



GILMER
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842)

2019-20 through 2023-24

District Innovation Planning Committee

1. Rick Albritton - Superintendent
2. Greg Watson – Deputy Superintendent
3. Dawn Harris – Asst. Superintendent
4. Kim Kemp - Elementary Principal
5. Gina Treadway - Intermediate Principal
6. Bill Bradshaw - Junior High Principal
7. Brian Bowman - High School Principal
8. Tabitha Lair - Elementary Teacher
9. Valerie Lampkin – Elementary Teacher
10. Devon Bean – Elementary Teacher
11. Belinda Day – Elementary Teacher
12. Brandi Pittinger - Intermediate Teacher
13. Brian Bigelow - Junior High Teacher
14. Sheila Johnson – Junior High Teacher
15. Shawn Owens - High School Teacher
16. Trish Kaunitz – High School Teacher
17. Shane Wilson – Business Representative
18. Sara Allen - Community Representative
19. JoAnn Clamp – Parent
20. Donna Sue Youngblood – Non-teaching professional
21. Diane Thomas – Non-teaching professional
22. Alise Nolan – Non-teaching professional
23. Karen Holyfield – PEIMS Coordinator
24. Board of Trustees

District of Innovation Timeline

Monday, October 22, 2018 – 8:30 am, Board Room

Initial meeting with administrative staff to discuss preliminary thoughts and discuss possible members of the District of Innovation Committee.

Tuesday, October 23, 2018 – 1:30 pm, Board Room

Meeting with administrative staff to further discuss thoughts and discuss possible members of the District of Innovation Committee.

December 10, 2018

6:00 pm: Board Meeting

- Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation.

6:10 pm: Public Hearing

- Public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation.

6:20 pm: Resume Regular Meeting

- Approve a motion to pursue local, “District of Innovation” plan.
- Board of Trustees approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee.

Thursday, January 10, 2019 – 4:00 pm, Administration Office

Initial meeting of the District of Innovation Committee.

Thursday, January 24, 2019 – 4:00 pm, Administration Office

2nd meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

January 28 – 31, 2019, Each individual campus

Faculty input, updates, and informational meetings

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Post the District of Innovation Plan for 30 days

Monday, March 18, 2019 – 4:00 pm, Administration Office

3rd meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

March 18, 2019

Submit the District of Innovation Plan to TEA and notify the Commissioner of Education of the Board's intention to vote on the adoption of the proposed plan

Monday, April 15, 2019 – 4:15 pm

District Advisory Committee meets to vote on the District of Innovation Plan

Monday, April 15, 2019 – 6:00pm, Board Meeting

- Approve the District of Innovation Plan
- Approve the 2019-20 school calendar

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

- Notify the Commissioner of Education of the approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions by completing TEA's form and send the approved version of the plan to TEA
- Post the approved version of the District of Innovation Plan on the District website
- Begin updating all policy changes with TASB

I. Gilmer ISD as a District of Innovation

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed. We feel this is a great opportunity for our local district to tailor plans based on the needs of our students and community. On December 10, 2018, the Gilmer ISD Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation. On December 10, 2018, the Board held a public meeting and made the determination to pursue the District of Innovation designation. At that time, the Board approved a District of Innovation Committee which included our District Improvement Committee members. Based on direction provided by the Board and other stakeholders, the Committee proposes the following plan. This plan will be in effect for the 2019-2020 school year through the 2023-2024 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

II. Comprehensive Educational Program

The Gilmer ISD District of Innovation Plan is founded and aligned to the Board's Mission, Vision, and goals for the District.

A. Mission: The following adopted Mission Statement is used as the foundation for the District:

The mission of Gilmer ISD is to prepare every student for the collegiate/career experience; recognize and educate each student as a unique individual; nurture academic, social and cultural differences, and to develop reliant citizens who contribute to the community's success and strength.

B. Vision: In Gilmer ISD, we believe that:

- Everyone can learn.
- Every student should feel welcome, loved, and safe.
- A solid educational foundation prepares every student to fulfill their ambitions and dreams for life.
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities enhance academic achievement.
- Every staff member is vital to the educational experience.
- Students, educators, parents, and community members share in the responsibility for the encouragement and success of students.

- Learning is a result of thinking and doing.

C. Goals

1. To ensure a safe school environment for students, staff, and community members.
2. To provide students with a quality education with rigorous instructional standards that adequately prepares them for the college or career of their choice.
3. To recruit and retain 100% Highly Qualified faculty, staff, and support personnel.
4. To build positive parent, business, and community partnerships.
5. To maintain strong management practices and capital improvement plans to achieve district-wide efficiency.

III. REQUIREMENTS OF THE EDUCATION CODE FROM WHICH THE DISTRICT WILL BE EXEMPT UPON ADOPTION OF THE PLAN

Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) that “inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan.” Taking into consideration the need for flexibility and local control in decision-making, Gilmer ISD seeks exemption for all allowable TEC requirements under the HB 1842 statute. The following exemptions are highlighted as examples, but not all inclusive.

A. School start date (TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL and LOCAL)

Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule. However, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. Most districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to have the flexibility to move the mandatory start date a little earlier in August to benefit our students.

- a.) GISD may adopt a calendar with a start date prior to the fourth Monday of August, but not before the first of August.
- b.) This will allow the first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction.
- c.) This will increase the number of days of instruction prior to any STAAR testing.
- d.) This will decrease the number of days of school following the end of year STAAR test.
- e.) This will allow our schedule to better align with other school districts and with local colleges that provide our students dual credit opportunities.

B. Submitting waivers for Kindergarten – Grade 4 class size (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113) (EEB LEGAL and BF)

Currently

Each Kindergarten – 4th Grade class is 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. 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 be sent home to each parent in the section/class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. After a waiver has been submitted, students will often move out of the district and the ratio will fall back below the 22:1 requirement. There are other extenuating circumstances in which exceeding the 22:1 ratio is necessary to better serve students.

Proposed

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times, it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

- a.) GISD will attempt to keep all K-4 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-4 core classroom ratio reaches 24:1, the campus will send a letter to the parents of the students in the impacted classrooms and inform them of the situation.
- c.) If two or more K-4 classrooms within a grade level remain at a 24:1 student to teacher ratio for 90 consecutive days, the district will consider adding an additional teacher to lower class sizes.
- d.) A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- e.) This gives GISD more flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

C. Teacher certification (TEC 21.003) (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)

Currently

In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or if 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. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process and it restricts our district's flexibility to best serve our students.

Proposed

To best serve GISD 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. The campus principal should only pursue this option when a certified and qualified teacher is not available or when this option would best serve the needs of the students. A teacher assigned to one subject out of their certification area should not be assigned to these courses for more than half of their work day and the arrangement should be re-evaluated at the end of each school year.

b.) This exemption will not apply to Special Education or Bilingual teachers. Teachers in these positions must continue to be SBEC certified.

c.) An individual with experience in a CTE field or with a 4-year degree in a non-CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or other courses through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the Superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if the District feels like 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. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be eligible for a non-Chapter 21 contract.

d.) This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

D. Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.102) (DCA LEGAL and LOCAL)

Currently: Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five years of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed: 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 Gilmer ISD, which will allow us to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness. All in-district promotions resulting in an assignment in a new professional capacity that requires a different class of certification will be provided a one-year probationary contract for a maximum of two years.

E. Transfer Students (TEC 25.036) (FDA Local)

Currently: A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who do not meet District admission criteria. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year and prohibits mid-year revocation for any purpose.

Proposed: Gilmer ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA Local requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space, instructional staff, programs and services are taken into consideration. The student's disciplinary history, work habits, and attendance are also evaluated. Transfer students will be expected to follow the rules of a transfer subject to revocation at any time during the school year. That is, the District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applications, allowing for immediate revocation, for the following circumstances:

- a.) Student behavior warrants a suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion;
- b.) Student attendance falls below the TEA truancy standard

F. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator (TEC 37.0012) (FO, FOA, FOC, GRA, Student Code of Conduct)

Currently: Current code constrains campus governance by requiring one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator.

Proposed: Relief from Texas Education Code 37.0012 will allow GISD to employ a more collaborative discipline program. It will allow for a more meaningful selection of staff to work together with parents for the benefit of students by allowing multiple personnel instead of a single individual to handle the discipline of a student.

G. BANK DEPOSITORY CONTRACT TERM (TEC 45.205) (TEC 45.206) (BDAE LEGAL, BDAE LOCAL)

Currently: The depository for the District shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. A district and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for two additional two-year terms. The contract term and any extension must

coincide with the district's fiscal year. An extension is not subject to the requirements of Education Code 45.206, *Education Code 45.205* and Education Code 45.204.

Proposed: An exemption from these statutes will allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 6-year allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the district's business. This will further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to change direct deposit instructions each time a new depository occurs and allows the district flexibility with respect to banking relationships. The time saved by the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees by not having to deal with this ministerial duty every two years will allow the Superintendent and the Board more time for studying and planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the district's educational goals. Gilmer ISD will continue to use the local depository for the District without rebidding as follows:

- a.) At the end of each two-year term, the District and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for multiple two additional year periods.
- b.) The District must review the contract to ensure the best value and support for the District and obtain Board approval for each of the two-year periods.
- c.) Nothing in this process would hinder the District's ability to undertake bidding on the District Depository Bank at the end of any of the two-year periods. Further, this entire Innovation Plan must be reviewed and renewed at the end of five years, including this provision.

H. Three-Day Limitation on Suspensions (TEC 37.005) (FOB – LEGAL)

Currently: TEC 37.005 states, "A suspension may not exceed three school days." The law has been interpreted to apply to both in and out of school suspensions. This limitation minimizes the options a campus has for discipline without sending a student to DAEP.

Proposed: An exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the option of keeping students on campus and closer to their regular teachers during a disciplinary placement rather than always opting to send students to DAEP for moderately serious offenses. Additional days of in-school suspension could provide a way for a campus to avoid excessive discretionary DAEP placements.