Plan for Innovation with a super majority. Thus it begins in July 2017 – July 2022.)

The Committee

The Local Innovation Committee was comprised of various individuals who hold and a diverse mix of perspectives. These individuals served to formulate this idea into a plan of action.

Committee Members:

David Velky, *Superintendent*

San Van Winkle, *Principal*

Eddie Byrom, *Dean of Students*

Kathy Fulton, *Counselor*

Dawn Rudasill, *School Board Member*

Irene Varga, *CTE teacher*

Terri Eckhart, *JH teacher*

Sarah Douglass, *Elementary teacher*

Lupe Enriquez, *Community Member*

Bridgett Fry, *Parent*

District of Innovation

Rocksprings ISD District of Innovation Timeline and Process

- 3/21/17** Resolution Approved by the Board of Trustees (Board Meeting)
- 4/11/17** Public Hearing, District Of Innovation Committee Appointed (Board Meeting)
- 5/2 & 5/4/17** Meetings of DOI Committee to draft, revise, and finalize Rocksprings DOI plan
TEA provided a copy of DOI plan/Incorporate feedback from TEA
- 5/9/17** Present finalized version of DOI plan to the Board of Trustees for feedback
(Board Meeting)
- 5/10/17** Post final version of the DOI plan to the RISD website

Notify the Commissioner of the Board of Trustees' intent to vote on DOI plan
- 6/13/17** DOI Committee conducted a public hearing regarding the proposed DOI Plan and
conducts final vote to approve DOI plan (Prior to Board Meeting) [The RISD DOI
Plan was approved by the RISD Board of Trustees by a simple majority.]

DOI Committee presents final committee approved DOI plan to School Board.
(Board Meeting)

Board consider/approve the DOI vote 2/3rd vote to approve. (Board Meeting)

Notify the Commissioner of Education of the board approval of the DOI plan if
passed.
- 7/18/17** The Local Innovation Plan based on all the above dates and actions was presented
to the Rocksprings ISD Board of Trustees in a Public Meeting. The Board
approved the District of Innovation Plan by as super majority. The vote was 6-0
with one trustee absent.

Update applicable policies.

The Local Innovation Plan: Teacher Certifications

Teacher Certifications: TEC § 21.003, 21.005, 21.053, TAC Chapter 231

In 2013, during the 83rd Texas Legislature, House Bill 5 was passed affording students more personalized graduation plans. These individualized graduation plans can come through various educational pathways. In order to offer students avenues to pursue these varied graduation plans, districts must train existing staff or recruit new staff in expanded curricular areas.

For a specific example, many of the career pathways that fall under the endorsements require very specialized certification in that particular field. The Texas Education Code sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.044 and 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231, inhibit the development of post high school plans and improvement of work force skills to the extent these laws limit the District's ability to find qualified, good fits in what is already a scarcity of applicants.

RISD seeks to modify Sec. 21.003. CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. 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 or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Innovative Practice:

In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of career and technical courses, the District seeks the ability to establish its own local qualification requirements in lieu of TEC 21.005. This measure will assist the District with hiring in trades and vocations such as welding, career, and technical studies. This exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals with practical skills that fit the RISD system. Special Education and Bilingual teachers may not be exempted from certification requirements as outlined in federal law.

As a small rural district, Rocksprings ISD teachers are often required to teach multiple grade levels sometimes in different subject areas. In order to facilitate the

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transition of an ever-expanding course load, Rocksprings ISD reserves the right to locally approve teachers to teach core subjects outside of their current certified area for a period of one school year based on approval by the Board of Trustees. Courses considered electives may be approved for up to two years by the Board of Trustees.

The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The District will hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who have been locally approved by the Board of Trustees.

The Local Innovation Plan: Uniform School Start and End Date

Uniform School Start and End Date: TEC §25.0811 & 25.0812

The RISD wishes to no longer be required to start school on or after the fourth Monday of August or not be permitted to conclude the school year prior to May 15. These requirements placed upon schools are greatly based on the lobbying conducted on behalf of the business and tourism industries. These statute requirements do not take into account the wishes of local education agencies and even more importantly, the needs of students. As such, the RISD seeks relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 dictating that schools must not start prior to the 4th Monday in August. Additionally, the RISD also seeks relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.0812 stipulating that the last day of instruction must not be set prior to May 15.

Innovative Practice:

RISD seeks local control over the start and end dates of a school year. RISD anticipates starting school during the month of August and concluding the school year in May. The primary goal of this change will be to better balance the days of instruction in each semester and afford greater flexibility in calendar options.

The Local Innovation Plan: Length of School Day

Length of School Day: TEC §25.081

The Texas Education Code 25.081 addresses the length of the instructional day by providing a definition of 420 minutes of instruction to encompass a day of instruction. In acknowledging that extending the school day is tantamount to extending the impact of instruction for a student, the 84th Texas Legislature of Texas through HB 2610 was revelatory and provided greater flexibility to school districts. The RISD seeks to implement HB 2610 alongside HB 1842 to afford greater autonomy in calendar drafting and instructional delivery through innovation.

Innovative Practice:

RISD will use flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction to better meet student and staff needs in our district while meeting a minimum of 75,600 minutes in the school year.

The Local Innovation Plan: Teacher Contracts

Teacher Contracts: TEC §21.401

Texas Education Code Section 21.401 stipulates that a teacher must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

During the course of those ten months, teachers will be expected to meet the 75,600 minutes of daily instruction as well as serve in his/her professional capacity during staff development days and teacher work days. As exempt employees, professional teachers may be asked to work beyond the traditional work hours during a day. It is possible that a teacher may be in service for 187 days. However, the assignments will be at discretion of the superintendent, or the superintendent's designee. Those decisions will be made based on what is in the best interest of the district which will be driven by what is best for the students of RISD.

Innovative Practices:

RISD seeks to discard the minimum of 187 days of service and instead move to 10 month professional contract ranging from August - May. Teacher contracts will more closely align with the 75,600 instructional minutes required for students and will also include staff development/workdays. This added flexibility will afford the RISD the opportunity to create a culture/climate that values an individual's time and empowers the ability to leverage that time in what will be an obsessive focus on student outcomes. Lastly, professional employees will not receive a reduction in pay for any reduction in their workload realized by this change.

The Local Innovation Plan: Class Size

Class Size: TEC §25.112

State law states a school district may not enroll more than 22 student in a kindergarten-4th grade class. State law currently requires a waiver and written notice of the exception to the parent of each student affected by the exception. Due to the class size at RISD and the uncertainty of new students in K-4, class size can fluctuate within the year causing some classes to exceed the 22:1 ratio and then resume to the 22:1 ratio shortly thereafter.

Innovative practice:

RISD will staff classes K-4 at the 22:1 ratio for all classes K-4 based on enrollment numbers. In the event that a K-4 classroom ratio exceeds 22:1 ratio, RISD will not request the specified waiver. RISD will evaluate the dynamics of the class in order to make the determination to pursue hiring an additional teacher mid-year. At the point a class exceeds the ratio of 24:1 in K-4 classrooms, RISD will pursue hiring an additional teacher mid-year.

The Local Innovation Plan: Probationary Contracts

Probationary Contracts: §TEC 21.102

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year.

Innovative Practices:

This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Relief from the Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of 2 or 3 years at the discretion of the Board of Trustees for experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses newly hired in RISD.

The Local Innovation Plan: Teacher and Principal Evaluation – Amended (8/10/21)

TEC Code 21.353, 21.3541

The state of Texas has used the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS.) teacher appraisal system since 2016. Districts currently have the option to only formally appraise teachers once every five school years. Rocksprings ISD teachers are formally evaluated annually.

Principals must also complete one formal walk-through each 6-week grading period. New staff members will have two additional formal walkthroughs throughout the year.

Principals are evaluated annually using T-PESS.

Innovative Practices:

A committee of administrators and teachers would have the option to develop a teacher evaluation system that would be a combination of PDAS, T-TESS, and other best practices to develop a local instrument that fits the needs and goals of our district.

- a. Rocksprings ISD will create and utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool.
- b. This instrument will be developed with input from administration, and teachers. The assessment will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-PESS, and other relevant best practices to create a tool that meets the needs of our districts.
- c. Campus's teachers must be formally evaluated annually.
- d. All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set personal goals and a staff development plan for the coming school year.
- e. Principals will continue to be evaluated annually with locally developed instrument.