WALNUT BEND ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Home of Pirate Pride

INTRODUCTION

Walnut Bend ISD is utilizing HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, in order to have more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed. This is a great opportunity for our district to tailor plans based on the needs of our students, faculty and staff, and the Walnut Bend community. This plan will be in effect starting the 2017-2018 school year through the 2021-2022 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DEBRA SIKES, SUPERINTENDENT

VIRGINIA MCNAIRN, BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

ROXI COSTILLO, BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

HEATHER HOLLE, TEACHER

AMANDA ROUNDTREE, TEACHER

ASHLIE HAZEL, TEACHER

BARBARA SMITH, PARAPROFESSIONAL

BARBARA JONES, PARENT

POLLY BROOKS, PARENT

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE

February 28, 2017	District Site-Based Committee Meets to learn about Districts of Innovation.
March 30, 2017	District Site-Based Committee Meets to discuss becoming a District of Innovation and recommends becoming a District of Innovation.

April 4, 2017	Initial meeting with faculty and staff to discuss District of Innovation.
April 11, 2017	District Site-Based Committee Recommends to the Board that Walnut Bend ISD become a District of Innovation; Board approves a resolution to begin the process to become a District of Innovation
May 9, 2017	Public Hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation; Board approves a resolution to initiate the process of designation of a District of Innovation.
May 15, 2017	District Innovation Committee meets to develop DOI Plan.
June 13, 2017	Board approves tentative DOI Plan to place on the website for 30 days and to notify the commissioner of the district's intent.
August 15, 2017	Board adopts DOI Plan and notifies the commissioner of education.

UNIFORM SCHOOL START AND END DATE EXEMPTION

TEC §25.0811; TEC §25.0812 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.

INNOVATION: Walnut Bend ISD believes that increased flexibility in determining the start and end of the instructional calendar will increase student achievement, improve attendance, and better allow the district to meet the social and emotional needs of the students. Setting the local limits for starting school no earlier than August 1 and ending no earlier than May 1 will have the following benefits: ● The instructional days of the fall semester (finishing before the Christmas holidays) could be increased, making the number of days closer to equal the days of the spring semester. This allows for a more balanced approach to the scope and sequence of all classes, which is especially beneficially in our Middle School grades ● Allows for a more equal distribution of the number of days in each grading period • Permits students additional instruction prior to state assessments. ● Allows teachers to participate in summer courses offered by postsecondary institutions • Allows for a calendar that fits the needs of our local communities, staff, and students, especially by allowing us to closely adhere to the secondary school our students attend after graduating 8th grade ● Allows for more flexibility in scheduling professional development during the school year.

PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

Current Provision TEC 21.102 states that a person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by a district for two consecutive school years; previously employed as a teacher by a district and, after a two year lapse in a district employment returns to district employment, the probationary contract offered to the employee may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one year periods, for a maximum contract period of three school years, except for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

INNOVATION: In order to support teacher growth and gather performance data, a one year time period is not always sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Experienced teachers new to Walnut Bend ISD who have been employed in public education for at least five of the previous eight years may be issued a probationary contract for up to two years from the date of district employment.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORIES

(TEC §45.206) (BDAE Legal) Districts are required to bid depository banking services at a minimum of every six years.

INNOVATION: In our rural area, there are a limited number of banking entities with the interest in serving and/or the ability to serve the financial needs of the District. In addition, the required bid process uses the time and efforts of district personnel that is better spent on other activities given our limited ability to change banks. Walnut Bend ISD administration will continue to review banking services every 2 years, monitor the availability of services and pricing that local banks may offer, and bid for services as needed to support the District's financial needs.

IMPLEMENT A LOCAL TEACHER APPRAISAL SYSTEM

(TEC §21.352) (DNA LEGAL) Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan: New state-wide teacher appraisal systems, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) is being introduced for the first time since 1997.

While this system is designed to meet the needs of the entire state, they do not adequately align with the standards and expectations in Walnut Bend ISD. This is especially due to our

small size, unique responsibilities of the teaching staff, and lack of available professional development opportunities in the immediate area. Therefore, the district seeks exemption from current requirements of the appraisal system.

INNOVATION: Walnut Bend ISD will develop a new localized appraisal system which will better align with the needs of our small district, the student needs and local expectations. This exemption would allow local flexibility to evaluate various performance measures, including classroom observations, goal setting and tracking, coaching opportunities, professional development within the district, and student growth progress toward identified individual learning objectives.

A committee of district administration and teachers will develop a teacher evaluation system and a system of evaluation for non-certified instructional staff, as well as non-instructional staff. This new appraisal system will be aligned with specific student needs and focus on local areas of emphasis. Staff appraisals will be conducted a minimum of three times per year (BOY, MOY, EOY) or as needed in individual cases. From the results of staff appraisals, Personalized Professional Learning Plans (PPLPs) will be developed. In order to promote professional development that focuses on individual growth, the District needs to maintain local flexibility to continue its current practice of using various measures, including multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, coaching and student growth progress toward learning objectives, as evaluation measures on teacher and administrator appraisals.

ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHER CONTRACT DAYS

(TEC §21.401) (DC LEGAL) Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan: Texas Education Code states that a contract between the district and an educator must be for a minimum of ten months of service. An educator employed under a ten-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service. The Commissioner may reduce the number of days of service, but such a reduction does not reduce an educator's salary. District calendars are designed to maintain the minimum total of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year. However, due to individual campus schedules, excess minutes of instruction may be 'banked' and used as required make-up time in the event of bad weather or emergencies requiring the closing of a campus or district.

INNOVATION: Although this flexibility has been allowed for required student attendance, there was no flexibility that impacted teacher contract days. Walnut Bend ISD may reduce the number of days of service from a minimum of 187 to a minimum of 182 for educators employed under a 10-month contract with no effect on salaries. This will enhance educator recruitment and retention, and improve morale. This would also allow staff more opportunity to pursue staff development and/or continue professional degrees.

LENGTH OF INSTRUCTIONAL DAY

(TEC 25.081 and TEC 25.082a) 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."

INNOVATION: While the intent of the Legislature was to standardize across all districts the amount of time students spent learning in a classroom, Walnut Bend ISD wishes to meet the goal of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year, but seeks an exemption from these statutes so that 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. The length of the instructional day cannot be changed absent the District becoming a District of Innovation. The current rules allow no flexibility in the design of district and campus schedules. Exempting from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Walnut Bend ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the District and its stakeholders. This exemption would primarily allow the District to alter the days needed for additional staff development, weather conditions, or other educational needs as determined by the District. This exemption would also allow the District to have a flexible amount of time to review student data so that certain determined target areas are covered thoroughly. Walnut Bend ISD will use this time to maximize instruction and prepare the instructors.

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS

(FDA Legal, Local) (Ed. Code 25.036): A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Walnut Bend ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated.

INNOVATION: Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.

In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Walnut Bend ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

CAMPUS PLANNING AND SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING

Texas Education Code 11.253 requires the District to establish campus-level planning and decision-making committees as provided in by Sections 11.251(b)-(e).

INNOVATION: Walnut Bend ISD is a small rural community. The District has an enrollment of 75 students (PK-8). Resources for persons serving as members of the District Planning Committee and the Campus Planning Committees are limited without asking the same people to serve on several. The proposal to allow the Campus Planning Committee to become synonymous with the District Level Planning Committee to be known as the District of Innovation Committee with the same duties as required in law of the District Planning Committee. Walnut Bend ISD would be able develop a more cohesive plan that establishes continuity of programs and performance through grades PK-8.

Walnut Bend ISD will use one committee, the District of Innovation Committee, to develop one plan for the District/Campus and integrate the District Plan of Innovation into the District/Campus Plan. Membership of the committee would consist of parent(s), community patron(s), business person(s) non-teaching professionals, teachers, and administration.

SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL STATUTORY CITATION

TEC 28.004(d-1) Requires SHAC committees meet four times each year.

INNOVATION: Walnut Bend ISD will be exempt from the requirement to hold a minimum of four meetings per year. The WBISD SHAC committee shall meet at least once per year. The district's size and the stability of the membership of the SHAC committee ensures that committee members are aware of the needs of the district's students and are able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings. The WBISD Board of Trustees and the members of the SHAC committee should determine how often the committee should meet.