

## **DE LEON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN**

#### **Background:**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session passed House bill 1842 allowing school districts to have greater local control while becoming a District of Innovation. This opportunity will allow for flexibility regarding certain state level rules and regulations in order to transform and make improvements to better serve the students of De Leon ISD.

The Innovation Plan for De Leon ISD will remain in effect for five years beginning in August 2017 through July 2022.

#### **De Leon ISD Mission Statement**

**The staff of De Leon ISD believes that all students are capable of learning. To foster student achievement, it is our responsibility to provide a well-balanced curriculum within an environment that is conducive to learning. Our goal is to help all students reach their greatest level of academic achievement. We can attain this goal by instilling in our students a love of learning and by providing a curriculum that includes basic liberal arts courses, fine arts, technology, and vocation training.**

#### **Local Innovation Committee**

Liesa Nowlin, Chairperson/High School Principal  
Lori Womack, Elementary Principal  
Chuck Miller, Secondary Assistant Principal  
Joe Burnett, Business Member  
Lori Campbell, Teacher  
Michelle McIlvain, teacher/parent  
Roxanna Thiebaud, Teacher  
Amber Bates, Counselor/parent  
Molly Smith, Teacher  
Josh Sepeda, Teacher

Nancy Brown, Community Member  
Rae Jean Hasty, Community Member  
Jana Cullers, Business Member  
Jill Hill, Parent  
Dana Marable, Superintendent  
Tera Kellam, Teacher  
David White, Paraprofessional  
Deanna Downs, Teacher/parent  
Shelia Johnson, Teacher

#### **De Leon Board of Trustees**

Craig Mahan, President  
Nelda Priddy, Secretary  
Josh Mahan, Member

Billy McGrath, Vice President  
Betty Morris, Member  
Brandon Burrow, Member

Lance Jones, Member

## **STATUTES UNDER CONSIDERATION**

### **I. Uniform Start Date:**

#### **Education Code 25.0811**

First Day of Instruction. (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

#### **Rationale for Exemption:**

De Leon ISD would like to have the flexibility to develop a calendar that would meet the needs of the students and community. This allows a similar start date with colleges that provide our dual credit courses. It also helps us balance the first and second semester by providing more instructional days prior to state testing and better balance our semesters as well as scheduling more timely and meaningful staff development throughout the school year.

### **II. Teacher Employment Contracts:**

#### **Education Code 21.102 (B)**

(b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one year, The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.

#### **Rationale for Exemption:**

De Leon ISD's request addresses experienced teachers or counselors new to the district who have been employed as a teacher/counselor in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the last date of district employment. The same rules will apply for any teacher/counselor returning to the District. This allows more time for evaluation of the teacher/counselor's effectiveness.

### **III. Class Sizes and Student-Teacher Ratios**

#### **Education Code 25.111, 25.112, 25.113, and 25.114**

State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio of 20 to 1 for average daily attendance. For physical education, the student-teacher ratio

cannot be greater than 45 to 1. In Kindergarten through grade four, the class student-teacher ratio must not exceed 22 to 1.

**Rationale for Exemption:**

While class size does influence the effectiveness of instruction, other considerations should be taken into account. DISD would also like to consider the needs of both teachers and students when making the decisions that affect class size. We believe every K-4 classroom should begin the school year under the 22 to 1 rule but after the teacher and students have formed a relationship (two weeks into the school year), then the 23<sup>rd</sup> student should not require consideration of forming a new class. This is detrimental to the learning environment for the entire class. Research clearly shows that it is the teacher in the classroom and his/her relationship with students that has the greatest impact on student learning. The same rationale should be used when considering physical education classes.

**IV. Teacher Certification**

**Education Code 21.003, 21.053, 21.055, 21.057**

Presently §21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or 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 the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified person, the district must request emergency certification from TEA and the State Board of Educator Certification.

§21.053 requires a teacher to present his/her certificate to the District before the employment contract will be binding and prohibits the district from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at that time.

§21.055 states that if a teacher is not certified, the District may issue a teaching permit to employ the individual.

§21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if any inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive days.

**Rationale for Exemption:**

State certification will not be required for teachers of Career and Technology (CTE Courses) and Fine Arts courses (Art, Music, Drama). DISD asks for the flexibility to consider entering into at-will employment agreements with noncertified individuals who have field/professional experience in these areas. This would provide more options for students in our small, rural area.