

**Rice I.S.D.**  
**District**  
**of**  
**Innovation Plan**  
**2022-2026**



# **Rice I.S.D.**

## **District of Innovation Plan**

### **I. Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions for certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On January 18, 2017, The Rice Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of the plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and community. On February 15, 2017, the Board appointed a District of Innovation Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District stakeholders including teachers, principals, and administrators.

### **II. Term**

The term of the Plan is for no more than five years unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees 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 nominate a new 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. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

### **III. Innovations**

The District proposes flexibility in the following areas:

#### **A. Class Size Requirements for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 4**

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 25.111, TEC 25.112 and TEC 25.113

Policies that may be affected: EEB(Legal), BF(Legal), and EHAA(Legal)

TEC 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of teachers certified to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance except as provided by section 25.112. TEC 25.112 prohibits a school district from enrolling more than 22 students for Kindergarten-fourth grade classes, unless a school district receives an exemption through the TEA waiver process. TEC 25.113 requires a district to notify parents of waiver or exemptions to class size limits as stated within the Code. According to these statutes, districts are required to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for Kindergarten through fourth grade. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency.

Historically, these waivers are never rejected by TEA. This proves to represent an unnecessary step for the education of our students. Additionally, a letter must be sent home to the parents of each student in the class informing them that a waiver has been filed. This statute does not take into consideration the impact of students moving into the district throughout the school year. The desire is to provide for lower class sizes, but also realize the expected growth experienced by the district.

*Proposed Innovation Strategies:*

- Locally monitor and maintain appropriate class size without the necessity of class waivers;
- Maintain a class to student ratio of 22:1; and
- Allow for flexibility for hiring personnel as we face exponential growth.
- Notify parents of class sizes exceeding 22:1 and explain plans to meet student needs

**B. Teacher Certifications**

Policy that may be affected: Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 21.003  
DK (Legal) and DCE (Legal)

DEC (Legal) states that a public school employee must have the appropriate credentials for his or her current assignment specified in 19 Administrative Code Chapter 231, Requirements for Public School Personnel Assignments, unless the appropriate permit has been issued under Chapter 230, Subchapter F, Permits. 19 TAC 231.1(a)

*Proposed Innovation Strategies:*

- Proposal: The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to

hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. Rice ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to core content area teachers, including CTE. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Rice ISD will notify parents if a locally certified teacher is employed for their child's class. This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications

- Whenever possible, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.
- The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.

### **C. Probationary Contracts**

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 21.102b

Policy that may be affected: DCA(Legal)

Texas Education Code Section 21.102b states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment within the district. Many times, this period is not sufficient enough to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since the teacher contract deadlines demand employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of the end of year classroom and student data.

#### *Proposed Innovation Strategies:*

By providing an additional year of probationary status, the campus and district administration can:

- Better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness;
- Ensure fit for the district and campus culture; and
- Provide an opportunity for teacher growth.

#### **D. School Calendar**

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 25.0811

Policy that may be affected: EB(Legal)

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in August.

The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed that it was hurting tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the students or the community.

#### **Proposed Innovation Strategies:**

- Rice I.S.D. students will begin school before the 4th Monday in August.

#### **E. Teacher Contract Days**

Applicable Provisions from the Texas Education Code: TEC 21.401

Policy that may be affected: DCB( Legal) and DCB( Local)

TEC 21.401 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days. Due to low property values, it is difficult for Rice I.S.D. to compete with neighboring schools in the area of teacher salary.

#### **Proposed Innovation Strategies:**

This plan reduces teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries. This would better align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

- This plan will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- This plan should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with neighboring districts.
- This plan will significantly improve teacher morale.

## **F. Transfer Students**

(TEC §25.036) (FDA LEGAL, FDA LOCAL)

Current Provision: 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.

### *Proposed Innovation Strategy:*

The ability to revoke a transfer for a student at any time during the year based on behavior, attendance or academic achievement which allows our district to continue accepting the greatest number of transfer students seeking a different educational setting than what is available where they reside. Students who experience challenges while on an interdistrict transfer deserve the ability to be returned to their home district to receive the greatest amount of support possible.

## **G. School District Depository Contract**

TEC Code Subchapter G, Section 45.206(BDAE Legal and Local). 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 as has qualified. (B) A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend the depository contract for two 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 Innovative Strategy:*

By gaining exemption from these statutes, Rice ISD would be able to allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total six-year allowable contract term. The district may choose to remain with the institution if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's bank services out to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there are no other banking institutions within the district's boundaries available to bid for the district's depository contract. In addition, this would further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter direct deposits and afford district flexibility with respect to local banking relationships

## **Rice I.S.D. District of Innovation Committee Members**

Amy Harvell-Superintendent

Robert Allen-Executive Director of District Operations

Monnie Metcalfe-Director of Special Programs

Bethany Ivie-High School Principal

Casey Sellers-Rice Intermediate Middle School Principal

Cindy Black-Rice Elementary Principal

Amanda Jennings-Rice Elementary Teacher

Heather Flores-Parent

Wilson Campbell-Rice High School Teacher

Jennifer Beard-Rice Elementary Paraprofessional