



RIESEL ISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION 2017

I. Introduction

The 84th legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allowed traditional independent school districts the ability to access flexibilities which had previously been reserved for Texas' open enrollment charter schools. In order for an independent school district to obtain these flexibilities, districts must seek designation as a "District of Innovation." On January 16, 2017, the Riesel ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by adopting a resolution to pursue a "District of Innovation" designation.

II. Process

On February 13, 2017, the Board appointed a District of Innovation Committee which was composed of administrators, teachers, parents, business owners, and community representatives. The committee met on February 16, 2017 to discuss options pertaining to the plan of Innovation and to determine which of these options might benefit Riesel ISD schools and community. After the development of the plan, it was posted for public viewing and comment for 30 days beginning on February 27, 2017 and the Commissioner of Education was notified at the Texas Education Agency. On March 28, 2017, the Local Innovation Committee voted to approve the final document and it was approved by the Riesel ISD Board of Trustees on April 11, 2017.

III. Committee Members

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| 1. Mindy Morgan | Elementary Teacher |
| 2. Tiffany Benton | Elementary Teacher |
| 3. Julie Jackson | Elementary Teacher |
| 4. Rachel Mutina | Elementary Teacher |
| 5. Ashley Wilton | High School Teacher |
| 6. Lisa Little | High School Teacher |
| 7. Lisa Drews | High School Teacher |
| 8. Raquel Chaparro | High School Teacher |
| 9. Meredith Stein | Parent |
| 10. Phyllis Koester | Community member |
| 11. Alex Rosas | Community member |
| 12. Megan Fisher | Business |
| 13. Heather Curtis | Business |
| 14. Misty Groschke | Business |
| 15. Jody Wood | Middle School Principal |
| 16. Brittini Summers | Elementary School Principal |
| 17. Whitney Dudik | Administration |
| 18. Brandon Cope | High School Principal |
| 19. Brian Garner | Superintendent of Schools |

IV. Timeline of Events

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| January 16, 2017 | The Board of Trustees voted to pursue the District of Innovation designation. |
| January 25, 2017 | The District Advisory Committee was informed of their possible role in designing a Local Innovation Plan. |
| February 2, 2017 | Region 12 representative, Charlene Simpson, introduced the District of Innovation to the District Advisory Council. |
| February 13, 2017 | A Public Hearing was held concerning the District of Innovation at the regularly scheduled School Board meeting. |
| February 13, 2017 | The Board of Trustees appointed the District Advisory Committee to also serve as the District of Innovation Committee. |

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| February 16, 2017 | The DOI committee discussed exemptions to be included in the DOI plan. |
| February 27, 2017 | The DOI Plan was posted on the District's website. The Commissioner of Education was notified. |
| March 28, 2017 | The Plan was approved by the DOI committee by a majority vote. (13-0 in favor) |
| April 11, 2017 | The Board of Trustees approved the DOI Plan by a 2/3's majority vote. |
| April 12, 2017 | The Commissioner of Education is notified of the approval of the Local Innovation Plan. The District begins updating needed policy changes. |

V. Term of Plan

The term of the District of Innovation plan, as constituted by the Texas Education Agency, will be for 5 years. Therefore, this plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year unless terminated by the Board of Trustees. The District Advisory Committee will annually monitor the Local Innovation Plan.

VI. Innovations

Uniform School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

The District may not begin instruction for the school year before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposed

The flexibility provided by permitting an earlier start date will allow Riesel ISD to annually determine, at the local level, what start date best meets the needs of the students and community. This enables us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, balance the amount of instructional time per semester, and provide more flexible professional

development opportunities for our staff. In addition, this change will help enable students to enroll in college courses that start in early June, avoiding a hurdle that otherwise might hinder students' college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date would also allow RISD to start classes on a Wednesday or Thursday easing the transition to schooling for students entering Pre-K/Kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Students will start school no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction and Length of School Day

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.081) (Ed. Code 25.082)

Currently House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amended Texas Education Code TEC §25.081 by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring the District to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess) each school year. Additionally, TEC §25.082(a) currently requires that a school day be at least seven hours each day including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed

Exemption from the 7 hour school day requirement would allow RISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it was locally determined as beneficial to the District and its stakeholders. Riesel ISD will continue to meet the minimum 75,600 minutes of instruction for maximum funding purposes. While there is an existing waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum per school year.

Exempting RISD from the 75,600 minute annual requirement would give the District a significant amount of local control over scheduling without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with the annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted and relevant professional development.

RISD does not intend to shorten the school day on a regular basis or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days will be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in

advance of the school year as well as continuously published using school media.

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

(FO LEGAL & LOCAL) (Ed. Code 37.0012)

Currently

Senate Bill 107 amended the Texas Education Code by adding Section 37.0012, which requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposed

The requirements in TEC 37.002 are redundant. RISD utilizes a multi administrator approach when necessary for student discipline. Campus principals assist each other and serve as the "behavior coordinator" and it is unnecessary to designate one of them as such.

Teacher Contract Days

(DCB Legal, DCB Local) (Ed. Code 21.401)

Currently

Texas Education Code § 21.401 currently requires a contract between the District and an educator to be for a minimum of 10 months. Additionally, an educator employed under a 10- month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposed

This proposal could reduce teacher contract days from 187 with no effect on teacher salaries. This is an attempt to provide flexibility to better align teacher service days to instructional days. Possible reduction of days will be discussed by the District Advisory Calendar Committee and approved by the Administration and Board of Trustees with the adoption of the yearly calendar.

This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.

This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore, putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts.

This proposal will significantly improve teacher morale and provide more opportunities to seek out beneficial staff development during the summer months.

Probationary Contracts

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

Currently

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

Proposed

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

Teacher Certification

(DK Legal, Local, Exhibit) (TEC §21.003, §21.053,)

As a small school district, it is sometimes difficult to find qualified applicants for certain fields. When an applicant is unavailable, it occasionally becomes necessary for a teacher to teach outside their certified teaching field. In order for a teacher to teach outside their teaching field, the district is required to submit a request to TEA. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Another area in which flexibility would benefit RISD would be the ability to hire full time employees, with industry experience, for innovative, dual credit, or new classes in which we are unable to find certified teachers for a position. Bilingual and Special Education teachers will be fully certified.

Proposed

It would benefit the district and students to have the ability to allow a teacher to teach one subject out of their certified teaching field. It would also benefit the students and the district to have the flexibility to hire individuals with college teaching or industry experience on a part or full time local certification. The district's first option would be to hire a qualified applicant with a TEA certification. In order to meet the criteria above, the following procedures would be implemented:

a) The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field.

b) An individual with college teaching or industry experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certificate. The campus principal would make a request to the superintendent and make all credentials available. The superintendent would have the capability to hire this person on a local certification and the employee would obtain an at-will contract.

School Health Advisory Council

TEC 28.004

Currently

Required to meet 4 times a year.

Proposed

SHAC committee members are aware of the needs of the district's students and are often able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings because of the District's size and the stability of the membership on the SHAC committee. The RISD Board of Trustees and the members of the SHAC committee should determine how often the committee should meet.

Class Size in Kindergarten through 4th Grade

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

Currently

Texas Education Code § 25.112 requires enrollment in Kindergarten through 4th Grade classes to be limited at 22 students. If maintaining this limit creates an undue hardship, the District may request a waiver from the Texas Education Agency. Texas Education Code § 25.113 requires written notice to be sent home to parents each time a waiver is granted. Many times, soon after the waiver is submitted, situations change and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

Proposed

At the beginning of every school year, RISD will meet the suggested student to teacher ratio of 22:1 in every K-4 class.

Small class sizes enable effective teachers to provide more individualized attention to every student. Having the time to seek and hire teachers enables us to best serve students with an effective student to teacher ratio.

Our goal is to hire the right teacher and not just any teacher to fulfill a mandate.

Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom that most influence the learning environment. Research shows that the teacher in the classroom has the greatest impact on student learning, as opposed to absolute class size. Under our district of innovation plan, in the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 student limit for K-4th grade classes, a TEA waiver will not be necessary.

When exceeding a 22:1 student-teacher ratio in a K-4th grade classroom, district policy will be to constantly evaluate the possible need to add additional staff. We will follow this guide throughout this process:

23:1 – Inform the Superintendent

24:1 – Inform the Superintendent and Board of Trustees

25:1 – Inform the Superintendent, Board of Trustees, and notify parents