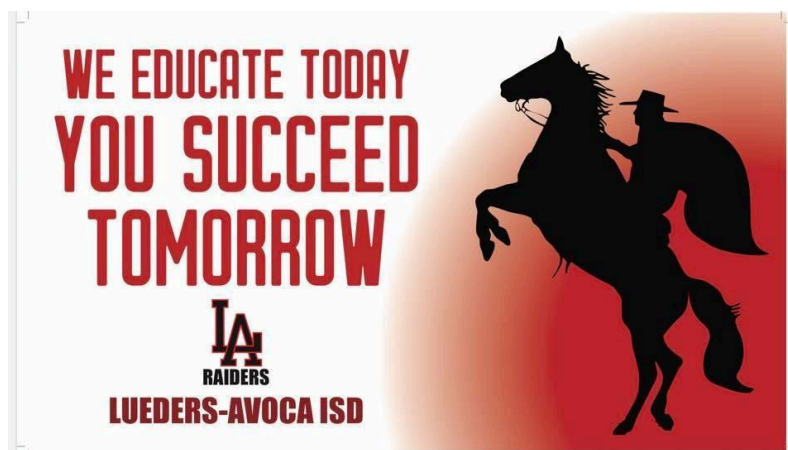


LUEDERS-AVOCA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Local Innovation Plan 2021-2026

To be considered by the L-AISD Board of Trustees
May 2021

Board Approved May 24, 2021



Board of Trustees

Pete Lopez, President

Danny Moore, Vice President

Justine Henderson, Secretary

Dottie Lopez

Samantha Barnett

Dawn Neatherlin

Bruce Wyatt

District Administration

Bob Spikes, Superintendent

Kristina Gaspar, Elementary/Junior High Principal

Robert Cummings, High School Principal

Melinda McCarter, Business Manager/Human Resources

Site-Based Decision Making Committee

Tish Ivy, Special Education Teacher

Jana Hinkle, JH English Teacher

Ginger Niehaus, Elementary Teacher

Annette Cummings, High School Special Education Teacher

Ashley Marley, Elementary Parent

Mandy Mims, Elementary Teacher

Dale Freeman, High School Math Teacher

Lana MacDonald, High School English Teacher

Lueders-Avoca ISD
District of Innovation Plan
Renewal 2021-2026

Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently. Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

Process

The Site-Based Decision-Making Committee met on March 16, 2021 to initiate the process of renewing the District of Innovation Plan in order to support innovative local initiatives to improve student learning and voted unanimously to move forward with the draft of the DOI to the Board of Trustees. On March 23, 2021 the Lueders-Avoca Independent School District's Board of Trustees discussed the draft of the DOI and will hold a public meeting regarding the pursuit of the designation of District of Innovation on April 19, 2021. The drafted plan was posted on the district website on March 26th, 2021. The District Board of Trustees will convene in May for consideration of adoption of the DIO at the regularly scheduled May meeting.

Term

If implemented by the Lueders-Avoca Board of Trustees, the District of Innovation Plan will become effective July, 2021 and will expire on the last day of June, 2026. In the interim, the plan may be terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. Amendments to the Innovation Plan will follow the same process as plan development. Changes will require majority approval of the District of Innovation Committee and District Site-Based Committees, 30 days posting, and a 2/3 vote by the Board of Trustees. Changes will not affect plan term unless the plan is revoked by either the Board of Trustees or the Texas Commissioner of Education.

Areas of Innovation

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares the exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board of Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

Uniform Start Date (§TEC 25.0811)

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday of August, unless they are a year-around district.

Rationale for Exemption:

The Lueders-Avoca Independent School District strategic plan proposes that we be permitted a flexible start date. This would allow for a calendar which best fits the needs of our students, community and school. It would provide a start date aligned with dual credit college courses and a more balanced semester structure; in turn, giving additional needed instruction time prior to standardized testing.

Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.057)

State law states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Education. The request may or may not be approved.

Rationale for Exemption:

As a small rural district, it is difficult to find qualified applicants for science, math, foreign language, and CTE courses. In order to best serve the students of L-A ISD, the decision on certification will be handled locally.

- This flexibility allows for out-of-state certified teachers could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials.
- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a teacher to instruct and supervise students out of their certified field. The principal will document qualifications that would allow the teacher to teach this subject.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve or deny the request based on if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individuals' employment. Local certificates will be valid for one year and the employee will be at-will.
- As a last resort, if a certified teacher cannot be secured to fill a position, the Principal and the Superintendent may pursue employing individuals that are not certified but have a bachelor's degree, to fill positions. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individuals' employment. Local certificates will be valid for one year and the employee will be at-will.

Contract Service Days (TEC§ 21.401)

State law currently requires educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Rationale for exemption:

The changes concerning the required days of instruction to minutes implemented by the passage of § 25.081 did not address contract days for employees with a 10-month contract. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision. This innovation strategy would allow the district the option to reduce the amount of contract days without affecting teachers' salaries.

Inter-District Transfers TEC 25.036 (Proposed 2021 Amendment)

Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. TEC 25.036, uses the language "may transfer annually" and has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Rationale for exemption

Lueders-Avoca 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 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. 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, Lueders-Avoca ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment and the eligibility to revoke transfer for a student's return to home district.

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), failed a drug test, or placed in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

Uniform Health Coverage TEC 22.004(i) (Proposed 2021 Amendment)

Under TEC 22.004, a district shall participate in the uniform group coverage program established under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code, as provided by Subchapter D of that chapter. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, a district participating in the uniform group coverage program established under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code, may not make group health coverage available to its employees under this section after the date on which the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code, is implemented.

Rationale for exemption

In order to have the option to offer additional benefit options to employees and to increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs, Lueders-Avoca ISD will use DOI flexibility to exempt the district from the health insurance requirements in TEC 22.004 (i).