

## WESTBROOK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

102 Bertner  
Westbrook, TX 79565  
(325) 644-2311 phone  
<https://www.westbrookisd.com>



Dr Raemi Thompson, Superintendent

TBA, Principal.

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### **PROPOSED LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842, which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of Innovation.

#### **Westbrook ISD Local Innovation Committee**

Dr. Raemi Thompson, Superintendent  
Todd Bursleson, Retiring Superintendent  
Sheila Holt, Counselor  
Jennifer Allen, Elementary Teacher

Sara Beasley, Secondary Teacher  
Jennifer Hale, Community Member/Parent  
Chad Morris, Business Representative/Parent

#### **Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees**

Ranee Dawson, President  
Jason Morris, Vice President  
Thomas Connell, Secretary  
Jim Bob Hale-Member

Ben Mueller-Member  
Mark Sheets-Member  
Thadd Rich-Member

#### **Term and Implementation**

The term for the Local Innovation Plan is expected to be for five years (sy 2022-2023 through sy 2026-2027) unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. In the event Westbrook ISD feels other exemptions would benefit the district, the committee will follow all procedures for amending the plan and presenting it for approval of the Board of Trustees. Adjustments to Board Policy and other district policies will be researched, reviewed, and adopted by the Board of Trustees as needed.

#### **Timeline**

Thursday, February 24, 2022–

1. Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation

Monday, March 28, 2022 – District of Innovation Committee Planning Meeting

1. Public Hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation
2. Approve a motion to pursue local District of Innovation plan
3. Approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee

Monday, April 18, 2022 – District of Innovation Committee Planning Meeting

Thursday, April 28, 2022 – Present District of Innovation Plan to the School Board for initial discussion/approval

1. Superintendent submits tentatively approved plan to TASB policy review for any WISD board policy conflicts/adjustments.

Tuesday, May 31, 2022 – Present Final District of Innovation plan to the School Board of Trustees approve the District of Innovation plan

1. Post final approved District of Innovation Plan to the WISD website
2. Notify Texas Commissioner of Education of the board's intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan

Tuesday, June 28, 2022 –

1. Public Hearing to hear and/or discuss any public comments concerning the WISD District of Innovation Plan
2. Board of Trustees approve the Final WISD District of Innovation plan

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**Westbrook Independent School District  
Board Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation**

WHEREAS, Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees is committed to the success of every child; and,

WHEREAS, HB 1842 provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation; and,

WHEREAS, Texas districts designated as Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes; and,

WHEREAS, the Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees has a long-standing practice of supporting innovation for the benefit of students; and,

WHEREAS, the Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees believes that it can be a better decision-making body for students when it has freedom to exercise local control over the decision-making process; and,

WHEREAS, HB 1842 requires districts seeking to be designated as Districts of Innovation to develop a local innovation plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees is preparing to develop a strategic plan for the District to improve school and District performance; and,

WHEREAS, the Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees believes that a local innovation plan, if created, should be developed in conjunction with the District’s strategic plan; and,

WHEREAS, before considering the creation of a local innovation plan, the Westbrook ISD Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing to receive feedback from District stakeholders.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Westbrook Independent School District Board of Trustees on February 24, 2022, initiates the process of exploring and considering designation of the District as a District of Innovation under HB 1842.

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**Ranee Dawson**  
Board President

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**Jason Morris**  
Board Vice-President

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**Thomas Connell**  
Board Secretary

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**Ben Muller**  
Board Member

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**Mark Sheets**  
Board Member

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**Jim Hale**  
Board Member

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**Thad Rich**  
Board Member

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**Todd Burleson/Dr. Raemi Thompson**  
Superintendent

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### Texas Education Code Proposed Exemptions

In conjunction with the Local Innovation Committee, district leadership staff reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the Westbrook ISD students.

#### 1. **First Day of Instruction** (TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL)

A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August.

Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- Allows for better balance of semesters/grading periods and create more instructional time prior to assessments
- The flexibility to start mid-week could ease the transition for students and teachers

Local Guidelines:

- Annually review the calendar to determine what is best for students and the community and set school start and end dates accordingly.

#### 2. **Teacher Certification** (TEC 21.003)

States that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless that person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- The statutory certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire non-certified classroom teachers as teachers of record when all other avenues of recruitment have been exhausted.
- The statutory certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and non-core electives.
- Local qualifications will allow the district to:
  - Allow experienced teachers to teach an elective in an area they are qualified
  - Expand CTE and dual-credit opportunities
  - Recruit teachers from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real world experience
  - Provide flexibility in scheduling and class options for students

Local Guidelines:

- Westbrook ISD will continue to make every effort possible to recruit and retain certified teachers in the classroom.
- Principals will submit candidates and credentials to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual and present to the Board for final approval.
- The Superintendent will have the authority to permit a certified teacher to teach a course outside his or her certified field.
- The district may assign a person who meets local requirements to teach a career and technical education (CTE) course or non-core elective courses.

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- A non-certified individual with proven credentials and/or experience in a field of study to teach in a subject area specific to those qualifications
  - All non-certified personnel will be employed on an at-will basis, will require an employment agreement rather than a chapter 21 contract, and will be reviewed annually in accordance to the needs of the district.
  - In accordance with the State Board of Education, candidates will be required to pass a criminal background check prior to receiving district certification.
  - Special Education and bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

### 3. **Teacher Contract Days (TEC 21.401) Minimum Service Required**

Defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- Reduce teacher contract days from 187 to fewer days with no effect on teacher salaries.
- Allow better alignment with teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- Increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- Enhance teacher recruitment
- Improve teacher morale

Local Guidelines:

- The Superintendent will present a recommendation of the number of teacher contract days to the WISD School Board for final approval.

### 4. **Length of School Day – TEC §25.081**

State law currently requires that all school days must be at least 420 minutes per day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, which accumulate to the required 75,600 minutes annually.

Local Guidelines:

- WISD would have the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined necessary to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, it is limited to a 6-day maximum per school year. Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the uncertainty of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might force the district out of compliance with annual minute requirements.
- WISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, early release days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stake holders in advance of the school year annually.

Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

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- This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instruction days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

### 5. Class Size Waiver Exemption (Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> Grade) (TEC 25.111, 25.112, 25.113)

State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio at most of 20:1 for average daily attendance. Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> grade classes are to be kept at a 22:1 student; teacher ratio according to state law. If the number exceeds the 22:1 ratio the parents are to be notified and a waiver must be filed with TEA.

Local Guidelines:

- Westbrook ISD will attempt to keep all K-4<sup>th</sup> core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds the ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. A waiver will not be filed with TEA. WISD will strive to communicate with our parents to keep them informed if the number exceeds the ratio of 22:1.
- The district will strive to employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance; however, the plan will allow the district to exceed this requirement based on campus or district needs.

Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- This gives WISD the flexibility without having to file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency in the event we exceed the 22:1 ratio.

### 6. Professional Development – TEC §11.253, §21.404, §21.451, §21.4513, and §21.458

State law currently requires a specified number of minutes for teacher's planning and preparation time, oversight by the campus-level committee established under §11.253, as well as only allows districts to assign mentors to teachers with less than 2 years of teaching experience.

Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- Allows the district the flexibility to schedule weekly, and/or bi weekly instructional meetings during the workday without compromising instructional time. In addition, eliminating the oversight provisions in §11.253 will allow for flexible, responsive staff development activities without having to first be approved by a committee which reduces the time teachers much take from their time to attend such meetings. Providing mentors to teachers in need should be a local decision and should be available for any teacher, regardless of their years of service in teaching.

### 7. Transfer of Student (TEC 25.036)

States that any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment of 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 jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

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### Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- Allows the district the flexibility to revoke transfer students who, on rare occasions violate the transfer policy.
- Allows the district the flexibility to revoke transfer students, whose parents do not support the district.
- Allows the district to better utilize school resources for the benefit of the district.
- Potentially provide space for students on a waiting list to enroll in the district.

### Local Guidelines:

- The district will require nonresident students 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 will be evaluated. The parent's willingness to cooperate with Westbrook ISD teachers, coaches, and administration in a positive manner will also be a determining factor.
- Transfer students are required to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district.
- Transfer students may be revoked by the superintendent **at any time** during the school year if the student is assigned disciplinary consequences such as suspension (in school or out of school), placement in DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the student's transfer status. Furthermore, the student's transfer may be revoked by the superintendent if the parents or legal guardians fail to support the District in a positive manner.

## 6. Site-Based Decision Making (TEC 11.251, 11.252, and 11.253) (BQ Legal/Local, BQA Legal/Local)

### Local Guidelines:

- Westbrook ISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision-making process and the convening of the school health advisory committee and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements as set forth in the Texas Education Code in Chapter 11 are burdensome, time consuming, and ultimately cause a misdirection of resources from the primary focus of schools: the education of students. Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of the district, school, and community as opposed to the broad brush of statutory requirements leveled down from a one size fits all approach as detailed in the code. In place of the SBDM and the SHAC, a Superintendent's Advisory Team (SAT) will be established, meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the district's success and most importantly, student's success. This council will convene at least two times per year and generate the general direction of district resources and efforts.

### Benefit of Exemption for WISD:

- This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this community.
- This consolidation will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multiple of needs as opposed to having one meeting after another throughout the year

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### **7. Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (TEC 37.008) (FOA LEGAL, FOCA LEGAL)**

Texas state law states that each school district shall provide a disciplinary alternative education program that: employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements established under Subchapter B, Chapter 21.

#### Local Guidelines:

- WISD seldom needs the existence of a DAEP and is usually a short-term requirement since there is a very limited number of students assigned to DAEP. Since the classes will be provided using computer-based instruction or oversight from a teacher, it is not necessary to have certified teachers monitoring DAEP. The campus administrator will ensure that the staff of the DAEP has the support necessary to properly supervise the students assigned to the program and will lend assistance of teacher with specific certification as needed.

### **8. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit (90% Attendance Rule) TEC 25.092**

TEC 25.092 declares a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

#### Local Guidelines:

- WISD believes 90% is an arbitrary percentage emphasizing “seat time” over content mastery. By claiming exemption from Sec. 25.092, the district can abstain from penalizing students who miss class time due to extra and/ cocurricular activities or other extenuating circumstances, academic activities, enabling the district to accommodate students with legitimate scheduling conflicts while reducing dropouts and increasing the number of qualifying graduates.
- Note that relief from Sec. 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Furthermore, in no way does this exemption limit a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec. 28.214 nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Sec. 28.216.

### **SUMMARY**

The District of Innovation Plan is an important step forward to ensure Westbrook ISD develops and supports our students, employees, families, and community in a personalized, more effective, and strategically aligned way. Moving our system towards a more personalized environment will enable us to better prepare our students according to their individualized needs and their unique passions, gifts, and talents. Through HB 1842, WISD will be positioned to leverage increased flexibility to make the best decisions for our children, locally.