

# GALENA PARK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN

## 1. Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (TEC 21.044, 21.003)

To best serve Galena Park ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The District's goal will continue to be hiring certified teachers; however, flexibility is needed in the areas that are difficult to fill or in high demand. Galena Park ISD proposes to submit a request for approval to fill a teaching position to the Superintendent or designee:

- A. In order to adequately supply programs with qualified candidates, the district requires the flexibility to hire community college and university professors, as well as current staff members who would qualify for placement in assignments outside of their traditional certification areas and to retain them. The request would outline what credentials the community college/university professor and/or certified teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach the subject outside of the individual's traditional area of certification.
- B. The district will establish local qualifications and training requirements for professionals and experts to teach career and technical courses in lieu of state requirements. The district will make decisions on certification needs for the various special programs including, but not limited to trade and vocational courses such as, welding, health sciences, architecture and construction, and other career and technical courses. These exemptions are of particular importance for hard-to-fill and high-demand courses. The district will ensure that professional development plans are in place to train non-certified personnel in pedagogy and to provide needed support.
- C. A teacher who is fully certified in another state will be considered a certified teacher in Galena Park ISD for one year on a probationary status given:
  - i The employee creates a Texas Educator TEAL account and applies for and pays for their (1) review of out of state credential, (2) one year temporary certification, (3) fingerprints; and
  - ii The employee agrees to register for appropriate content and Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) exams.
- D. A teacher who has a four-year degree, fluent in Spanish, and is able to pass a district assessment will be qualified to teach Spanish I and Spanish II.

### Rationale

Exemption from TEC 21.044 and 21.003 would enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of career and technical course offerings.

## 2. School Start Date

(EB Legal) (TEC 25.0811)

To best serve the students and community of Galena Park ISD, we propose the Board of Trustees allow the Superintendent the authority to amend the start date of the school year based on information from health departments, local, state and/or federal officials and TEA.

### Rationale

Due to situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Superintendent needs the flexibility in determining the start date of the school calendar to best meet the needs of the students in Galena Park ISD. GPISD reserves the right to begin school before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August and prior to the start of San Jacinto College classes.

## 3. Teacher Evaluation

(DNA Legal, DNA Local) (TEC 21.352)

To best serve the needs of Galena Park ISD staff, we propose to allow one district committee of administrators and teachers the option to develop alternate appraisals for specific groups of teachers, where the adopted teacher evaluation may not be the most appropriate evaluation. Such groups of teachers could include Life Skills, PASS, SLC, Elementary Specials, and CTE classes, among others.

We propose to allow one district committee of administrators and teachers the option to develop a local teacher evaluation that can be used in the place of the commissioner's recommended instrument (T-TESS). The newly developed instrument would not include a student growth measure nor require annual online recertification for appraisers.

### Rationale

Districts already have the right to develop alternate appraisals, but each appraisal instrument must be approved by the District Planning and Advisory Committee and each Campus Planning and Advisory Committee. Our District Planning and Advisory Committee already includes representation from each campus.

## 4. Minimum Minutes of Instruction

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (TEC 25.081)

To best serve the Galena Park ISD community, the exemption from TEC 25.081 would allow our Superintendent or designee to determine whether to amend our District calendar to make up lost instructional time.

### Rationale

The proposed exemption from TEC 25.081 will allow Galena Park ISD to avoid submitting waiver requests to TEA in cases of unforeseen changes to school calendar, and will further allow Galena Park ISD to adjust school day schedules to better meet the instructional needs of students.

## 5. Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size

(EEB LEGAL) (TEC 25.111-13)

To best serve the needs of Galena Park ISD students and staff, the District will attempt to maintain the 22:1 ratio in all K-4<sup>th</sup> core classrooms. However, if the class size exceeds this ratio, the Superintendent will report the circumstance to the Board of Trustees.

In the event a K-4<sup>th</sup> grade core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will contact the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation. The District will provide relief by placing an instructional aide in the classroom for the duration of time it remains at or above the 25:1 ratio.

### Rationale

While the District believes small class size plays a positive role in student learning, this must be balanced with the logistics and timing of adding staff. We do not believe there is a negative impact to student achievement when one or two additional students are added to a class. Most importantly, research demonstrates it is the teacher in the classroom, not absolute class size, which has the greatest impact on student learning.

A TEA waiver request will not be necessary when a K-4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

## 6. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

(FO LEGAL) (TEC 37.0012)

To best serve the needs of students and staff in Galena Park ISD, we propose the District abstain from designating only one person as the Campus Behavior Coordinator.

### Rationale

Galena Park ISD's elementary campuses currently have at least two administrators: one principal and one assistant principal, who by job description, serve in this capacity already. Our secondary schools each have one principal and multiple assistant principals who all work together to ensure compliance with Chapter 37, Subchapter A. Our District believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the Galena Park ISD's Student Code of Conduct.

## 7. Probationary Contracts

(DCA LEGAL) (TEC Code Section 21.102)

To best serve the needs of students and staff in Galena Park ISD, we propose the District be allowed to extend the probationary period to exceed one year if the person has been employed in education for at least five of the previous eight years. Further, when an employee currently employed with the District transitions into a new position (such as an assistant principal moving into a principal position), we propose the District be allowed to place the employee on a probationary contract for up to three years.

This exemption provides flexibility so that the superintendent may approve recommendations for a second and/or third-year probationary contract for teachers, administrators, counselors, nurses or any employee who has been employed in public education for at least five of the previous eight years, and has completed his or her first probationary year with the District, as well as any employee who has transitioned into a new position with the District, in order to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

### Rationale

Allowing the District to extend the probationary contract beyond the current one year specified in TEC 21.102 will allow teachers, administrators, counselors, nurses, and other probationary contract employees who have worked in public education for at least five of the previous eight years, as well as employees who have transitioned into new positions with the District, additional time to meet the District's expectations for professional job performance.

## 8. Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates

To best serve our local Galena Park ISD community, staff, and students, Galena Park ISD includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a 2/3 majority vote of the Galena Park ISD Board of Trustees.

## 9. Depository Contract

(BDEA Legal, BBFA legal) (TEC Subchapter G, Section 45.206)

To best serve the needs of Galena Park ISD the exemption under Subchapter G, Section 45.206 would allow existing bank contract to be extended beyond the current six-year allowable term to a maximum eight-year term.

### Rationale:

This exemption will lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposals (RFP) as well as mitigate impacts to employees that may need to alter direct deposit or banking services. It will also allow the business office and treasury management team to remain focused on other priorities.

## 10. Teacher Work Days

(DCB Legal, DCA Legal) (TEC Section 21.401)

To best serve the needs of Galena Park ISD the exemption under Section 21.401 would allow the Galena Park ISD Board of Trustees to approve teacher contracts/calendar for less than 187 days without impacting salary.

Rationale:

This exemption would allow for more flexibility when creating the school district calendar.

## 11. Special Education Content Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (TEC , 21.003)

Exemption from content certifications required for special education courses where instructional content is significantly modified.

Rationale:

The proposed amendment would allow the district to exempt teachers from content-area teaching certifications, when appropriate. This flexibility would aid in the recruiting, hiring, and retention of special education-certified teachers, without forfeiting federal licensure requirements or impacting certification requirements for special education teachers providing content instruction in a classroom setting.