

# **Lasara Independent School District**

## **District of Innovation Plan**



**Local Innovation Plan – 2020**

**\*Amended 2023**

Adopted by Lasara ISD School Board on March 18, 2024

# Districts of Innovation (DOI)

## Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in spring 2015. This bill provides Texas Public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities a school district must adopt a District of Innovation Plan.

Districts of Innovation provides opportunities for:

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

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

## Duration

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning August 2020 and ending at the end of the 2024-2025 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the plan.

## Timeline

February 10, 2020	<b>Board Information</b> On February 10, 2020, the Lasara ISD Board of Trustees was provided an overview and Introduction to District of Innovation
February 10, 2020	<b>Resolution Passed</b> On February 10, 2020, the Lasara ISD Board of Trustees was asked to approve a resolution to explore the opportunity for Lasara ISD to become a District of Innovation.
March 9, 2020	<b>Public Hearing</b> On March 9, 2020, the Lasara ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public input on the District of Innovation opportunity.
March 9, 2020	<b>Appoint Committee</b> On March 9, 2020, the Board of Trustees will appoint the District Planning and Decision-Making Committee (DPDMC) to develop a District of Innovation Plan
March 10, 2020	<b>Develop &amp; Approve a Plan of Innovation</b> On March 10, 2020, the Committee developed & Approved a Plan of Innovation.
March 13, 2020	<b>District of Innovation Plan posted for 30 days online</b>
April 14, 2020	<b>Superintendent notified Commissioner of intent to Adopt DOI</b>
April 20, 2020	<b>District of Innovation Plan Approved by Board of Trustees</b> District of Innovation Plan Approved by Board of Trustees on April 20, 2020, the Board of Trustees approved the Lasara ISD District of Innovation Plan. A copy of the approved District of Innovation Plan will be provided to the Texas Education Agency for posting on its website.

## District of Innovation Committee

Alejos Salazar Jr.	Superintendent
Cynthia Ramos	C & I Director/Federal Programs
William Bardwell	Technology Director
Joanna Gomez	GEAR UP Facilitator
Alexandria Lupercio	Principal
Melissa Nieto, Rosemarie Buchanan	Secondary/Elementary Teacher
Angela Perez	Instructional Coach
Eliberto Guerra	County Commissioner
Alice Marquez	Parent
Miranda Tamez	Parent

**Flexible Calendar****Currently**

(TEC 25.0811)

FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION. (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

**Proposed**

To allow a calendar that fits the local needs of the community, Lasara ISD would like to consider a flexible calendar option which may include an early start date, whereas students may begin the school year earlier than the fourth Monday of August.

**Justification**

The flexibility to determine the school start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. The district calendar is created and approved by a district-level committee before being presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. Exemption from the uniform start date will also allow for our district to get a jump start on the preparations for the state assessments, benefiting both students and staff. A flexible calendar will ensure that our semesters are well-balanced, giving our students the best opportunities to succeed.

**Teacher Certification****Currently**

(TEC 21.003) (TEC 21.053) (TEC 21.057)

CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. (a) 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. {referring to Subchapter B, Chapter 21, Texas Education Code} PRESENTATION AND RECORDING OF CERTIFICATES. (a) A person who desires to teach in a public school shall present the person's certificate for filing with the employing district before the person's contract with the board of trustees of the district is binding. (b) An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate. PARENTAL NOTIFICATION. (a) A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom. In the event a district

cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

### **Proposed**

To best serve Lasara ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

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. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.

b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment.

### **Innovation:**

The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification.

The District will make every attempt to 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 are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. The exemption will permit district leadership to have the flexibility to establish its own criteria in hiring quality personnel who may have knowledge in the hard-to-fill areas.

### **Justification**

The teacher certification proposal will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and will provide more options and offerings for our students, specifically secondary students. Lasara ISD students will be provided with greater opportunities to access job and career related courses.

### **90 Percent Attendance:**

#### **Current Statute:**(FEC Local) TEC 25.092

State law currently requires students to attend class 90 percent of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.

#### **Proposed Flexibility:**

Lasara ISD believes in awarding credit based on content mastery rather than seat time to earn credit. Flexibility will allow the district to recognize enriching activities, academic experiences or other extenuating circumstances that support the Lasara ISD student profile. This flexibility will allow the district to work with students and parents on innovative options to reach a student's academic goals. We recognize that our students gain knowledge outside the traditional classroom through extra/co-

curricular activities that currently count against the 90% attendance rule. Flexibility in this area does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic (UIL) rules. This flexibility does not alter or limit a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades.

## **Transfer Student Policy**

### **Currently**

(TEC 25.036)

TRANSFER OF STUDENT. A district may choose to accept students as transfers, even if they are not entitled to admission in the district. The District wishes to continue accepting transfer students under this law. This provision, however, has been interpreted to require a student transfer to be for a period of one school year, and to restrict a district's ability to revoke a transfer approval mid-year.

### **Proposed**

Lasara ISD seeks the flexibility to revoke a student's transfer status during the school year based on the student's failure to meet expectations for behavior, attendance, and academic efforts while attending Lasara ISD. The District seeks exemption from any one-year commitment that might be interpreted or implied by the provisions of TEC § 25.036 when accepting transfer applicants. Students who do not meet the District's expectations for behavior, attendance, and academic efforts and/or interfere with our teachers' ability to educate other students will be returned to their home district, as early as the end of the next grading period after which such determination is made by administration. This revocation option will be reserved only for those students who consistently fail to meet District expectations for behavior, attendance or academic effort; students that are placed in DAEP, are expelled or who engage in criminal behavior; and students who are truant or do not meet the state's 90% attendance standard.

### **Justification**

Lasara ISD is seeking the flexibility to revoke a student's transfer acceptance at any point during the school year if they fail to meet the district's expectations for behavior, attendance, and academic efforts while attending Lasara ISD.

## **Teacher Contract Days**

### **Currently**

(TEC 21.401)

MINIMUM SERVICE REQUIRED. (a) A contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service. (b) An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

**Proposed**

Lasara ISD will have the flexibility to decrease teacher contract days from 187 to a number more dependent upon the school calendar and district needs (e.g., teachers will work 9 additional days more than required instructional days). Any decrease in teacher contract days is not intended to have any effect on teacher annual compensation.

**Justification**

With this added flexibility, the Lasara ISD hopes to better align the teacher contract days to the 75,600 minutes of required instruction, enhance teacher recruitment and improve teacher morale. The Superintendent will present a recommendation to the Board of trustees each year with proposed work calendars. Work calendars will include the number of days to be worked by each class of employees (including teachers) in the district.

**Kinder through 4<sup>th</sup> Class Size Waiver**

(EEB LEGAL) (TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113) (TEC 25.114)

**Currently**

Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student 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.

**Proposed**

In the event a class size in kindergarten through fourth grade exceeds twenty-two students and the 22:1 teacher to student ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. Notifications to the parents will only be sent home in the event a Kindergarten through fourth grade class reaches a 24:1 student to teacher ratio.

**Justification**

In most cases at Lasara ISD, student to teacher ratios that exceed 22:1 are rare and for limited periods of time. A class size waiver for Lasara ISD would provide flexibility when dealing with situations when class size increases without having the bureaucracy of waivers to the Texas Education Agency.

**Discipline Options****Currently**

(TEC 37.008)

Current law requires students who are placed in a Disciplinary Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) to be separate from their regular instructional setting, be under the supervision of a certified teacher, and not be allowed to be with other students who are not in the program.

**Proposed**

All continuous supervision by a non-certified paraprofessional who has been trained in behavior management techniques. Require a certified teacher to assist the DAEP instructor for at least 60 minutes per day for classroom instruction. Allow students who are in other disciplinary instructional arrangements such as in School Suspension or Time-Out to be housed with DAEP students and supervised by the same DAEP personnel. DAEP may be housed in the same facility as the regular campus, as long as students who are not in a discipline placement have no access to the student(s) in the DAEP placement.

**Justification**

Lasara ISD is a small school with access to a wide range of facilities that may meet the needs of students placed in a DAEP setting. DAEP placements, often require extensive resources that need instructional support personnel to transport or serve students placed forty-five minutes away. The proposed change gives the district flexibility, especially when dealing with short term placements, to meet the needs of a student placed in DAEP while not removing services from students on campus.

**Bank Depository Bid****Currently**

(TEC 45.206)

At least 60 days before the end of the current depository contract the school must decide to use either competitive bidding or a request for proposal to choose a new depository.

**Proposed**

Lasara ISD would like to renew the depository contract with the current depository entity if the relationship is currently positive without going out for competitive bids or requests for proposal at the conclusion of a contract.

**Justification**

Lasara is a rural community. Going out for bids or requesting proposals is a time-consuming process that adds bureaucracy and paperwork to a process with little to no choice.