



Ricardo Independent School District District of Innovation Plan Amendment

Introduction:

The overall goal and mission of Ricardo ISD is facilitated through daily creative scheduling, technology, and rigorous curriculum standards that are imperative for our students to be successful. House Bill 1842, Section 4, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides Texas public school district the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. The plan allows school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of the students served. As a District of Innovation, Ricardo ISD will be able to implement the Innovation Plan with the increased flexibility governing education programming, empowerment to innovate and think differently, and the freedom necessary to personalize learning while ensuring each student is prepared to assume the role of a productive citizen. Districts are not exempt from statutes related to curriculum, graduation requirements, nor academic and financial accountability.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>District of Innovation Committee Members:</u></p> <p>Dr. Vita Canales, Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Flores, RMS Principal Lisa West, RMS Counselor Michael Morales, RMS Teacher Marci Braswell, RES Principal Michelle Dupont, RES Counselor Tamara Reyna, RES Teacher</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Innovation Plan Term:</u></p> <p>The term of the plan is for five years, beginning in August 2017 through the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the plan.</p>
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District of Innovation Timeline/Process:

Jan 18, 2017	Board Resolution, Public Hearing, Appoint Committee
Jan 23-Feb 22, 2017	Plan posted online
Feb 15, 2017	School Board Intention to Sign Final Plan; Notify Commissioner
Feb 15-Mar 17, 2017	Final Innovation Plan posted online for comments
Mar 29, 2017	School Board Approval; Notify Commissioner
2017-18 until 2021-22	Plan is implemented



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1. **Start of School Year (TEC 25.0811) (EB Legal)**

- a. *Current Law:* State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.
- b. *Proposal:* The primary goals of this change to create greater flexibility in the district calendar and improve the overall district attendance rate, to improve student success on state and local assessments by balancing the amount of instructional time per semester, and to allow for greater opportunity for meaningful staff development throughout the school year. The flexible start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and staff.

2. **Class Ratio 22:1: (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113) (EEB Legal)**

- a. *Current law:* Classes in grades Kindergarten through 4th may not exceed a ratio of 22 students to 1 teacher. When an individual class exceeds this ratio, the district must either add a new teacher, reassign teachers from other schools with lower student enrollment, or submit a waiver request to the Texas Education Agency. These waivers requests have not been rejected by TEA. In addition to the waiver request, it is required that a letter be sent to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted and the class exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- b. *Proposal:* RISD believes that class size plays a positive role in the classroom, but the district will maintain the 22:1 student to teacher ratio in Kindergarten through 4th grades. The district will continue to follow the process of thoughtful planning, reviewing staffing ratios, and making decisions in the best interests of students, while taking into consideration the financial capacity of the district. In the event that class sizes exceeds the 22:1 ratio, in Kindergarten – 4th grade, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the campus principal will submit a request to the Superintendent for approval. Parents do not need to be



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formally notified, as a parent can request a class size at any time. This exemption provides RISD local control over class size ratios, without the unnecessary step of seeking a waiver from the TEA.

3. Probationary Contracts: (TEC 21.102) (DCA Legal)

- a. *Current law:* Probationary contracts may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.
- b. *Proposal:* Due to the unique nature of RISD, including our initiatives and processes, this period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. Upon exemption, all new contract employees will be subject to the probationary period, in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

4. Teacher Certifications (TEC 21.003) (DK Local) (DK Legal)

- a. *Current law:* states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern, teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by Subchapter B.
- b. *Proposal:* The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take Languages Other than English, Fine Arts, or any elective, the district seeks to establish its own local qualifications requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth by law.



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5. Group Health Coverage (TEC 22.004i) (CRD Local) (CRD Legal)

- a. *Current law:* states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Ricardo ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverage for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.
- b. *Proposed law:* Increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs.