



# **Karnes City Independent School District**

## **District of Innovation Plan**

### **Introduction**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1842 which gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to the state's open enrollment charter schools. HB 1842 provides Karnes City ISD an opportunity to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of our student population, in order to prepare them for success and life-long learning.

Karnes City ISD took the first step in exploring this opportunity when the KCISD Board of Trustees approved a resolution initiating the process on January 9, 2017. The Board then held a public hearing to consider whether the district should develop an innovation plan, at which time the Board decided to move forward in the process. A committee was appointed to develop an innovation plan, and the plan was then created. The innovation plan was posted online for at least 30 days. The committee approved the plan on April 3, 2017. The Karnes City ISD Board of Trustees approved the plan on April 10, 2017 for 5 years, through April 2022.

### **District of Innovation Team**

Jeanette Winn, Superintendent	Vanessa Gatica, Elementary Teacher
Jo Ann Gutierrez, Director of Instructional Services	Heather Gisler, Junior High Teacher
Lisa Moczygamba, Special Programs Coordinator	Nancy Huser, Elementary Teacher
Brian Uriegas, High School Principal	Monica Janda, Primary Teacher
Theresa Molina, Junior High Principal	Scott Mathis, High School Teacher
Anthony Annis, Elementary Principal	Gabriel Pacheco, Parent Representative
Jennifer Foster, Primary Principal	Melissa Padron, Parent Representative
Jim Adams, Community Representative	David Purser, High School Teacher
Genna Alexander, Primary Teacher	Cary Rhodes, Elementary Teacher
Olivia Benware, Junior High Teacher	Staci Slayden, Community Representative
Lisa Cummings, Parent Representative	Sherry Sommer, Community Representative
Candice Dragon, Elementary Teacher	Cathy Stolle, Elementary Teacher
Jo Ann Ebrom, Elementary Paraprofessional	Deanna Wiatrek, Junior High Counselor
Crystal Fausey, Junior High Paraprofessional	Alicia Wieding, Parent Representative
Abigail Fenner, Elementary Secretary	Jayma Wood, High School Teacher

### **Innovations**

Karnes City ISD, in conjunction with the District of Innovation Committee, proposes the following flexibilities with the Texas Education Code to provide the best educational opportunities for students at KCISD.

## ***1. First and Last Day of Instruction***

Exemption from: TEC §25.0811  
TEC §25.0812

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. For many years this was the rule. However, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in August.
- TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

These laws restrict flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community.

**Proposal:** The district will develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in KCISD by incorporating the flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters, more instructional days prior to mandatory testing, and a school end date prior to June.

By ending the school year earlier, KCISD can support students who need remediation, as well as students who are entering college or trade school. An earlier school start date allows these students to register for summer classes and attend new student orientation meetings without missing instructional time.

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## ***2. Teacher Certification Requirements***

Exemption from: TEC §21.003(a)  
TEC§21.053

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher or other certified position unless the person holds an appropriate certificate.
- TEC §21.053(b) states that an educator may not be paid for teaching or work done before the issuance of a valid certificate.

**Proposal:** The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. When that is not reasonably 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.

Karnes City ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to, CTE and languages other than English. Special Education teachers will continue to be required to hold a standard teaching certificate. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Karnes City ISD will notify parents if a locally certified teacher is employed for their child's class.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

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### ***3. Minimum Minutes of Instruction per Day***

Exemption from: TEC §25.081  
TEC §25.082

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC §25.081 requires that each school day must be 420 minutes long in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes and to accumulate instructional minutes toward the 75,600 minutes of instruction required for students annually.
- TEC 25.082 (a) provides that a school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

**Proposal:** The district will consider altering the length of an instructional day on a limited basis when it is locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. Karnes City ISD does not have any intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis or without specific purpose (i.e. bad weather, professional development, early dismissal for events of community interest, etc.).

To the greatest extent possible, shortened days would 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 and continuously published using school media.

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

Exemption from: TEC §21.102(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC §21.102(b) states that a probationary contract 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 with the district.

Due to the unique nature of KCISD, including our initiatives and processes, this period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data.

**Proposal:** Upon exemption from TEC §21.102(b), all new contract certified employees subject to T.E.C. Chapter 21, will be subject to a two year probationary period set out in TEC §21.102(c), in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance. Partial years will not count toward the full year requirement.

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## ***5. Minimum Service Required***

Exemption from: TEC §21.401(a)  
TEC §21.401(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC §21.401(a) A contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service.
- TEC §21.401(b) An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

**Proposal:** KCISD seeks the freedom to reduce the number of teacher contract days from 187 days and move to a 10 month contract for teachers from August-May, with a focus on minutes of instruction, instead of days of instruction; without an anticipated reduction in salary. The move to minutes of instruction will better align teacher contracts to the minutes of instruction requirement.

The teachers will fulfill the required 75, 600 minutes of instruction and additional minutes and staff development as determined locally by the KCISD Board. This strategy will provide opportunities for teachers to seek out beneficial content area staff development during summer months and may improve teacher morale.