

# Kerens ISD

## District of Innovation Plan

### Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th 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. As a District of Innovation, Kerens ISD wishes to implement an Innovation Plan with increased flexibility and freedom necessary to personalize learning experiences. As a District of Innovation, Kerens ISD intends to use this opportunity to develop a plan that focuses on the District's vision, "Igniting Potential, Motivated to Succeed", and 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

Kerens ISD's Innovation Plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless the plan is terminated or amended by the Kerens ISD Board in accordance with HB1842. To ensure success of Kerens ISD students, the committee is committed to constantly monitoring and making necessary amendments to be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

### District Innovation Team

- |                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Jason Adams     | Superintendent              |
| 2. Gayle White     | High School Principal       |
| 3. Crystal Adams   | Middle School Principal     |
| 4. Shana Owen      | Elementary School Principal |
| 5. Brad Atkeisson  | KISD Assistant Principal    |
| 6. James Briggs    | KHS Teacher                 |
| 7. Christy Strange | KMS Teacher                 |
| 8. Whitney Bonner  | KES Teacher                 |
| 9. Mollie Emerson  | Parent                      |

## Innovations

### **1. Teacher Certification**

*(TEC 21.003) (DK LEGAL) (DK EXHIBIT)*

#### **Currently**

*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.*

#### **Proposed Plan**

- In order to best serve Kerens ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.
- The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand dual credit, and career and technical/STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics) courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.
- This exemption directly supports the move from “highly qualified” requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area.
- In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.
- The superintendent will submit this action to the Board of Trustees for Board approval prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. Teachers employed by local certification will only be offered a probationary contract.

### **2. Teacher & Principal Evaluations**

*(TEC 21.203) (TEC 21.352) (TEC21.354) (DNA LEGAL) (DNA LOCAL)*

#### **Currently**

*The state of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) teacher appraisal system since 1997. The state issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, that will be called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Districts currently have the authority to only formally appraise teachers once every five school years. Kerens ISD teachers are formally evaluated annually.*

#### **Proposed Plan**

- Kerens ISD will utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool.
- A committee of administrators and teachers would have the option to develop a teacher evaluation system that would be a combination of PDAS, T-TESS, and other best practices to develop a local instrument and/or process that fits the needs and goals of Kerens ISD.
- This instrument will be developed with input from central administration, campus administration, and teachers. It will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-PESS, and any other relevant best practice.
- All teachers will be formally evaluated at a minimum of once every other year. Administrators will have the authority to place a teacher on an annual appraisal schedule if the teacher is performing below expectations.

- All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set classroom goals and a staff development plan.
- All new teachers to the district will be formally evaluated during their first year of employment.
- Principals will continue to be evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.
- These locally developed plans should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for Kerens ISD.

### **3. School Calendar**

*(TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB LEGAL)*

#### ***Currently***

*Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Texas Education Code Section 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.*

#### **Proposed Plan**

- Students will begin no earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of August.
- Teachers will begin no earlier than the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of August.
- Will allow for the elimination of imbalanced grading periods and semester schedules.
- Will allow for a calendar that fits the needs of our local community, staff, and students.

### **4. Minimum Minutes of Instruction**

*(TEC 25.081) (TEC 25.082) (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 Plan**

- 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 6 day waiver maximum that relates to the length of the school day.
- The opportunity to be exempt from the 7 hour day requirement will allow the district to create more flexibility within the daily schedule for students and staff. This flexibility will be used to create a unique bell schedule instead of the static schedule required of schools by this mandate.

### **5. Class Size Ratio**

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

#### ***Currently***

*Kindergarten thru 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. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.*

## **Proposed Plan**

- While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, this must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff, and the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students.
- We do not believe it has a negative effect when a district adds only 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.
- Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. In the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten thru 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- This exemption only allows Kerens ISD the local control over class size ratios, not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements.
- This plan also emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passions and needs. This grants flexibility in class size at all times-regrouping for success, small groups, large groups, etc.

## **6. Teacher Contract Days**

*(TEC 21.401) (DCB LEGAL) (DCB LOCAL)*

### ***Currently***

*Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.*

### **Proposed Plan**

- This proposal reduces teacher contract days from 187 to 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This somewhat makes an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts.
- This proposal will hopefully improve teacher morale.
- This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

## **7. Campus Behavior Coordinator**

*(TEC 37.0012) (FO LEGAL) (FO LOCAL)*

### ***Currently***

*Manner in which statute inhibits goals of the plan TEC§37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.*

### **Proposed Plan**

- This requirement inhibits social and emotional learning because it restricts the District's ability to promote a more collaborative discipline program that provides social and emotional supports to students. It takes the control of the discipline plan out of the principal's control and does not take into consideration situations where discipline is handled by other professionals.
- The District will focus on establishing classroom protocols and utilizing school culture to foster the development of individual responsibility, positive behavioral interventions and supports while

encouraging the social and emotional development of each student and his/her responsibility toward the community.

- Kerens ISD will restore control and management of maintaining student discipline to the oversight of the campus principal.
- The specific duties of the Campus Behavior Coordinator will be given to the campus principal who may divide and/or delegate duties to other professionals as needed. Examples: parent notification of disciplinary action, notice of law enforcement action, restraint reports, corporal punishment, video recordings, etc.

#### **8. 90 Percent Attendance Rule** (TEC 25.092) (FEC LOCAL)

##### ***Currently***

*State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.*

##### **Proposed Plan**

- Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates.
- Abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances.
- This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities.
- It will also allow Kerens ISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they've attended a certain number of school days.