

# Rivercrest

Independent School District

## *District of Innovation Plan*

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*January 2017 – December 2021*

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### **Introduction**

House Bill 1842 passed in the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning.

Rivercrest ISD wishes to implement an Innovation Plan with increased flexibility and freedom necessary to personalize learning experiences. As a District of Innovation, Rivercrest ISD intends to utilize the opportunity to enact maximum local control and design local policies as needed to best meet the needs of our students, employees, and community.

## **Term**

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in January 2017 and will remain in effect for five years, through December 2021, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District of Innovation Planning Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

## **Timeline**

| <b>Timeline</b>   | <b>Activity/Task</b>  |
|-------------------|---|
| November 8, 2016  | Board of Trustees passed Resolution to initiate District of Innovation Plan   |
| November 8, 2016  | Board of Trustees held public hearing and appointed District of Innovation Planning Committee (DOIPC) to draft Plan |
| November 14, 2016 | Initial orientation and planning meeting of the District of Innovation Planning Committee                           |
| November 28, 2016 | Planning meeting to finalize the District of Innovation Plan  |
| December 6, 2016  | Post District of Innovation Plan on RISD website  |
| January 5, 2017   | District of Innovation Planning Committee vote on plan  |
| January 6, 2017   | District of Innovation plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education  |
| January 9, 2017   | Board of Trustees vote on District of Innovation Plan   |

## **Planning Committee**

| <b>Member Name</b> | <b>Representation</b> | <b>Campus</b> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Vincent Lum        | Parent                | Elementary    |
| Tami Hines         | Parent                | Junior High   |
| Brandon Bell       | Parent                | High School   |
| Tonya Gifford      | Teacher               | Elementary    |
| Kristi Purviance   | Teacher               | Elementary    |
| Camey Limbock      | Teacher               | Junior High   |
| Mona Pitts         | Teacher               | Junior High   |
| Mandy Bachman      | Teacher               | High School   |
| Ginger Foster      | Student Coordinator   | High School   |
| Carrie Gray        | Principal             | Elementary    |
| Lee Wilson         | Principal             | Junior High   |
| Ronny Alsup        | Principal             | High School   |
| Tiffany Easley     | Financial Director    | District      |
| Stanley Jessee     | Superintendent        | District      |

## **Teacher Certification**

Exemption from: TEC 21.003; TEC 21.053; TEC 21.057

Relevant Board Policies: DBA LEGAL/LOCAL; DK LEGAL/LOCAL

### **Currently**

*TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or 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 in Subchapter B. TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time. TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.*

### **Proposed**

In order to best serve Rivercrest ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow the district to consider part-time professionals to teach courses, allow industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology, and also assist in staffing high need STEM and dual credit course offerings. Teachers certified in other states could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. This would also allow experienced certified teachers to teach a course outside their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.

### **Local Guidelines**

- A. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subjects and/or grade levels out of their field. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.
- B. The campus principal may submit a request to the superintendent for local certification of uncertified individuals. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the individual possesses qualifying him/her to teach the subject.
- C. The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification and will submit approved requests to the Board of Trustees for approval prior to the individual beginning employment.
- D. Local teaching certificates will be issued for one year and the employee will be at-will.
- E. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.

## **School Start Date**

Exempt from: TEC 25.0811; 25.0812

Relevant Board Policy: EB LEGAL

### **Currently**

*TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15<sup>th</sup>.*

### **Proposed**

Rivercrest ISD would like to locally determine the school start date for school. This flexibility would allow the district to determine, on an annual basis, what start date best meets the needs of the students. It also offers the following opportunities:

- Beginning school before the fourth Monday in August gives the ability to help balance semesters.
- An earlier start permits students additional instruction prior to state assessments.
- This will allow for a calendar that fits the needs of our local communities, staff, and students.

## **Minimum Minutes of Instruction**

Exemption from: TEC 25.081; TEC 25.082

Relevant Board Policy: EB LEGAL, EC LEGAL

### **Currently**

*Both Texas Education Codes 25.081 and 25.082 address the length of the instructional day by limiting it to “420 minutes of instruction” or “seven hours each day including intermissions and recesses”, totaling 75,600 minutes for the year.*

### **Proposed**

Rivercrest ISD would like to be exempt from the 420 minute day requirement and have the flexibility to alter the length of the school day on selected days whenever it is determined to be necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders.

- The opportunity to exempt from the 420 minute school day requirement will provide the district the opportunity to provide each campus the flexibility of creating a daily schedule that will better serve the students and teachers on each campus.
- This flexibility will give local control to the district in meeting the yearly requirement of 75,600 minutes in relation to the district calendar for each specific school year.
- This exemption will provide greater flexibility than the current waiver system.

## **Class Size Waiver**

Exemption from: TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113

Related Board Policy: EED LEGAL

### **Currently**

*Texas Education Code 25.112 limits the number of students in Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 22 students per teacher. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waiver must be applied for annually. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio and inform them the waiver has been submitted.*

### **Proposed**

While Rivercrest intends to remain within the education code guidelines with regard to class size ratios, we seek local control to manage increases in class sizes to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students. Research shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning and not the absolute class size. Small class sizes may have a positive effect in the classroom, but must also be balanced with the timing of adding staff, the qualifications of staff available, the makeup and chemistry of the classroom and other classroom influences.

## **Contract Service Days**

Exemption from: TEC 21.401

Related Board Policy: DC LEGAL

### **Currently**

*Texas Education Code requires educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.*

### **Proposal**

With the passage of TEC 25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes, the law did not address contract days for 10-monthly contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. Rivercrest proposes to reduce teacher contract days from 187 to 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers and should enhance teacher recruitment morale.

## **Employment Contracts**

Exemption from: TEC 21.102

Related Board Policy: DCA LEGAL

### **Currently**

*For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.*

### **Proposed**

For experienced teachers new to the district that have been employed as a teachers in public education for at least five of the past eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years. This will allow the district to more fully determine the staff member's effectiveness.

## **Transfer Students**

Exemption from: TEC 25.001; TEC 25.036

Related Board Policy: FDA (LOCAL)

### **Currently**

*Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.*

### **Proposed**

Rivercrest ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (LOCAL) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements and the rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applications for the following circumstances:

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

## **Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs/Suspensions**

Exemption from: TEC 37.008; TEC 37.006; 37.005

Related Board Policy: FOCA (LEGAL); FOB (LEGAL)

### **Currently**

*TEC 37.008 requires each school district to provide a disciplinary alternative education program that provides for the students who are assigned to that program to be separated from students who are not assigned to the program.*

### **Proposed**

While Rivercrest would make every attempt to comply with the existing education code, exemption from this requirement would allow the district to better utilize staff and facilities by allowing junior high and high school DAEP students to attend the same classroom as junior high and high school In School Suspension students when necessary.

### **Currently**

*TEC 37.006 states that an elementary student may not be placed in a DAEP with any other student who is not an elementary student. However, students younger than 10 may only be placed in a DAEP if they commit an expellable offense under 37.007.*

### **Proposed**

Exemption from this requirement would allow the district to make common sense decisions about which students are age appropriate to be in the same room together and allow the district to better utilize existing staff and facilities in the event of an elementary DAEP placement.

Currently when an elementary student is placed in DAEP, it pulls staff away from the secondary DAEP or ISS. This exemption would allow us to continue to use both rooms for ISS and DAEP.

### **Currently**

*TEC 37.008 requires Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs to employ only teachers who meet all certification requirements.*

### **Proposed**

Exemption from this requirement would allow the district to better utilize staff. Although we do currently have all certified staff for DAEP, we utilize teacher aides for a portion of the day with ISS. In the event that we need to combine DAEP and ISS students, that room would be staffed by certified teachers part of the day, and non-certified staff for a portion of the day.