

# LA PORTE

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

**DISTRICT OF INNOVATION  
LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN**



*Every student's success is our #1 priority!*

# La Porte Independent School District

## District of Innovation Plan Expansion

Modified Version (May 2017)  
Post April 2017 Board Approval

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code that are available to open charter enrollment schools. On February 14, 2017, the Board of Trustees (“Board”) of the La Porte Independent School District passed a Resolution to Initiate the Process for Designation as a District of Innovation.

A public hearing was held during the Board Meeting on February 14, 2017. At that time, employees, parents, students and community members had the opportunity to share their opinions regarding the District’s pursuit of a designation as a District of Innovation. The Board approved moving forward with the development of a Local Innovation Plan at its meeting on February 14, 2017, and appointed the La Porte ISD District Education Improvement Council (DEIC) as the Local Innovation Committee (“Committee”) to develop the Plan.

## **II. TERM of the Local Innovation Plan**

The term of the Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”) is for a period of five years, beginning at the start of the 2017-18 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-22 school year, unless the Plan is terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with statute. This plan includes, but is not limited to, current Texas Education Code mandates that inhibit the goals of La Porte ISD.

## **III. A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

The Plan’s comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the District’s Mission Statement, Vision – La Porte ISD Portrait of a Graduate, and District Goals of the La Porte Independent School District.

### **A. Mission Statement**

*Every Student’s Success is our #1 Priority!*

### **B. District Vision – La Porte ISD Portrait of a Graduate**

*A La Porte ISD graduate is . . .*

*Bulldog Proud...*

- Possesses confidence about the future
- Values the total educational experience--academic, extra-curricular, and social
- Stays connected to the LPISD family
- Commits to lifelong support of LPISD programs

*Prepared...*

- Possesses academic and technological proficiencies
- Transitions to college and/or career equipped with the skills, goals, and plans for success
- Values honesty and integrity
- Demonstrates effective communication and collaboration skills

*A Citizen...*

- Participates in the democratic process
- Exhibits environmental responsibility
- Respects cultural diversity
- Recognizes and responds to community needs

*An Explorer...*

- Thinks critically
- Embraces productive membership in the global community
- Values lifelong learning
- Welcomes challenge and innovation

*A Producer...*

- Recognizes the importance of systems thinking
- Utilizes data and analysis to pragmatically solve problems
- Exhibits courage to take risks and make tough decisions
- Balances achievement and growth in both personal and professional life

**C. District Goals**

1. Increase achievement and success for every student through rigorous, broad-based academic programs.
2. Provide a safe, secure, and disciplined learning environment.
3. Attract, develop, and retain excellent staff.
4. Promote family engagement and active involvement of the community in the education of our students.
5. Ensure and demonstrate efficient and effective use of district resources.

## IV. Innovations

The District's mission and vision coupled with the District's Board-approved goals necessitate the need for local control and flexibility. Requirements of the Education Code inhibit the District's ability to:

1. Develop an instructional calendar that supports the continuous improvement of student learning.
2. Ensure a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff.
3. Increase opportunities for the retention and recruitment of professional staff.
4. Attract and hire hard-to-fill Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) staff positions.

**Goal 1:** Increase achievement and success for every student through rigorous, broad-based academic programs.

### 1. First Day of Instruction

#### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §25.0811**

*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. A school district may:*

- (1) *begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August if the district operates a year-round system under Section 25.084.*

#### **Current Status:**

Texas Education Code Section §25.0811 inhibits La Porte ISD's ability to establish an instructional calendar that best meets the instructional needs of students and the priorities of the community by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. The fourth Monday in August is an arbitrary start date that does not meet the needs of the La Porte ISD community. The District has historically ended classes for the first semester before the Winter Break to better align with college and university schedules in the area and to best accommodate high school students taking dual credit courses.

#### **Benefit of Exemption:**

Having the flexibility to establish an earlier start date will enable the District to better balance the amount of instructional time available in each semester, providing classroom teachers the opportunity to deliver more equitable learning experiences for students in the fall and spring semesters. Waiver of the required school start date will allow time at the conclusion of the school calendar for instruction prior to summer administration of state assessments required for graduation. Finally, it will also enable the District to give a full week off at Thanksgiving to alleviate the loss of funding due to student absenteeism.

By having the flexibility to end school earlier, parents will be less likely to take their children out of school prior to the last day of instruction. Graduating seniors will also be able to enroll in college courses that normally begin the first week of June to further their college and career readiness. Likewise, teachers who wish to pursue advanced college degrees or additional certifications will complete the school year in time to attend summer classes.

**Local Guidelines:**

The La Porte ISD DEIC, comprised of teachers, administrators, support personnel, parents, business and community leaders, serves as the District’s calendar committee. This Council will develop several instructional calendar options and recommend a preferred option for Board consideration. In developing calendar options, DEIC will utilize the flexibility of having more local control on the school start date.

Exemption from the Texas Education Code Section §25.0811 will require the District to review its policies at EB (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

**First Day of Instruction Action Steps**

#	<b><i>ACTION STEPS</i></b>
1.	Form DEIC calendar subcommittee meeting at first DEIC meeting; calendar process and timeline discussed.
2.	Develop sample calendars based upon established district calendar planning assumptions, including historic holiday preferences and flexibility.
3.	Share annual calendar development process and information with district and campus leaders. Participate in the regional district meeting with San Jacinto College to review other area district and college calendars.
4.	Convene DEIC Calendar Subcommittee meeting and meet regularly until draft calendars are developed.
5.	Solicit campus input and preferences for calendar choices.
6.	Share potential draft calendar options at regular DEIC Meeting.
7.	Post calendars online for community and staff input.
8.	Reach consensus at DEIC for final calendar recommendation that best meets the needs of students, families, teachers and employees.
9.	Recommend final calendar choice to Superintendent to be presented to the Board of Trustees.

**Goal 2:** Provide a safe, secure, and disciplined learning environment.

## **2. Campus Behavior Coordinator**

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §37.0012**

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

### **Current Status:**

The District is required, by Texas Education Code §37.0012, to appoint a person at each campus to serve as campus behavior coordinator with the primary responsibility for maintaining student discipline. The campus behavior coordinator is also required to promptly notify parents, by telephone and in writing, when a student is suspended, removed to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) or Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP), or taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. In La Porte ISD, the campus principal serves as the de facto campus behavior coordinator. However, the requirement to designate a single employee to maintain student discipline and make all required parental notifications inhibits the District's ability to implement an effective and systematic approach to student discipline.

### **Benefit of Exemption:**

The shared responsibility of discipline among campus principals and assistant principals will minimize the loss of instructional time and ensure the safety of all students as well as provide increased opportunities to build relational capacity with parents and students. All campus administrators engage in comprehensive professional learning to support the implementation of the La Porte ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, by spreading the CBC responsibilities across the campus administrative leadership team, the team will more positively impact student learning through uniform instructional supervision.

### **Local Guidelines:**

The District will designate all campus principals and assistant principals to fulfill discipline and behavior duties.

Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.0012 will require policy revisions at FO (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the legal policies at FOA and FOC. In addition, the Student Code of Conduct will need to be revised to eliminate the reference to a campus behavior coordinator.

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**Campus Behavior Coordinator Designation Action Steps**

#	<b><i>ACTION STEPS</i></b>
1.	Conduct comprehensive review of TEC §37.0012, Board Policies in the FO(LLEGAL/LOCAL/EXHIBIT) Student Discipline series, and the LPISD Student Code of Conduct to determine necessary language changes to accommodate this initiative.
2.	Implement appropriate language changes to Board Policies FO series and the Student Code of Conduct.
3.	Disseminate corresponding changes in district disciplinary operating guidelines to all campuses to ensure 100 percent compliance with the changes.
4.	Provide administrator training as necessary to accommodate changes in disciplinary procedure guidelines.
5.	Update district and campus home page information to accurately reflect the role, responsibilities and responsible personnel for conducting campus behavior coordinator duties.



**Goal 2:** Provide a safe, secure, and disciplined learning environment.

### 3. Student/Teacher Ratio and Class Size

#### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §TEC 25.111-113**

*Each school district must employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance. Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class. A campus or district that is granted an exception from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.*

#### **Current Status:**

Kindergarten – 4th grade classes are to be kept at a 22 to 1 student-teacher ratio according to State law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Along with the waiver, a letter is required to be sent home to parents of students in each class/section exceeding the 22:1 ratio, informing them a waiver has been submitted. In many instances, soon after the waiver process is complete, the class size drops below the maximum 22:1 ratio due to students withdrawing from the district and/or school.

#### **Benefit of Exemption:**

To best serve the needs of La Porte ISD students and staff, the District will attempt to maintain the 22:1 ratio in all K-4th grade 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-4th grade core classroom reaches 24:1, the campus will contact the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.

#### **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. However, the District intends to maintain an average 20:1 ratio districtwide.

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**Local Guidelines:**

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

Exemption from Texas Education Code § 25.111-113 will require the District to review its policies at EEB (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

**Student Teacher Ratios and Class Size Action Steps**

#	<i><b>ACTION STEPS</b></i>
1.	Survey campus enrollment, staffing ratios, and class sizes at the beginning of each school year and monitor throughout.
2.	Reassign available staff to relieve classrooms with student enrollments exceeding 22:1.
3.	Review campus enrollment, staffing ratios and class sizes with the Superintendent.
4.	Review staffing ratios to determine if additional staff can be hired and if the timing of a new hire is in the best interests of students.
5.	Seek approval from the La Porte ISD Board of Trustees for approval for classes exceeding 22:1.
6.	Notify parents of class sizes exceeding 22:1 and explain plans to meet student needs.

**Goal 3:** Attract, develop, and retain excellent staff.

#### **4. Teacher Certification**

##### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §21.003**

*A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or 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 as provided by Subchapter B.*

##### **Current Status:**

The Texas Education Code Section §21.003 dictates that all district teachers be certified in accordance with rules adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

##### **Benefit of Exemption:**

In order for La Porte ISD to hire personnel for Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) and **Languages Other Than English (LOTE)** hard-to-fill positions, the District must seek exemption from the law requiring certification. This would allow La Porte ISD to hire nontraditional candidates who bring authentic field and industry knowledge and skills which would provide students with unparalleled learning experiences. Although it is the District's intent to limit the use of this exemption, the current statute inhibits the District's ability to recruit and employ highly qualified professionals with industry and field experience to successfully teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) courses. Potential areas of local certification may include, but are not limited to: culinary arts, automotive technology, cosmetology, criminal justice, engineering, Cisco networking, veterinary science, manufacturing, and media courses. These individuals often hold multiple certifications in their areas of expertise that would be far more beneficial in their ability to prepare students for success in these areas than would a Texas teaching certificate. **Native Speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification.**

##### **Local Guidelines:**

The Superintendent, after consultation with campus leadership, the Human Resources Department, and the Curriculum and Instruction Department, will certify candidates that meet local credential guidelines. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to the individuals beginning employment.

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Exemption from the Texas Education Code §21.003 will require the District to review its policies at DBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the policies at DK (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

**Candidate Qualifications may include a combination of:**

- Professional work experience;
- Formal training and education;
- Relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or
- Any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentials related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching.

**Criminal History:**

All candidates must complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC §22.0833 for a non-certified employee.

Teachers employed under this certification program will receive pedagogy and classroom management training.

**Teacher Certification Action Steps**

	<b><i>ACTION STEPS</i></b>
1.	Survey current campus enrollment and preregistration enrollment in CTE, <b>LOTE</b> and STEAM classes.
2.	Identify staffing needs based on survey results.
3.	Determine essential qualifications for hard-to-fill CTE, <b>LOTE</b> and STEAM courses.
4.	Reassign available SBEC certified staff.
5.	After SBEC certified staff have been reassigned, and the need for hard-to-fill CTE, <b>LOTE</b> and STEAM course instructors still exists, review professional candidate qualifications aligned with instructor needs.
6.	Network with local industrial and business partners to recruit candidates for skilled CTE, <b>LOTE</b> and STEAM courses.
7.	Provide teachers employed under this certification program with pedagogy and classroom management training.

## 5. Teacher Appraisal Cycle

### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section 21.203 and 21.352**

*Sec. 21.203. Employment policies adopted by a board of trustees must require a written evaluation of each teacher at annual or more frequent intervals. The board must consider the most recent evaluations before making a decision not to renew a teacher's contract if the evaluations are relevant to the reason for the board's action. Sec. 21.352. In appraising teachers, each school district shall use the appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner; or an appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the district- and campus-level committees. Except as otherwise provided, appraisals must be done at least once during each school year. A teacher may be appraised less frequently if the teacher agrees in writing and the teacher's most recent evaluation rated the teacher as at least proficient, or the equivalent, and did not identify any area of deficiency. A teacher who is appraised less frequently than annually must be appraised at least once during each period of five school years.*

### **Current Status:**

The state issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Under T-TESS, all teachers must be appraised every year.

### **Proposed:**

La Porte ISD will continue to implement T-TESS as its teacher appraisal system; however, the District will develop an appraisal cycle whereby teachers may be appraised less than the current TEC annual requirement. To be eligible for this flexibility, teachers must have participated in T-TESS for at least one year in the La Porte ISD appraisal system, as well as meet a District-defined base standard.

This exemption will allow local flexibility to evaluate various performance measures, including classroom observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth progress toward identified learning objectives.

Exemption from the Texas Education Code §21.203 and §21.352 will require the District to review its policies at DNA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

**Teacher Evaluations Action Steps:**

<b><i>ACTION STEPS</i></b>	
<b>1.</b>	Initiate a committee, comprised of teachers and administrators to develop the T-TESS District-defined base standard.
<b>2.</b>	Develop the T-TESS Appraisal Cycle determined by the T-TESS District-defined base standard.
<b>3.</b>	After the development of the District-defined base standard, the DEIC will review and approve.
<b>4.</b>	The Superintendent will notify the Board of the T-TESS Appraisal Cycle to be used by teachers.

**6. Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates**

To best serve our local La Porte ISD community, staff, and students, we will continue the process of ongoing reflection addressing Texas Education Code mandates. If other requirements of the Texas Education Code inhibit goal attainment, we will revise this plan. Any additions or modifications would follow the District of Innovation process for approval.