



Proposed for Renewal in March 2025 without changes.

**Rains ISD**  
**District of Innovation Plan**

## **District of Innovation Committee**

Saylor Barrios, JH Teacher  
Staci Ely, JH Teacher  
Kaley Jones, JH Teacher  
Sherri Cockrell, HS Teacher  
Laura Jenkins, HS Teacher  
Autumn Tanton, HS Teacher  
Serennah Marrone, Elem Teacher  
Amy Tanton, Elem Teacher  
Candice Buchanan, Elem Teacher  
Karlie Farmer, Int Teacher  
Tiny Jones, Int Teacher  
Justin Bartley, Int Teacher  
David Gowin, Business Representative  
Carla Weddle, Business Representative  
Sherri McCall, Community Member  
Karen Thurman, Community Member  
Jennifer Hill, Community Member  
Candice West, Parent  
Julia Potts, Parent

\*Joe Nicks, Superintendent  
\*John Portwood, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services  
\*Lyndsay Hayes, Executive Director of Academics  
\*Molly Davidson, Director of Special Education  
Anastasia Armstreet, Elementary Principal  
JC Vance, Intermediate Principal  
Jennifer Moore, Junior High Principal  
Jeff Akin, High School Principal

\*Advisory Role

## **Rains ISD--District of Innovation**

House Bill (HB) 1842 was passed during the 84th Session of the Texas Legislature. This bill created Districts of Innovation. With certain performance requirements being met, districts may follow certain procedures for adoption as listed in Statute. In gaining this designation, districts will be exempt from certain sections of the TEC (Texas Education Code) that inhibits the achievement of district goals.

It is the belief of Rains ISD that certain statutes limit the district's potential. We seek exemption from the following provisions of the TEC:

### **First Day of Instruction:**

#### Manner in which the law inhibits:

Adhering to this law restricts the flexibility of the district in designing a calendar that fits the needs of the district and community.

#### Benefit of Exemption:

- The calendar will have the flexibility to start school one to two weeks early, the second or third Monday in August or a mid-week start sometime during one of those weeks.
- Starting earlier will more equitably balance the two semesters and set exams prior to the winter holiday break and create more instructional time before STAAR/EOC/AP exams.
- The balanced semesters will align with college semesters as well, allowing more opportunities for students and staff to attend summer school (semester starts in early June).
- Strategically placed professional development/planning days could be scheduled to analyze and plan for student performance issues (following MAP and 9 week testing).
- The ability to incorporate more professional learning days throughout the year will reduce the need for substitutes.

#### TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

TEC 25.0811: A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

## **Teacher Certification:**

### Manner in which the law inhibits:

The requirement for certification inhibits the district's abilities, at times, to hire teachers for specialized or hard-to-fill areas. Using the exemption from teacher certification rules, Rains ISD would be able to hire professionals in specialized trades and vocations to teach identified career/technical courses, dual credit courses, and non-core electives at the secondary level.

### Benefit of Exemption:

- The District will have the ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE), STEAM Courses, and Dual Credit Courses.
- Local Qualifications will allow the district to :
  - Allow experienced teachers to pick up an elective in an area to teach in which they are qualified
  - Allow qualified teachers to teach one class outside of their certification area
  - Hire community college instructors/individuals with a Master's Degree (to teach dual credit, a person must have 18 graduate hours in the field of study)
  - Offer dual credit opportunities in CTE courses
  - Recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real world experience
- Local Procedure:
  - Principals, along with the department supervisor, will submit the candidates to the Superintendent with credentials. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to beginning employment.
  - The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the individual possesses that would qualify this individual to teach in the desired position along with the support that will be provided for the teacher.
  - Emergency situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
- Individual qualifications would include:
  - Demonstrated subject matter competency
  - Professional work experience

- Formal training and education
  - Relevant industry license, certification, registration
  - Any combination of work experience, training and education or industry credential related to the subject matter he or she will be teaching
- All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure they have sufficient education and expertise to provide the instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught.
  - Before issuing a school district teaching permit to an individual, the district would ensure that the individual completed the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education (SBEC) rules. In addition, the individual would be required to obtain a set number of hours in classroom management training and work with a mentor teacher for the first two years of employment. The individual would be employed on an at-will basis.

TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

TEC 21.003, TEC 21.053 requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

## **Probationary Contracts**

Manner in which the law inhibits:

The limited time period between hiring and recommending for renewal is at times insufficient to fully determine a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. The time restriction may also negatively impact a newly-hired teacher who may struggle with circumstances beyond his/her control, and who needs an additional year to demonstrate capabilities.

Proposal:

In some cases, one school year may be insufficient to fully evaluate a teacher's, counselor's, nurse's, or principal's effectiveness since contract timelines necessitate that employment decisions are made in March. This plan would allow the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, nurses, or principals newly hired.

- After the first year of probationary period in Rains ISD, a teacher may have an opportunity to move into a term contract if he/she meets the following 5 criteria:
  - A score of "Proficient" in 12 of the 16 Domains on the T-TESS.

- Student outcomes that indicate either
  - 60% of students met growth projections as indicated by NWEA MAP scores (K-10th grade).
  - 60% of students met Level II or above standard for STAAR (3rd-EOC).
- Attended all district and campus required professional development.
- Positive recommendation from the current campus principal.
- Concurrence from the office of curriculum and instruction.

TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

TEC §21.102(b) states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher, counselor, nurse, or principal in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district. (DCA LEGAL)

## **INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFER STUDENTS**

Manner in which the law inhibits:

(FDA LOCAL) Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff and the student's disciplinary history, academic records, and attendance records are evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. Violation of the terms of the agreement may result in a transfer request not being approved the following year. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to require a transfer to be a commitment for a period of one school year.

Proposed:

The district is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants and allows the district to rescind a transfer for students not meeting local transfer criteria at any time during the school year.

TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

TEC 25.036 states that any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.