



**West Rusk CCISD  
District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842)  
2023-2028**

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to be designated as Districts of Innovation, thereby allowing them the flexibility to be exempt from or modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of the students and personalize learning.

Districts of Innovation provide opportunities for:

- Greater local control
- Increased flexibility governing education programming
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently

Districts are not exempt from statutes related to curriculum, graduation requirements, nor academic and financial accountability.

West Rusk CCISD's plan will be in effect for the 2023-2024 school year through the 2027-2028 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

**West Rusk CCISD Mission Statement**

The West Rusk CCISD public education system is devoted to ensuring that all its children, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap, have access to a quality education by providing a well-balanced curricula in a safe environment, free of drugs, violence, and firearms, designed to equip students with the tools and understanding necessary to successfully negotiate the challenges to work and life as presented by an ever changing society.

## District of Innovation Committee

1. Lawrence Coleman	Superintendent
2. Leah Bobbitt	Assistant Superintendent
3. Gwen Gilliam	Director of Student Services
4. Jake Jackson	High School Principal
5. Lori Burke	Junior High Principal
6. Burt Langley	Intermediate Principal
7. Carlette Mills	Elementary Principal
8. Krystal Medford	Intermediate Assistant Principal
9. Joshua Conway	Elementary Assistant Principal
10. Cynthia Duncan	High School Teacher
11. Susan Pickle	High School Teacher
12. Stacie Nix	Junior High Teacher
13. Chuck Atkinson	Junior High Teacher
14. Jessica Minor	Intermediate Teacher
15. Kaylah Hlavaty	Intermediate Teacher
16. Taryn Cabrera	Elementary Teacher
17. Kelly Medford	Elementary Teacher
18. Shaena Osteen	High School Parent
19. Terri Martin	High School Parent
20. Katherine McCandless	Junior High Parent
21. Amy Wood	Intermediate Parent
22. Brittany Bowley	Elementary Parent
23. Sheral Caldwell	Elementary Parent
24. Jean Davidson	Business
25. Kathy Hlavaty	Business/Community
26. Melissa Mason	Business
27. Ginger Fulgham	Community
28. Judy Elrod	Business
29. Alice Johnson	Community
30. Virgie Riley	Community
31. Mitzie Walton	Business
32. Sharon Williams Fletcher	Paraprofessional

**West Rusk CCISD  
District of Innovation Timeline**

January 9, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School Board Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public Hearing to discuss developing a local innovation plan to increase local control over the District operations and support innovation and local initiative. (District of Innovation)</li> <li>○ Approved Resolution to Consider Designation as District of Innovation</li> <li>○ Appoint District Advisory Council to create a comprehensive District of Innovation Plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
January 11, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Administrative Team Meeting</li> </ul>
January 23, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● District Advisory Council Meeting to develop plan</li> </ul>
January 27, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan posted on WRCCISD website for 30 days</li> </ul>
March 2, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Committee voted to approve final plan and notify Commissioner of Education</li> </ul>
March 6, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board voted to approve</li> </ul>
March 7, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final plan posted on website and submitted to Commissioner and TEA</li> </ul>

\*If approved, the DOI plan will be in effect for up to five years.

**Terms of District of Innovation Plan**

The plan will become effective March 2023, and will remain effective through 2027-2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District of Innovation (DOI) Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan. Any recommended plan changes will be posted to the District website for 30 days and require the approval of the DOI Committee and Board of Trustees.

## **1. School Start Date**

*(EB LEGAL)(Ed. Code 25.0811)*

### Currently

Under current Texas Education Code the District is prohibited from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. A district may not receive a waiver for the requirement.

### Proposed

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the earliest mandatory start date back to the second Monday in August, which would better benefit our students.

- a. This will allow flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year. This will enable the District to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in the semesters, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, by having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.
- b. This will allow the first semester to end before the winter break, which in turn, will allow students to take semester exams before the two+ weeks layoff from school during the break. An earlier start date will provide more instructional time prior to state assessments. Junior High sports will benefit from an earlier start date by allowing more practice time before their first contest date.
- c. The goal is to improve the District attendance rate and student success through flexibility in the calendar.

## **2. Submitting Waivers for Kindergarten - Grade 4 Class Size**

*(EEB LEGAL)(Ed. Code 25.111)(Ed. Code 25.112)(Ed. Code 25.113)*

### Currently

Kindergarten - 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 students to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the District must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. 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.

Proposed

West Rusk CCISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio.

- a. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- b. In the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- c. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.

**3. Teacher Certification**

*(DK LEGAL)(DK LOCAL)(DK EXHIBIT)(DBA LOCAL)(Ed. Code 21.003)*

Currently

A public school employee must have the appropriate credentials for his or her current assignment unless the appropriate permit has been issued.

Proposed

The goal of the District is to always hire the most qualified candidate for every teaching position. The District will always seek to hire certified individuals to fill teaching positions when possible. In order to best serve West Rusk CCISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

By exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for career and technical, and hard to fill content teachers, the District will have the flexibility in providing our students an opportunity they may not have otherwise been afforded. West Rusk CCISD will allow District Teaching Certifications based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.

- a. An individual with certain qualifications who is not state certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas such as mathematics, science, Career and Technical Education (CTE), etc.
- b. All Special Education and Bilingual/ESL teachers will be required to be SBEC certified.
- c. A person seeking District Teaching Certifications should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.
- d. The campus principal must submit to the superintendent a request for District Teaching Certifications outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications.

- e. Qualifications that may be considered but not limited to:
  - i. Professional work experience
  - ii. Formal training and education, including an Associate's Degree(CTE) and Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral Degrees
  - iii. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration
  - iv. Combination of work experience, training, and education
  - v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students
  - vi. Bachelor's Degree may be waived in certain CTE courses
- f. An employee working under a District Teaching Certification will not receive a term contract, but will work on a probationary contract or at-will basis.
- g. An employee working under a District Teaching Certification will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.
- h. An employee working under a District Teaching Certification will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system of all certified teachers.
- i. This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

#### **4. Probationary Contracts**

*(DCA Legal)(Ed. Code 21.102)*

##### Currently

A probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the District.

##### Proposed

West Rusk CCISD would like to continue with the ability to renew the probationary contract for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum of three school years, for all teachers that are new to the District who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of eight preceding employment by the District.

## **5. Length (number of days) of Teacher Contracts**

*(DC Legal)(DEA Legal)(Ed. Code 21.401) the law already allows this exemption*

### Currently

Under current education law, a teacher's contract is 10-months or more specifically, 187 days in length.

### Proposed

West Rusk CCISD would like the ability to set its teacher contract days from a range of 182 to 187 days with no negative effect on teacher salaries. This reduction in contract days of up to five days would make our salaries more competitive.

- a. This plan will increase the daily rate of district teachers.
- b. This plan should enhance our ability to recruit teachers to our district.
- c. This plan will provide our teachers more flexibility during the summer months to find professional development opportunities that, personally, benefits them.
- d. In each year of the plan, the exact number of days (up to 187) a teacher's contract will be determined by the calendar planning committee. The minimum number of days a 10-month teacher's contract will be 182 days, and the maximum will be 187 days with no effect on salaries.

## **6. Student Transfer Policy**

*(FDA Legal)(Ed. Code 25.001)(Ed. Code 25.036)*

### Currently

A nonresident student wishing to transfer into the District shall file an application for transfer each year with the Superintendent or designee. Transfers shall be granted for one regular school year at a time.

### Proposed

The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. Student behavior warranting suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, expulsion, and attendance will be evaluated. In these rare cases, West Rusk CCISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

## **7. Local School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)**

*(EHAA Local)(BDF Legal)(EHAA Legal)(FFA Local)(FFAF Legal)(FFEED Legal)(Ed. Code 28.004)*

### *Currently*

According to TEC 28.004, the board of trustees of each school district shall establish a local school health advisory council to assist the District in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the District's health education instruction. This committee must conduct a minimum of four meetings per year.

### *Proposed*

West Rusk CCISD will claim an exemption to this requirement. The District will determine the make-up of members to the local school health advisory council. The members of the SHAC shall determine how often the committee should meet; however, the West Rusk CCISD SHAC shall meet at least once per year. Due to the District's size, the SHAC is consistently aware of the needs of the District's students and are often able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings.