



District of Innovation Plan

"Empowering Lives Through Excellence Everyday"

Strategic Plan Goal 1: Enhance programs to meet individualized student needs

Class Size and Student/Teacher Ratio

Statutes:

§TEC 25.112 – Class Size

§TEC 25.113 – Notification of Waiver

Currently:

§25.112 addresses the number of students that may be in a single kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class and limits that number to 22. The intent of this statute was to ensure that classrooms maintained a small teacher/student ratio under the belief that smaller classes led to improved achievement for students who benefited from more individualized teacher attention. While a state waiver may address the maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms, these waivers are rarely rejected by TEA; therefore, it represents an unnecessary bureaucratic step. In addition, a letter is required to inform parents of the waiver. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved negating the need for this correspondence. Moreover, hiring staff mid-year disrupts the rapport and relationships built, makes it difficult to find highly qualified teachers, and changes the dynamics of the learners. The statute does not take into consideration the impact of transferring students to new classrooms in the middle of the school year.

Proposed:

It is the philosophy of West Orange-Cove CISD that lower class sizes have a positive impact on Kindergarten -4th grade students; therefore, the district will stay true to the intent of the 22:1 ratio. We believe, however, that appropriate class sizes can be monitored and maintained at the local level without the necessity of waivers from the Texas Education Agency.

- Staffing decisions and teacher needs will be based on projected 22:1 ratios in K-4th grade. West Orange-Cove CISD will continue to begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a homeroom student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per Kindergarten-4th grade class.
- In the event that two or more core classrooms in a K-4th grade reaches 24:1 during the first grading period of the year, the District will actively seek an additional teacher.

By seeking an exception from §25.112 the District would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually.

School Start Date

Statute:

§TEC 25.0811 – First Day of Instruction

Currently:

A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver of this requirement. Using this year's calendar with August 1, 2017 being a Tuesday, the start date would not occur for students until August 28. Teachers would be able to start August 21.

Proposed:

Implementation of this statute as is will result in the loss of 5 days of instruction in the first semester. Starting one week earlier in August allows for more instructional time prior to semester exams and more instructional time overall prior to state exams. With the approval of this District of Innovation process we request approval to start sooner than the fourth Monday in August.

Strategic Plan Goal 4: Maintain a quality staff

Certification Required

Statutes:

§TEC 21.003, DK Local, DK Legal, DK Exhibit

Currently:

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Proposed:

The district will continue to make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification; however, the district may locally grant exceptions to certification requirements in order to best meet the needs of WOCCISD students. For example, but not limited to, an individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach an industry recognized 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 the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students.

Probationary Contract

Statute:

§21.102 Teacher Employment Contracts

Currently:

Experienced teachers 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 in Texas for at least five of the previous eight years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate an employee's effectiveness.

Proposed:

All contract employees new to WOCCISD that have been employed in public education in Texas for at least five of the eight previous years, may be issued a probationary contract for up to two full school years from the date of district employment. This will allow the district more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness prior to offering a term contract.

Local Role (Appraisal Process)

Statute:

§TEC 21.352

Currently:

Each school district shall use the appraisal process developed by the commissioner of education (T-TESS) or an appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the district and approved by the commissioner.

Proposed:

The performance of certain certified positions are difficult to fairly evaluate using the current evaluation system (T-TESS). Therefore, a district committee of teachers and administrators will develop alternate appraisals for teachers/certified personnel in West Orange-Cove CISD where the adopted teacher evaluation instrument might not appropriately gauge the effectiveness of the employee.

The appraisal instrument used for evaluation of certified personnel will not include a growth measure.

Strategic Plan Goal 5: Promote a positive image

Campus Behavior Coordinator

Statute:

§TEC 37.0012 – Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Currently:

Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus.

(a). A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.

(b). The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter.

Proposed:

The proposal for WOCCISD is to seek exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated campus behavior coordinator. The relationships that are established between the campus administrator, student and parent are the foundation for promoting and maintaining positive behavior. Utilizing a local process allows the administrator who currently has a relationship with the parent and student to be the person to make parental contact. The administrator notifies the parent of discipline or behavioral concerns, rather than having contact made by a designated behavior coordinator, who may or may not know all the students, providing a more individual and personalized approach.