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## **Westphalia ISD District of Innovation Plan**

In January 2022, the Westphalia 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 Westphalia 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.

### **Term**

The term of the plan is for five years beginning August 1, 2022 and ending July 31, 2027, 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.
- Providing greater flexibility over the school calendar ensuring that it reflects the preferences of the local committee and the Board of Trustees.
- Eliminating requirements in half-day programs that are in conflict with other TEC mandates.
- 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**

Westphalia ISD will consider ALL permitted exemptions as described in the District of Innovation legislation (TAC 102) of 2015. The following items identify exemptions that the district will seek immediately. Westphalia ISD reserves the right to examine and approve exemptions in all areas identified in statute or Commissioner Rules.

### **Chapter 21: Educators**

#### **Teacher Certification**

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.003, DK Legal, DK Local, DK Exhibit

Westphalia 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. WISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers. WISD will also have certified bilingual/ESL and special education teachers that are certified through SBEC.

#### **Teacher Instructional Assignment**

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.003

Westphalia 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 WISD to staff hard-to-fill positions. While WISD 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 (ie 1st/2nd grade) to teach kindergarten.
- Allow a teacher certified to teach through 6th grade to teach courses in grades seven and/or eight.
- Allow a teacher certified to teach elementary reading to be the reading teacher of record for middle and/or high 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.
- Allow for greater flexibility in determining appropriate CTE experience in order to teach a CTE course. District of Innovation Plan: Areas of State Law Considered for Exemptions

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### **Teacher Contract Days**

Statutory Citation: TEC 21.401, DCB Legal, DCB Local

Current education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 days. Proposal would reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries. This would be an attempt to better align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

- a) Will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers
- b) Enhance teacher recruitment
- c) Improve teacher morale

### **Chapter 25: Admission, Transfer, and Attendance**

#### **School Calendar**

Statutory Citation: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 25.0811 and Section 25.0812:EB Legal

Westphalia ISD will be exempt from the first day of instruction requirements listed in TEC 25.0811 and the last day of instruction requirements listed in TEC 25.0812.

Westphalia ISD, using educator and community input, should be allowed to develop a school calendar that best meets the needs of our students, parents, staff, and community. Multiple calendar options will be developed for consideration. The calendars will be presented to district staff for a vote. The calendar with the majority vote will be presented to the Board of Trustees for their review and consideration. Final calendar approval, including when the WISD school year begins and ends, will be made by the locally elected WISD Board of Trustees.

#### **Inter-District Transfers**

Statutory Citation: FDA LOCAL, TEC 25.036

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.

Westphalia 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 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 cases, Westphalia ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

#### Local 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.

#### **Submitting waivers for Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 4 class size**

(EEB LEGAL)(Ed. Code 25.112)(Ed. Code 25.113)

Currently Pre-Kindergarten - 4th Grade classes are to be kept at 22 students to 1 teacher ratio accordingly to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times, it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

Proposed

a. Westphalia ISD has recently seen a growth in our lower elementary classes, making the possibility of surpassing the 22 students: 1 teacher ratio. WISD will attempt to keep all PK-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.

b. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 23:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.

c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

This gives WISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

#### **School District Depository Contract**

TEC Code: Subchapter G, Section 45.205 (BDAE Legal and Local).

TERM OF CONTRACT. (A) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected as has qualified. (B) A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend the depository contract for two additional two-year terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206. (C) The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Rational for Exemption:

By gaining exemption from these statutes, the Westphalia ISD would be able to allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total six-year allowable contract term. The district may choose to remain with the institution if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there are no other banking institutions within the district's boundaries available to bid for the district's depository contract. In addition, this would further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter direct deposits and afford district flexibility with respect to local banking relationships.