

River Road Independent School District

Local Innovation Plan

LOCAL INNOVATION COMMITTEE / DSBDM MEMBERS

Richard Kelley, Superintendent
Andy Nies, Asst. Superintendent – DSBDM Chair
Missy Treiber – Rolling Hills Teacher
Audra Medellin – Rolling Hills Teacher
Michelle Taylor – Willow Vista Teacher
Akaisha McKillip – RRMS Teacher
Bobbi Norwood – RRHS Teacher
Kristen Decker – RRHS Teacher
Shannon Woodward – Primary Non-Teaching Rep.
Lacey Clark – District Parent
Donnie Frye – District Parent
Kelly Venable – Business Representative / RRISD Board Member

INTRODUCTION

The 84th Legislative Session, through House Bill 1842, created “Districts of Innovation” in Chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code. The new law allows independent school districts, such as River Road ISD, to access many of the flexibilities available to Texas’ open enrollment charter schools. To take advantage of these new opportunities, a school district’s board of trustees must adopt an “innovation plan.” Only districts with acceptable performance ratings are eligible to be a District of Innovation. River Road ISD has an acceptable performance rating and is eligible to be designated as a District of Innovation.

As a District of Innovation, River Road ISD will have:

- Greater local control over the educational and instructional model for River Road ISD students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, while maintaining accountability for results; and
- The ability to innovate and think “outside the box,” to the benefit of River Road ISD students, educators and staff.

River Road ISD's District of Innovation Committee is focused on ten (10) areas of Innovation:

1. School Calendar: First Day of Instruction
2. School Calendar: Last Day of School
3. Teacher Certification: SBEC Requirements
4. Teacher Certification: School District Teaching Permit
5. Teacher Certification: Parental Notification
6. Campus Instruction: Kindergarten thru 4th Grade Class Size
7. Campus Instruction: Kindergarten thru 4th Grade Notice of Class Size
8. Campus Instruction: Physical Fitness Assessment Required.
9. Campus Instruction: Reporting of Physical Fitness Results
10. Campus Instruction: Minimum Minutes of Instruction

BACKGROUND & PROCESS

On December 12, 2016, RRISD's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to initiate the process to be designated as a District of Innovation. At that same meeting, the Board conducted a public hearing to receive comments from the public about becoming a District of Innovation. Following the public hearing, the Board named the District Site Base Decision Making Team (commonly known as "DSBDM") to serve as RRISD's District of Innovation Committee ("Committee") and develop the innovation plan ("Plan"). The Committee/DSBDM is comprised of key stakeholders, including elementary and secondary teachers, district-level non-teaching professional staff, parents, community representatives, business representatives, and a Board member.

TERM

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning March 20, 2017, and ending March 20, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. RRISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

INNOVATIONS

River Road ISD seeks exemption from the following Texas Education Code provisions:

1. School Start and End Date:

Exemption from: TEC § 25.0811; TEC § 25.0812

Related Board Policies: None Applicable

TEC § 25.0811 states a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August.

TEC § 25.0812 states a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Innovative Plan:

The goal is to allow for a school calendar which fits the local needs of our community, emphasizing active learning, college & career readiness, and social and emotional needs of students. In addition, we want to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

Goals:

- Begin instruction earlier and develop a school calendar which meets the needs of the district.
- Allow the first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction. Enable the district to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in each semester.
- With the 75,600 minutes requirement and state assessment given in early May, it might be possible to finish the school year prior to May 15.
- End the school year prior to Memorial Day to allow students and teachers to participate in summer courses.
- Build in breaks (staff development or holiday days) each month or six week. Tie these to traditional business holidays if possible.

The District of Innovation Plan Committee has determined the above-listed benefits justify RRISD seeking exemption from the Texas Education Code § 25.0811 and TEC § 25.0812.

2. Teacher Certification Requirements:

Exemption From: TEC § 21.003(a); TEC § 21.055; TEC § 21.057

Related Board Policies: (DK LEGAL)

TEC § 21.003(a) states a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

TEC § 21.055 A school district may issue a school district teaching permit and employ as a teacher a person who does not hold a teaching certificate issued by the SBOE. To be eligible for a school district teaching permit under this section, a person must hold a baccalaureate degree. Promptly after employing a person under this section, a school district shall send to the commissioner a written statement identifying the person, the person's qualifications as a teacher, and the subject or class the person will teach. The person may teach the subject or class pending action by the commissioner.

TEC § 21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Innovative Plan:

River Road ISD will continue to seek highly effective educators certified through the traditional means developed by the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC).

The current certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CATE), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Fine Arts, Languages other than English (LOTE), Social Studies, and English Language Arts courses. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local certification requirements for such course in lieu of the requirements set forth in the Texas Education Code. The District understands that it is still bound by federal regulations tied to funding received from the USDE, i.e. Title I monies. Furthermore, the District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits.

By seeking flexibility to establish our own certification requirements the following advantages can be gained:

- A Greater number of CATE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students and
- An ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.

In order to best serve students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.

Notification of District Teaching Permits (Local Certification) shall not be necessary.

Allow District Teaching Permits (local certification) based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway. An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including:

- Advanced courses to be taught by individuals qualified to teach at the college and university level
- Languages Other than English (LOTE) specialty teachers/areas
- Career & Technical Education (CTE)

A person seeking District Teaching Permit (local certification) should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.

The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications.

Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to:

- Professional work experience
- Formal training and education in the content area
- Active, relevant professional industry certification or registration
- Combination of work experience, training, and education
- Demonstration of successful experience working with students

The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students. **Employment is dependent upon Board approval.**

An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will not receive a contract, but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers. Local teaching certificates will be for one year.

An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.

A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.

3. Class Size Ratios:

Exemption From: TEC § 25.112; TEC § 25.113

Related Board Policies:

TEC § 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for Kindergarten - 4th Grade classes.

TEC § 25.113 requires district to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. Districts are required by state law to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for Kindergarten - 4th Grade classes.

Innovative Plan:

The intent of this statute was to ensure that classrooms maintained a small teacher/student ratio under the belief that smaller classes led to improved achievement for students who benefitted from more individualized teacher attention. While the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, said waivers must be applied for annually and must be applied for by each district, each year. By seeking an exemption, the District would not be required to seek waivers annually. The District does not traditionally seek waivers in this area and will strive to maintain a ratio of 22:1 or less in K-4 classrooms.

- Beginning of the year hiring decisions will be based on projected 22:1 ratios.
- To the extent possible, each school year will begin with enough teachers to establish a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per Kindergarten - 4th grade.
- Enrollments into a campus grade level will continue until the class size has reached 23:1 in each section of the grade level.
- Each section in a grade level would receive new students equally.
- In K-4th grade, all options will be discussed and considered before going over the 22:1 ratio.

- If two or more classes exceed the 24:1 ratio at any time during the year, the District could actively seek an additional teacher. After thoughtful communication between the Superintendent, campus principal, and grade level teachers, the Superintendent will determine what is in the best interest of the students.
- Transfers may not be allowed into a campus if it will increase the ratio over 22:1.

4. FitnessGram:

Exemption From: TEC § 38.101; TEC § 38.103

Related Board Policies:

TEC § 38.101 requires school districts to annually assess the physical fitness of students enrolled in grades three or higher in a course that satisfies the curriculum requirements for physical education under Section 28.002(a)(2)(C).

TEC § 38.103 requires a school district to provide the results of individual student performance on the physical fitness assessment required by this subchapter to the agency. The results may not contain the names of individual students or teachers or a student's social security number or date of birth. (b) The results of individual student performance on the physical fitness assessment instrument are confidential and may be released only in accordance with state and federal law.

The district would like to seek an exemption from the requirement of administering the FitnessGram.

5. Class Minutes

Exemption From: TEC § 25.081; TEC § 25.082

Related Board Policies:

TEC § 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”.

Innovative Plan:

While the intent of the Legislature was to standardize across all districts the amount of time students spent learning in a classroom, River Road ISD wishes to meet the goal of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year, but seeks an exemption from these statutes so it may reach the 75,600 minute total in a more creative manner without being limited to either 420 minutes or seven hours of instruction every day.”

Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods and times instruction may be delivered to students.

Relief granted from this section does not constitute any substantive exemption from compulsory attendance or UIL rules, nor does it limit or modify a teacher's ability to assign or determine grades in accordance with Texas Education Code 28.0214 and 28.0216.

IMPLEMENTATION

This Local Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the River Road ISD will operate in order to provide improved student and educator opportunities. This Plan sets out the laws from which River Road ISD seeks exemption, so that it can develop more innovative programming and better meet the needs of its students, educators and community. While this Plan sets out those parameters, along with some innovative practices listed, it does not and cannot establish the full scope of innovative practices within the RRISD. Specific implementation plans will be developed in order to fully realize the work of the Committee (e.g., future District Site-Based Decision Making Teams and/or Calendar Committees will develop calendars as permitted by these innovations).

If needed, adjustments to Board Policy will be researched, developed, and presented to the Board of Trustees. It is the expectation of the Committee that all Board Policy language will reflect the spirit of the Committee work and honor the parameters and limitations expressed in this Plan.

Any and all changes that arise from the District of Innovation work will be accompanied by a comprehensive communication plan for students, families, and the community.

- **1st Committee Meeting: February 15, 2017**
- **2nd Committee Meeting: February 16, 2017**
- **Dates Proposed Plan Posted on District Website (minimum of 30 days): February 17 – March 20, 2017**
- **3rd Committee Meeting (included public hearing): March 20, 2017**
- **Texas Education Agency Notified of Board's Intent to Vote: February 17, 2017**
- **School Board Meeting/Public Hearing: March 20, 2017**
- **Texas Education Agency Notified of Plan Approval: March 21, 2017**

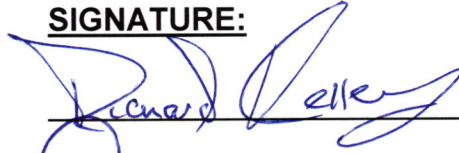
Approved by a Majority of River Road ISD's DOI Plan Committee:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

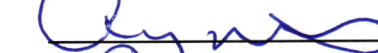
DATE:

Richard Kelley



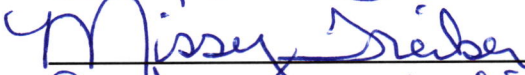
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Andy Nies



2/17/17

Missy Treiber



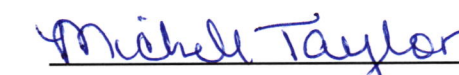
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Audra Medellin



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Michele Taylor




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Akaisha McKillip



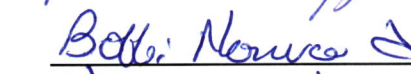
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Deanna Skaggs



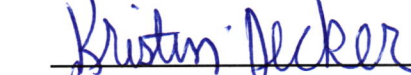
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Bobbi Norwood



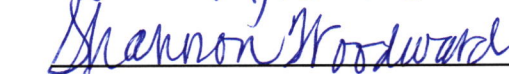
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Kristen Decker



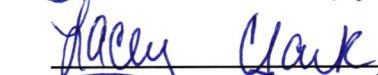
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Shannon Woodward



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Lacey Clark



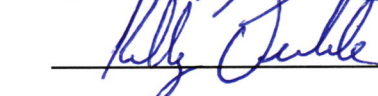
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Donnie Frye



2-17-17

Kelly Venable



2-17-17

Approved by a 2/3 of River Road ISD's Board of Trustees:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Glenn Perky

Brian Shannon

Amanda Brown

Stacey Johnson

Kelly Venable

Butch Dawson

Copen Smith
