



## WELLMAN-UNION INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 69

5<sup>th</sup> & Terry St.

Wellman, TX 79378-0069

<http://wellman.esc17.net>

(806) 637-4910 phone (806) 637-2585 fax

Ben Prowell, Superintendent

Kyle Conatser, Secondary Principal

Bridget Brown, Elementary Principal.

### **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.

#### **Wellman-Union ISD Local Innovation Committee**

Ben Prowell, Superintendent

Kyle Conatser, Secondary Principal

Bridget Brown, Elementary Principal

Megan Becker, Counselor

Karol Browne, CTE

Kody Robinson, Secondary Teacher

Robin Tells, Elementary Teacher

Rosie Garza, Community Member

Annie Rempel, Community Member

Kenny Underwood, Business Representative

#### **Wellman-Union ISD Board of Trustees**

James Harlan, President

Barrett Brown, Vice President

Eddie Rodriguez, Secretary

Ryan Dill-Member

Aaron Martin-Member

Jace Moore-Member

Gabe Neill-Member

#### **Term and Implementation**

The term for the Local Innovation Plan is expected to be for five years unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. In the event Wellman-Union 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**

Tuesday, February 14, 2017 –

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

Wednesday, March 1, 2017 – District of Innovation Committee Planning Meeting

Monday, March 6, 2017 – Present District of Innovation Plan to the School Board

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 –

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



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Monday, April 10, 2017 – Board of Trustees approve the District of Innovation plan

Tuesday, April 11, 2017 – Begin updating policy changes with TASB

Monday, July 12, 2021 – Board of Trustees vote to allow district to make amendments to the plan

[Monday, November 8, 2021 -Public Hearing to discuss renewal of District of Innovation](#)

[Monday, November 8, 2021- Board of Trustees meet to discuss renewal of District of Innovation](#)

[Tuesday, November 9, 2021–DOI Committee meets to discuss, amend, and renew the current DOI Plan](#)

[Thursday, November 11, 2021-Proposed Renewal Plan posted on District website](#)

## **Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation**

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WHEREAS Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district’s most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

WHEREAS the Wellman-Union Independent School District’s most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Wellman-Union Independent School District by adoption of this resolution initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a district of innovation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that after the public hearing the Board of Trustees of Wellman-Union Independent School District shall appoint a committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 14<sup>th</sup> day of February 2017, by the Board of Trustees.

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Presiding Officer

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Secretary



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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 Wellman-Union 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 WUISD:

- 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 WUISD:

- The statutory certification requirements inhibit the district's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teacher 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:

- 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.



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- 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.
- State certification will not be required for teachers of career and technical education (CTE) courses or non-core elective courses.
- In accordance with the State Board of Education, candidates will be required to pass a criminal background check prior to receiving district certification.
- District certificates will be good for one year.
- District certificate employees will be employed on an at-will basis.

### 3. Length of School Day (TEC 25.081)

- Requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

#### Benefit of Exemption for WUISD:

- Flexibility to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it is locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district without losing funding or credit for instructional time. (No intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis but would be used for special circumstances.)

#### Local Guidelines:

- The approved school calendar with limited (or zero) early release days will be followed unless there is a locally justifiable reason for a change.
- If it is decided that an additional early release day is needed, the district will publicize to all stakeholders once the decision is made.
- The district will continue to meet the required 75,600 instructional minutes each school year.

### 4. Teacher Contract Days (TEC 21)

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

#### Benefit of Exemption for WUISD:

- 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



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### Local Guidelines:

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

### 5. **Transfer of Student** (TEC 25.036) (**Amended July 2021**)

- 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.

### Benefit of Exemption for WUISD:

- 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 recourses 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 Wellman-Union 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. **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



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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.

### Plan:

- Wellman-Union 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. WUISD 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:

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

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

### Exemption:

- Wellman-Union 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:

- 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

## **8. Absences for College, University, or Military visits (TEC 25.087) (FEA LEGAL)**



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- A. Texas law states that students are excused for a maximum of two days for college or university visits in their junior year and again in their senior year
- B. Rationale for exemption
  - High school students are not allowed to receive an excused absence if they take more than two visits during their junior and senior year
- C. Proposed Innovation
  - The district shall excuse a student for up to two days during their junior year and up to four days during their senior year to visit an accredited institution of higher education and/or military enlistment activity

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

- A. 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.
- B. Rationale for exemption-WUISD 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.

**10. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit (90% Attendance Rule)**

Exemption from: 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.

Innovation: WUISD 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. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the minimum attendance for class credit or final grade laws, Wellman-Union opposed to a state mandate.



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**RENEWAL TERM**

- On November 8, 2021 the Wellman-Union ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing approved to start the renewal process of the District of Innovation Plan. The term for this Renewal Plan will start February 2022 and end in five years, February 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with TEC 12A.006 and 12A.008. The DOIC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan on an annual basis and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

**SUMMARY**

The District of Innovation Plan is an important step forward to ensure Wellman-Union ISD develops and supports or 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, WUISD will be positioned to leverage increased flexibility to make the best decisions for our children, locally.