



**GATESVILLE INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Doing What's Best For Kids!

**GATESVILLE I.S.D.
DISTRICT OF INNOVATION
PLAN AS PRESENTED TO
THE G.I.S.D.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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, Gatesville ISD will be able to implement the work of our GISD Portrait of a Graduate with the increased flexibility and freedom necessary to be innovative with the kinds of learning experiences afforded to our students. Making important educational decisions at the local level is the most effective way to support the innovation plans in our district.

This plan is specific to the exemptions as outlined. The district intends to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, as per the Districts of Innovation process, the district will reconvene the District of Education Advisory Committee to explore the request.

Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) “that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. . .” The **GISD Portrait of a Graduate** demands innovative practices and opportunities for our students, and therefore, GISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute:

- Chapter 21 Subchapter A & B, Specifically 21.003, 21.051
- Chapter 25 Subchapter C, D, & E Specifically 25.0811, 25.092, 25.111, 25.112, 25.113, 25.081(d)(e), 25.082

Portrait of a Graduate

Gatesville I.S.D. adopted the Portrait of a Graduate to answer this question: What are the skills necessary for all of our students to be successful in the workforce, college, or military?

College, Career, or Military Ready

- Graduates of Gatesville I.S.D. will have engaged in a challenging curriculum, which culminated in preparation for a successful transition to college, career, or the military. The classroom experiences for all students in Gatesville I.S.D. will have matched the student's strengths and interests, challenged them intellectually, and prepared them socially.

Critical Thinkers and Problem-Solvers

- Graduates of Gatesville I.S.D. will have learned to seek quality results through individual accountability, leadership, teamwork, and lifelong learning using multiple modes of technologies and resources. Graduates of G.I.S.D. will have engaged in problem-solving, inquiry, and design of innovative solutions to overcome obstacles.

Effective Communicators

- Graduates of Gatesville I.S.D. will know how to comprehend and express ideas clearly through various means of communication. Graduates of G.I.S.D. will be effective communicators who can read, speak, write, comprehend, interpret, and listen to various forms of communication.

Servant Leaders

- Graduates of Gatesville I.S.D. will have experience in giving and serving others in the community through service projects. The G.I.S.D. graduate will have learned to demonstrate ethical behavior and serve those in need.

Contributing Member of Society

- Graduates of Gatesville I.S.D. will be socially responsible citizens who understand the importance of being a contributing member to society. Graduates will make ethical decisions as well as sound financial decisions in order to be independent and successful members of the community.

Technologically Literate

- Graduates of Gatesville I.S.D. will be technologically literate citizens who can demonstrate basic computer operating skills in order to be successful in daily living and the workplace. Graduates will be able to discern reliable information from online sources, collaborate using online tools, apply basic word processing skills, manipulate data within spreadsheets, and display information with presentation tools.

Gatesville ISD Strategic Plan

Beliefs <i>An expression of fundamental values, ethical code, overriding convictions, inviolable principles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We believe positive relationships between teachers, students, and parents are integral parts of a quality education. • We believe quality education is a shared responsibility of the entire community. • We believe passion in teaching cultivates successful students. • We believe character, integrity, and perseverance are the foundation of education. • We believe a well-rounded educational experience is the priority. • We believe all children are capable of high achievement.
Mission <i>Highest aspiration and purpose of the school; a declaration of the unique identity to which the school aspires, its specific purpose, and the means by which it will achieve its purpose</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">Doing What's Best for Kids!</p>
Objectives <i>An uncompromising commitment to achieve specific, measurable, observable, or demonstrable results that exceed current capability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each student will graduate life-ready striving for personal excellence and excelling as a leader and innovator in his/her chosen career path. • Each student will be an independent thinker who possesses critical thinking, problem-solving, communication skills, and perseverance to reach their extraordinary potential. • Each student will be an ethical citizen who contributes to and serves their local and global community.
Parameters <i>Boundaries within which the school will accomplish its mission; self-imposed limitations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will base all decisions on what is best for students. • We will treat students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members with dignity, respect, and passion. • We will ensure a culture of integrity. • We will be responsible stewards of our resources. • We will practice and promote open, honest communication. • We will not compromise excellence.
Strategies <i>Bold resolutions that dedicate the school's resources and energies toward the continuous creation of systems to achieve the extraordinary as expressed in the mission and objectives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources, Recruitment & Retention: We will provide competitive employment packages to recruit the highest quality faculty, staff, and administrators, and retain and maximize effectiveness by providing a positive culture, mentoring, and promoting open communication between all stakeholders. • Alignment of Resources & Human Capital: We will increase efficiency by aligning people and resources to improve productivity, curriculum & instruction, and district programs. • Curriculum & Instruction: We will develop and implement a real-world, engaging, innovative, and rigorous curriculum that will optimize relevant learning. • Technology: We will continually evaluate, update, and implement emerging technology by budgeting necessary resources, ensuring teacher accountability, and providing professional development. • Communication & Community Partnerships: We will establish a comprehensive community communications plan that integrates all facets of school and community and fosters collaboration of resources and events to provide synchronized planning and execution for all stakeholders. • Facilities & Infrastructure: We will utilize the comprehensive facilities plan to design facilities to create an innovative learning environment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ We will build flexible spaces for the classroom in order to leverage technology and to enhance the learning experience. ◦ We will develop criteria to be used in the design of future construction and renovation projects.

FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Statute: Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. In the past, districts could apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier to meet the needs of the local community. This waiver opportunity was met with resistance from the Texas tourism groups who lobbied to have the practice ended, because they believed it was detrimental to the Texas tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed flexibility: This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the campus, students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would support semester course curriculum.

In addition, flexibility in the start and end of the school year would allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also allow GISD to begin the first week of classes with a shortened week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, first grade, fourth grade, junior high, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

MINIMUM MINUTES OF INSTRUCTION

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code §25.081(d)(e)), (Ed. Code §25.082)

Current Statute: House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081(d,e), For each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students. The commissioner may approve the instruction of students for fewer than the number of minutes required if a calamity causes the closing of schools. If the commissioner does not approve reduced instruction time a school district may add additional minutes to the end of the district's normal school hours as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to a calamity.

The commissioner may adopt rules, on the basis of the minimum minutes of instruction required, that refer to a minimum number of days of instruction.

A day of instruction means 420 minutes of instruction. A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed flexibility: The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. Communication about student progress is essential for the innovative work taking place through our Portrait of a Graduate. The district is not seeking an exemption from the 75,600 minutes of instruction for the school-year. However, the district seeks the flexibility to occasionally shorten the school day to provide more time for

teachers to plan, collaborate, and prepare for instruction that better meets the needs of students. Flexibility to the length of the school day promotes innovative programs that increase graduation rates through credit recovery, such as the late start interventions. Teachers need more time to analyze and evaluate student work and adapt instruction to meet student needs. Shortened days, scheduled strategically throughout the school year, such as monthly or after grading periods, will result in teachers being better prepared. This will also allow for embedded professional learning time. Strategically placed late start or early release days will reduce staff and student fatigue, stress, anxiety, and absenteeism. Gatesville ISD believes the local community should decide what is best for its students and staff. Sections 25.081(d)(e) and 25.082 of the TEC limit the District's ability to provide sufficient time for teachers to plan, collaborate, and prepare for innovative and high quality instruction and to provide ongoing, high-quality professional development.

Changes or modifications to the instructional day should not be made without specific purpose and should be planned for the purpose of improving the quality of instruction. Shortened days should not be excessive. Length of school day changes should be developed with stakeholders and advisory bodies, planned ahead of time, and noted in the district calendar, so that families can plan and be prepared.

Calendars should be published and distributed to stakeholders well in advance of the school year. Instructional time should be maximized to maintain 75,600 minutes for the school year.

STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO, CLASS SIZE, & NOTICE OF CLASS SIZE

(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.111) (Ed. Code 25.112) (Ed. Code 25.113)

Current Statute: Pre-Kindergarten – 4th Grade class sizes are to remain at or below 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 completed at the start of a school year as well as anytime a child enrolls in an elementary school at a grade level where the ratio is already maintained according to staffing projections the previous year.

Proposed Flexibility: This exemption allows GISD the time to staff campuses with effective teachers by granting local control over class size ratios. Small class sizes enable effective teachers to provide more individualized attention to each student. Having the latitude and time to seek and hire teachers enables us to best serve students with an effective student-teacher ratio. Our vision is to have the timing and latitude to hire the “right teacher” for kids and not “any teacher” to fulfill a mandate. Additionally, the district will not file a waiver to the TEA when class sized in pre-kindergarten-fourth classrooms exceed the 22:1 ratio. In addition, flexibility around class size can be considered at the elementary level in configurations that support the work of the engaged classrooms and student needs at certain grade levels. If GISD remains above the 22:1 ration for a period of 1 month, it will notify the board and look to additional personnel to alleviate the ratio.

MINIMUM ATTENDANCE FOR CLASS CREDIT OR FINAL CREDIT

(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)

Current statute: State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.

Proposed flexibility: The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Flexibility in the abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances that supports GISD's goal to educate the whole child.

To meet the needs of 21st century learners, GISD would like to investigate the option to provide students credit for courses based on content mastery, not the amount of time the student spends in the classroom. This exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime anyplace apart from the traditional way of delivering instruction.

Additionally, flexibility in this area directly supports GISD's goal of educating the whole child. Our students attain valuable and meaningful learning from extra/co-curricular activities and experiences that currently count against the student's 90% attendance availability if a student has to miss part of the traditional school day.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

RULES REGARDING FIELD-BASED EXPERIENCE AND OPTIONS FOR FIELD EXPERIENCE & INTERNSHIPS, CERTIFICATION REQUIRED (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.051, 21.003)

Current Statute: 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

~~**Proposed Flexibility:** The flexibility in allowing GISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses, hard to fill to fill courses, and high demand courses. Also, with the shortage of teachers throughout the state, GISD needs the flexibility to hire teachers that have not earned a certification, but at a minimum have a bachelor's degree and are actively working toward certification. This would be for any teaching position where a certified teacher can not be secured. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area, or applicants seeking~~

~~assignments without traditional certification but are actively working toward. This will enrich applicant pools for all content areas.~~

Proposed Flexibility: GISD will continue to prioritize the hiring of certified teachers for all instructional positions. When a certified applicant is not available, the District may hire an uncertified individual, except in the areas of special education and bilingual education. The District may also assign certified teachers to positions outside of their certification field or grade level, including allowing elementary-certified teachers to teach at the intermediate or middle school level, middle school-certified teachers to teach at the elementary or high school level, and high school-certified teachers to teach at the middle school level.

To ensure the quality of instruction, the District will establish minimum qualifications for individuals hired under these provisions and will require professional development in areas such as student management, instructional strategies, curriculum, and parent engagement. The District will also require uncertified individuals to complete appropriate certification within three years of employment.

Recent changes to Texas Education Code § 21.0032 now prohibit school districts from employing uncertified individuals as teachers of record for foundation curriculum courses—including English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—beginning with the 2029–2030 school year. However, districts are permitted to submit a plan to the Commissioner of Education outlining a reasonable timeline and strategy for compliance before that date. GISD **will** take advantage of this opportunity and will develop and submit a compliance plan that allows the District to continue utilizing this flexibility while transitioning toward full compliance.

The plan will include annual reviews of staffing assignments, prioritization of certified candidates for foundation curriculum positions, and increased support for certification pathways. The District intends to gradually reduce reliance on uncertified teachers in these courses and will be fully compliant with the new statutory requirements no later than the beginning of the 2029–2030 school year. Additionally, for the 2026–2027 school year, the District will continue to employ uncertified teachers of record for foundation curriculum courses other than reading language arts or mathematics in grade levels above fifth grade, as permitted under the statute. GISD will also continue to explore other legally available options for staffing, including waivers under TEC § 7.056 and the issuance of local teaching permits under TEC § 21.055.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR RESPONSIBILITIES (TEC §33.006)

Texas Education Code § 33.006

Current Statute: TEC § 33.006 requires school districts to adopt a policy mandating that school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program as defined by TEC § 33.005. Time spent administering assessment instruments or assisting with those instruments does not count toward the required 80 percent.

Proposed Flexibility: This exemption allows GISD local control in determining how school counselors allocate their time to best meet campus and student needs. By removing the rigid 80 percent requirement, GISD can more effectively assign responsibilities to counselors based on staffing, scheduling, and campus priorities.

This flexibility ensures that district and campus leadership can make responsive decisions that maximize the impact of counseling services while addressing the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of GISD students. Duties such as assessment coordination, staff support, and other essential tasks may be assigned without conflicting with state requirements, allowing counselors to serve in the most meaningful and effective ways.

LOCAL SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (TEC §28.004)

Texas Education Code § 28.004

Current Statute: TEC § 28.004 requires each school district to establish a local school health advisory council (SHAC) to help ensure that the district's health education curriculum reflects local community values. The statute also mandates that the SHAC meet at least four times per year.

Proposed Flexibility: This exemption provides GISD the flexibility to determine how often its SHAC needs to meet, based on the size of the district and the needs of the student population. As a smaller district, GISD's SHAC members are closely connected to the community and well informed about student needs. In many cases, the SHAC is able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings per year.

Under this exemption, GISD will maintain an active SHAC and remain committed to meaningful community input on health education, while allowing the council—together with district leadership—to determine an appropriate meeting schedule. At minimum, the SHAC will meet **once** per year, with additional meetings held as needed to support the health and wellness goals of the district.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORIES CONTRACT

(BDAE Legal & Local) (TEC Subchapter G. 45.206)

Current Statute: TERM OF CONTRACT. (A) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. (B) A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year-terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206. (C) The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Proposed Flexibility: By gaining exemption from these statutes, GISD would be able to allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 8 year allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP). In

addition, this would further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter their direct deposit instructions and afford district flexibility with respect to local banking relationships. With this exemption in place, none of the additional requirements related to the bid or request for proposal detailed in Sec. 45.206 through 45.209 would be applicable. GISD will continue to review and monitor the depository contract and will seek a new contract when and if it becomes financially beneficial to the District.

The benefit is the time saved by the administration and the board of trustees by not having to deal with the ministerial duty every two years will allow the superintendent and the board more time for studying and planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the district educational goals.