
De Leon Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan



August 1, 2022 – July 31, 2027

De Leon Independent School District

Background

The 84th Legislative Session passed House bill 1842 allowing school districts to have greater local control while becoming a District of Innovation. This opportunity will allow for flexibility regarding certain state level rules and regulations in order to transform and make improvements to better serve the students of De Leon ISD.

The Innovation Plan for De Leon ISD will remain in effect for five years beginning in August 2017 through July 2022.

Mission Statement

The staff of De Leon ISD believes that all students are capable of learning. To foster student achievement, it is our responsibility to provide a well-balanced curriculum within an environment that is conducive to learning. Our goal is to help all students reach their greatest level of academic achievement. We can attain this goal by instilling in our students a love of learning and by providing a curriculum that includes basic liberal arts courses, fine arts, technology, and vocation training.

District Goals

- De Leon ISD will attract qualified staff who will engage in ongoing professional development in order to promote student performance, which exceeds state averages and prepares students for success in life.
- De Leon ISD will develop a partnership with parents and community to build a community of leaders.
- De Leon ISD will provide resources and facilities that enhance learning in a safe environment.

De Leon Board Of Trustees

Josh Mahan, President
Carrie Morris, Vice President
Heath Matteson, Secretary
Cecelia Boswell, Member
Terrill Casey, Member
Derek Otwell, Member
Racheal Wofford, Member

District Of Innovation Committee

Dana Marable - De Leon ISD Superintendent
Liesa Nowlin - Chairperson/De Leon High School Principal
Amber Bates - Perkins Middle School Principal
Lori Womack – De Leon Elementary Principal
Kaye Quinn – De Leon High School Counselor/Testing Coordinator
Minde Ivy - De Leon High School Counselor
Terra Jobe - Perkins Middle School Counselor
Natalie Boswell - De Leon Elementary Counselor
David White - De Leon ISD Maintenance Director
Lori Campbell - De Leon High School Teacher
Tara Kellam - De Leon High School Special Education Teacher
Chuck Miller – De Leon High School Assistant Principal/Teacher
Melissa Schultz - De Leon High School Gifted & Talented Coordinator/Teacher
Roxanna Thiebaud - De Leon High School Teacher/District Dyslexia Specialist
Lisa Amick – Perkins Middle School RTI Coordinator
Kinsey Garcia – Perkins Middle School Teacher
Angela Gooden – De Leon Elementary Teacher
Shanna Lewis – De Leon Elementary Teacher
Dosha Locke – De Leon Elementary Teacher
Kristin Matteson – De Leon Elementary Special Education Teacher
Ismelda Garza - Parent Member
Rachael Wofford – Parent Member
Nancy Brown - Community Member
Lori Jordan - Community Member
Angela Anders - Business Member
Corbi Schaak - Business Member

District Of Innovation Renewal Timeline

- January 19, 2022 District administrators reviewed our current District of Innovation Plan and made the decision to pursue renewing our plan for an additional five-year term. The decision was also made to review Texas Education Codes and DOI plans from other school districts to explore additional exemptions that may be beneficial to our district.
- February – March 2022 District administrators reviewed Texas Education Codes for changes to make sure that our current exemptions continue to benefit our district. Innovation plans from other Texas school districts were also reviewed to explore additional exemptions that may be beneficial to our district.
- April 1, 2022 Information collected regarding current and proposed exemptions was provided to the District of Innovation Committee members for review.
- April 6, 2022 District of Innovation Committee met to review and finalize the local innovation renewal plan for presentation to the DISD School Board.
- April 11, 2022 Public meeting to review the District of Innovation renewal plan.
- April 14, 2022 District of Innovation renewal plan posted to the De Leon ISD website. Commissioner of Education notified of the Board’s intent to renew.
- April 18, 2022 Notification from Commissioner of Education of items for clarification on the District of Innovation renewal plan.
District of Innovation renewal plan included in the DISD School Board meeting as a discussion item.
- April 19, 2022 District of Innovation renewal plan updated to reflect feedback for clarification from the office of the Commissioner of Education. Updated plan emailed to District of Innovation Committee members for review and discussion. Feedback provided via email.
- May 16, 2022 Public meeting to review the updated District of Innovation renewal plan.
- May 17, 2022 District of Innovation renewal plan posted to the De Leon ISD website. Commissioner of Education notified of the Board’s intent to renew.



STATUTES UNDER CONSIDERATION

I. Uniform Start Date: Education Code 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.

Rationale for Exemption:

De Leon ISD would like to have the flexibility to develop a calendar that would meet the needs of the students and community. This allows a similar start date with colleges that provide our dual credit courses. It also helps us balance the first and second semester by providing more instructional days prior to state testing and better balance our semesters as well as scheduling more timely and meaningful staff development throughout the school year.

II. Teacher Employment Contracts: Education Code 21.102 (B)

(b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one year, The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.

Rationale for Exemption:

De Leon ISD's request addresses experienced teachers or counselors new to the district who have been employed as a teacher/counselor 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 last date of district employment. The same rules will apply for any teacher/counselor returning to the District. This allows more time for evaluation of the teacher/counselor's effectiveness.

III. Class Sizes and Student-Teacher Ratios Education Code 25.111, 25.112, 25.113, and 25.114

State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio of 20 to 1 for average daily attendance. For physical education, the student-teacher ratio cannot be greater than 45 to 1. In Kindergarten through grade four, the class student-teacher ratio must not exceed 22 to 1.

Rationale for Exemption:

While class size does influence the effectiveness of instruction, other considerations should be

taken into account. DISD would also like to consider the needs of both teachers and students when making the decisions that affect class size. We believe every K-4 classroom should begin the school year under the 22 to 1 rule but after the teacher and students have formed a relationship (two weeks into the school year), then the 23rd student should not require consideration of forming a new class. This is detrimental to the learning environment for the entire class. Research clearly shows that it is the teacher in the classroom and his/her relationship with students that has the greatest impact on student learning. The same rationale should be used when considering physical education classes. When the district does surpass the 22 to 1 class size, or the 45 to 1 physical education class size, the district will provide written notice of this exception to parents/guardians of all students in the affected class(es) as required in TEC Sec. 25.113. The district does plan to maintain an overall average student to teacher ratio of 20 to 1 as stated in TEC Sec. 25.111.

IV. Teacher Certification and Instructional Assignments

Education Code 21.003, 21.053, 21.057

§21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor 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 person, the district must request emergency certification from TEA and the State Board of Educator Certification.

§21.053 requires a teacher to present his/her certificate to the District before the employment contract will be binding and prohibits the district from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at that time.

§21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if any inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive days.

Rationale for Exemption:

To meet local needs and provide more options for students in our small, rural area, DISD asks for the flexibility to:

- Consider entering into at-will employment agreements with noncertified individuals who have field/professional experience in the areas of Career and Technology (CTE Courses) and Fine Arts (Art, Music, Drama courses). State certification will not be required for teachers in these areas.
- Allow certified staff to be assigned to areas in which they may have college coursework and expertise. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - Allow a teacher certified to teach through grade 6 to teach courses in grades seven and/or eight
 - Allow a teacher certified to teach elementary reading be the reading teacher of record for middle and/or high school students.

- Allow a teacher certified in middle school or high school mathematics to teach elementary grades such as fourth and or fifth.
- Allow a teacher to teach one or two classes out of field in an area or areas that the teacher has college course work and expertise.
- **Special Education and Bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.**

V. Minimum Service Required – Teacher Contract Days

Education Code 21.401

§21.401 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.

Rationale for Exemption:

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. Although this flexibility has been allowed for required student attendance, there was no flexibility that impacted teacher contract days. Districts should have the option to reduce the number of contract days for educators when bad weather or emergencies arise. The Board of Trustees shall have the option to reduce the number of contract days by an amount less than or equal to the number of attendance days adjusted for student instruction without a reduction in an educator’s salary.

VI. Inter-District Transfer Students – Revocation of Transfers

Education Code 25.036

§ 25.036 states a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district.

Rationale for Exemption:

De Leon 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, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district.

If a transfer student commits a **DAEP** offense, has a pattern of misbehavior over time, or has a student attendance record which falls below the TEA truancy standard, De Leon ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment so that non-resident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year. This change would help assure that the De Leon ISD is able to maintain a productive, safe environment that is conducive to learning.