

**Rusk ISD**  
**District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842)**  
**Term of Designation 5 Years: April 10, 2022- April 9, 2027**

**I. Innovation District – Rusk ISD**

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 exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

On February 13, 2017, the Rusk ISD Board of Trustees (“Board”) passed a Resolution for the sole purpose of exemption from TEC §25.0811 First Day of Instruction. This resolution initiated the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

On February 13, 2017, the board held a public meeting and made the determination to pursue the district of Innovation designation for the sole purpose of exemption from TEC §25.0811 First Day of Instruction. At that time, the Board appointed the District Education Improvement Council (DEIC) as the Local Innovation Committee representing the District’s various stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members and administrators. The purpose of the Local Innovation Committee is to develop a local innovation plan for exemption from TEC§25.0811 First Day of Instruction only.

On February 15, 2022 Rusk Independent School District proposed a “Renewal” District of Innovation plan and posted it on its website.

This is a 5 year innovation plan from April 10, 2022 through April 9, 2027. This plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed if the action is approved by a majority vote of the district-level committee (DEIC) and a two-thirds majority vote of the board of trustees.

Based on recommendations by the Local Committee of Innovation, with input from various stakeholders, the Committee recommends the following plan:

**II. Comprehensive Educational Program**

The Rusk ISD District of Innovation Plan is founded and aligned to the District’s Mission, Vision, Values Goals and Objectives.

A. Mission: We Learn

B. Vision: Our District must become a professional learning community.

C.Values:

- A. Working in collaborative teams that takes collective responsibility for student learning
- B. Implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- C. Monitoring student learning through quick checks
- D. Using results of quick checks to improve practice, achieve goals and intervene and enrich on behalf of students
- E. Providing systematic process for intervention and enrichment
- F. Communicating

D.Goals:

- A. Increase student achievement,
- B. Promote student growth,
- C. Close the achievement gap,
- D. Develop college and career readiness.

E. Objectives:

- A. District will work toward meeting all accountability index targets for all campuses.
- B. District will work toward implementing a guaranteed and viable innovative curriculum to meet the needs of all learners by appropriately pacing curriculum throughout the year before state required testing.
- C. District will implement instructional methods to increase performance.
- D. Assist teachers in implementing best practices learned at high-quality professional development throughout the school year.
- E. District will develop and utilize strategies to ensure parent involvement and community participation for 100% of identified targeted student group
- F. District will work toward putting processes and structures in place to support intervention of targeted students.

**§ 25.0811. FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION** - (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August. (Policy EB Legal, EB (Local))

**Innovation Strategy** – Calendar flexibility for instruction to begin at a date that allows the District to balance the amount of instruction between semesters. This flexibility will also allow teachers the opportunity to better pace their innovative curriculum and delivery of instruction. By having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, students will have the advantage of additional instructional days before the state testing. Students will also be available to enroll in college courses or college camps that start early in June.

**§ 21.102 (DCA LEGAL) Chapter 21 Employment Contracts (Probationary Contracts)** - Currently, experienced teachers and other certified personnel new to the District have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

#### **Innovation Strategy**

1. Probationary Contracts – For experienced teachers and other certified personnel new to Rusk ISD who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the date of hire. Partial years would not count toward the full year requirement. This will allow the District more time to evaluate a staff member’s effectiveness.

#### **Local Guidelines**

1. Campus Principals will inform the individual certified personnel of performance standards that warrant improvement as determined by the evaluation tool and other performance-based documents.
2. During the first year of employment, Campus Principals will make a recommendation to the Superintendent to non-renew, continue employment on a probationary contract for a second year, or offer a term contract.
3. The Superintendent will determine if the decision is in the best interest of the District and make a recommendation to the Board.
4. The Board may terminate a probationary contract or extend the probationary contract to a second year and shall give notice to the employee no later than the tenth day before the last day of instruction required in the contract.

**§ 21.003 (DBA LEGAL/DBA LOCAL) Teacher Certification / Local Teaching Permit**- Currently, 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, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

**§ 21.053 (DBA LEGAL/DBA LOCAL) Presentation and Recording of Certificates**- requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator or teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

**§ 21.057 (DBA LEGAL/DBA LOCAL) Parental Notification-** requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

### **Innovation Strategy**

1. 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. Rusk ISD would like the ability to issue District Teaching Permits (local certification) in areas of high demand to better meet the educational needs of our students.

### **Local Guidelines**

1. In order to best serve Rusk ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.
2. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified.
  - a. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the subject/field of study.
  - b. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
3. Rusk ISD will allow District Teaching Permits (local certification) based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.
  - a. An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas, core academic areas, etc.
  - b. A person seeking District Teaching Permit (local certification) should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfil the requirements of the position.
  - c. 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.

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

- i. Professional work experience;
- ii. Formal training and education;
- iii. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration;
- iv. Combination of work experience, training, and education; and/or
- v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students.

e. 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.

f. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will receive a non-certified contract.

g. Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

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

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

6. 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.

7. Rusk ISD may post the DOI position each year and consider hiring a certified, experienced, quality teacher. Should the vacancy not be filled by June 1st, the DOI teacher may be offered the position the following year.

**§ 21.401(a), (b) (DC LEGAL) Employment Practices** - Currently, Texas Education Code §21.401 (a),(b) defines a teacher contract as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 days. Current school law has converted required student and instructional attendance days to 75,600 minutes while not addressing teacher contracted workdays. This discrepancy allows flexibility to the number of days a student must attend school but does not allow the number of days required for teachers to be adjusted IF a district deems it appropriate to do so.

**Innovation Strategy**

Teacher Contracts – Rusk ISD will calculate contracted days for teachers that aligns with the 75,600 minutes required of students.

**Local Guidelines**

1. Rusk ISD will develop and adopt a calendar that reflects the required 75,600 minutes for students and teachers.
2. Rusk ISD will decrease the teacher contracted 187 days with no effect on teachers’ salaries.

This proposal will allow more local control by the Rusk ISD School Board in adopting a calendar and teacher contracted workdays. The proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers, enhance teacher recruitment and improve teacher morale.

<b>Rusk Independent School District District of Innovation Renewal Timeline</b>	
Monday, February 14, 2022	The District Administration informed the Board of Trustees of the proposed District of Innovation plan renewal
Tuesday, February 15, 2022	Post proposed Rusk ISD District of Innovation plan on the district website for 30 days and notify commissioner of Board’s intention to vote on the adoption of the District of Innovation Plan
Thursday, February 17, 2022	The board of trustees has notified the commissioner of education of the board's intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan
Monday, March 21, 2022	The district-level committee established under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §11.251, has held a public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and has approved the plan by a majority vote of the committee member
Monday, March 21, 2022	6:00 PM regular Board Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board of trustees adopts a proposed local innovation plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the board</li> <li>• District begins operation as District of Innovation</li> </ul>
Wednesday, March 23, 2022	District notifies Commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions and posts adopted plan on website.

## **District of Innovation Committee (DEIC)**

Grey Burton	Superintendent
Stacie Young	Chief Financial Officer
Cadi Collins	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Tammy Hancock	Director of Special Programs
Donna Tugwell	Director of Special Education
Gary Cruseturner	Director of Technology
Yesenia Badillo	Instructional Administrative Assistant
Crystal Nichols	Principal, NV
Misti Owens	Assistant Principal, NV
Alice Ray	Counselor/Non-Teaching
Kellie Durrett	Teacher
Amanda Hesterley	Teacher
Rachel Godfrey	Teacher
Ashley Oliver	Principal, NV
Jennifer McCormack	Assistant Principal, NV
Elizabeth Cahalane	Counselor/Non-teaching
Tammy Brogdon	Teacher
Christy Starkey	Teacher
Darla (Moore) Crews	Teacher
Jan Evans	Principal, NV
Karli Sitton	Assistant Principal, NV
Kayla Hassell	Non-teaching
Melanie Black	Teacher
Christy Turner	Teacher
Amanda Wilcox	Teacher
Debbie Welch	Principal, NV
Anthony Garner	Assistant Principal, NV
Suzanne Cooper	Counselor/Non-Teaching
Heather Stewart	Teacher
Doug Bayles	Teacher
Brian Williams	Teacher
Ronny Snow	Principal, NV
Brian Tarvin	Assistant Principal, NV
Riki Core	Non-Teaching
Jeff Humphries	Teacher
Justin Hooper	Teacher
Peter McGowan	Teacher
Tara Newman	At-Large/District Level Professional
Marla Koslovsky	Parent
Brian Givens	Community Member
Austin Young	Business Representative