

PROPOSED DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN (RENEWAL)

Breckenridge ISD Board of Trustees

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Term and Implementation

The term of this innovation district plan will be five years or until terminated by the Breckenridge ISD Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. Should the district choose to request further allowances that would increase student achievement, the Board will re-establish the Innovation Plan Committee and repeat the process.

Implementation of this plan will be carried out by the Administration, Board of Trustees, and Campus-Level and District-Level Planning Committees. Board Policies affected by the implementation of these innovation strategies will be reviewed and revised as necessary by the Board of Trustees.

Allowable Exemptions

District personnel, along with the Local Innovation Committee, have considered the allowances set forth in Sec 12A.003 of the Texas Education Code. In an effort to allow flexibility in creating programs that meet the challenges related to educating a low socio-economic population in a rural, West Texas setting, the Local Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees, jointly agree to these requested allowances.

Uniform Start Date (TEC §25.0811)

Currently, state law mandates a start date of the fourth Monday in August, except for districts that operate a year-round program.

Rationale for Exemption

Flexibility in start date will allow several benefits to enhance the programs at Breckenridge ISD. First, it will allow more days throughout the school year for teacher preparation, planning, and data-driven decision-making. Second, it will allow us to more effectively balance the number of days in the first and second semesters. Third, it will allow for scheduling around local activities, such as the Stephens County Fair.

Local Guidelines

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

Certification Requirements (TEC §21.003, §21.044, §21.053 and §21.057)

State law requires that classroom teachers hold an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate State Board of Educator Certification. When a properly certified teacher cannot be obtained, the district must file a request for an Emergence Certification through the Texas Education Agency and the State Board for Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

Statewide, teacher shortages are hampering school districts' ability to find qualified teachers. 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 courses. Breckenridge ISD is located in a rural area, resulting in limited course offerings. The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. This flexibility will allow the district to offer a wider variety of courses and provide more innovation in instruction and coursework for Breckenridge ISD students. This flexibility would also allow the district to employ the teacher candidates that have the greatest passion for teaching and learning.

Local Guidelines

In order to best serve Breckenridge ISD students, decisions on certifications will be handled locally.

- The Principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject(s) out of his/her certification field. The Principal will be required to provide valid reasoning for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The Principal may submit to the Superintendent a request including all the individual's credentials. The Superintendent will approve or deny the request and report the action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning employment. The local certificate will require an employment agreement rather than a Chapter 21 contract.
- In the case the District is not able to hire an appropriately certified teacher, the Principal may submit a request to the Superintendent to hire a non-certified teacher. The Principal and Superintendent will establish a plan of action that includes an appropriate number of professional development hours and a focused mentorship to help the teacher become certified in a reasonable time period. The Superintendent will present the plan to the Board of Trustees prior to the employment of the individual.
- Special Education and ESL/ELL certifications cannot be waived.

Group Health Benefits for School Employees (TEC §22.004i)

Currently, the TEC §22.004(i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code.

Rationale for Exemption

The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Breckenridge ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represents community interests in this matter.

Local Guidelines

Increased local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs.

This provision will expire on August 31, 2022.

Class Sizes and Student-Teacher Ratios (TEC §25.111, §25.112, §25.113, and §25.114)

Current law requires a student-teacher ratio of 22-1 for students in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade, and for Physical Education Classes a student-teacher ratio of 45-1.

Rationale for Exemption

A smaller class size, under normal circumstances, will allow for more individual attention. However, clearly the district must be able to assess the current staff and students and place them in the situation that allows for optimum learning. The qualities of the teacher have a much larger impact on learning than class size. Flexibility from this rule will allow plans that may increase the student-teacher ratio for part of the day, while at the same time allowing for more individualized attention in other parts of the day. When a qualified teacher cannot be found to reduce the class size to current law, it is better to have a few extra students with a qualified teacher.

Local Guidelines

In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, the class sizes will be reviewed by appropriate district and campus administrators. The Board of Trustees will be informed of which K-4 classes exceed the 22:1 ratio. TEA waivers for class sizes exceeding 22 will not be required.