

Guthrie Common School District

Background

The 84th 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. On Tuesday, August 29, 2023, during a special called board meeting, a public hearing was conducted to consider whether Guthrie CSD should develop a plan for designation as a District of Innovation. The Guthrie CSD Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution to consider developing a Local Innovation Plan. The board of trustees appointed an eleven-person Local Innovation Committee to research, discuss and develop the Local Innovation Plan.

The committee met on September 25, 2023 to review, discuss, and develop the innovation plan. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback on October 3, 2023 and remained online until November 3, 2023. The final version of the plan was approved by the Local Innovation Plan committee. The plan moved on for final vote of the Guthrie CSD Board of Trustees. On November 20, 2023, the Board of Trustees reviewed the plan and approved the plan.

Local Innovation Committee

Steve Wolf, Superintendent
Martin Tucker, Principal
Cassie Daniel, Counselor
Kelsey Winslow, Parent
Belinda Moore, Teacher
Melissa Everson, Teacher

Nancy McWhirter, Parent
Cindy Jouett, Parent
Kent Ballard, Teacher
Amy Richardson, Teacher
JoAnn Shipman, County Librarian

Guthrie CSD Board of Trustees

Toby Oliver, President
Zane Daniel, Secretary
KC Green, Member
Jeff Daniel, Member

Laura Moorhouse, Vice President
Clell McCauley, Member
Wendy Masterson, Member

Texas Education Code Exemptions

District staff in conjunction with the Local Innovation Committee reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the students who attend Guthrie CSD.

I. **Uniform School Calendar (TEC §25.0811) (TEC §25.0812)**

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts. State law also prohibits school districts from ending the school year before May 15th.

Rationale for Exemption

The flexibility of the school calendar allows the district to:

- A. determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the need of the students, the school, and the community.
- B. better align its starting date to accommodate the start date of colleges in which the district uses for dual credit courses.
- C. to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school.
- D. better balance the amount of days in each semester.
- E. aid students to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.
- F. provide more flexibility in professional development for school staff.
- G. eliminate the imbalanced six-weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.

II. **Length of School Day (TEC §25.081)**

State law currently 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.

Rationale for Exemption

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Guthrie CSD the flexibility needed to:

- A. alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.
- B. obtain an amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements.

Guthrie does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. Guthrie CSD will meet the minimum requirements of 75,600 total instructional minutes.

III. **Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.053 and §21.057)**

State law states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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 teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of

Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

In order to best serve GCS D students, decisions on certification will be handled locally to:

- A. hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, as well as career and technical courses. Guthrie CSD is the third least populated county in the United States which limits course offerings and utilize creative instructional methods district wide.
- B. allow local district control over certifications in order to better enable students to obtain the educational benefits of such course offerings.
- C. allow the principal to allow certified teachers to teach up to two courses per year out of their certified field.
- D. allow the principal to submit a request to allow a certified teacher to instruct and supervise students outside of their field.
- E. allow the principal to request and document what credentials and/or skills the certified teacher possesses in which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- F.

IV. Revocation of Student Transfer at Mid Year (TEC §25.036)

Texas Education Code 25.036 states that district transfers are for an entire school year.

Rationale for Exemption

Guthrie CSD is seeking to eliminate the provision requiring a one year commitment after accepting inter-district transfer students. In rare circumstances, a non-resident student's behavior may warrant the kind of consequences contemplated by this exemption. These are students assigned behavioral consequences of loss of privileges, corporal punishment, in school suspension, off campus suspension, placement in an alternative education program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard or failing to maintain the academic standard of an 80 average in all subjects may also be subject to immediate removal.

V. Teacher Contract Days (TEC §21.401)

Texas Education Code 21.401 states the minimum service required. Teachers on a ten month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Rationale for Exemption

Guthrie CSD seeks to reduce teacher contract days to match the adopted school calendar. This exemption will provide teachers more flexibility during summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field, their salary will be consistent with a 187 day calendar, improve teacher morale, and enhance teacher recruitment. Additionally, it will be part of the calendar planning process to reduce the number of teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length as determined appropriate by school district in an attempt to better align the teacher contract days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

VI. DAEP Teacher/Supervisor (TEC§37.008(a)(7))

Texas Education Code 37.008 states that a DAEP Program employ only teachers who meet all certification requirements.

Rationale for Exemption

Guthrie CSD will train paraprofessional staff and substitutes to perform DAEP duties to enhance student learning while in placement. Subject teachers will check and support DAEP student(s) during conference periods. This will more effectively utilize certified instructors in their assigned subjects.

Term and Implementation

The term for this plan is for five years unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Texas law. In the event Guthrie CSD feels other exemptions would benefit the district, the Board of Trustees will nominate a new committee and follow all procedures for amending this plan.

This innovation plan and specific implementation of the plan will be developed by the appropriate campuses and principals. Adjustments to Guthrie CSD Board Policy and other district policies will be researched, reviewed, and adopted by the Board of Trustees. The Guthrie CSD District Of Innovation will meet annually to review this plan.