

La Porte ISD

District of Innovation
Local Innovation Plan
2022 - 2027



Every student's success is our #1 priority!

La Porte Independent School District

District of Innovation Renewal Plan

Renewal Date
April 5, 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th 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.

II. TERM of the Local Innovation Plan

The term of the Local Innovation Plan ("Plan") is for a period of five years, beginning May 27, 2022 through May 27, 2027, 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. Consider minimum attendance for class credit or final grade.
3. Ensure a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff.
4. Increase opportunities for the retention and recruitment of professional staff.
5. Attract and hire hard-to-fill 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 - EB (LEGAL) and (LOCAL)

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.

2. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

TEC §25.092 – FEC (Legal) and FEC (LOCAL) **TASB Update 118 for FEC (Legal) allows the District to award credit and/or final grade without an exemption. The exemption "Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade" may be removed from the District of Innovation Plan at the next renewal or addendum period.*

Current Status:

La Porte ISD currently follows the education code whereby a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

Benefit of Exemption:

LPISD believes that a student's mastery of content should be at the forefront of determining class credit or a final grade rather than "seat time." Students obtain absences through co-curricular or extracurricular absences, illnesses, or other extenuating circumstances. Student effort to maintain mastery of content even when there are singular or significant absences should be recognized.

Local Guidelines:

The Superintendent will develop administrative procedures that monitor student absences to identify students who are struggling with mastering the content of the course due to excessive absences. Procedures will include a process to provide intervention and support for students who are academically struggling. A student's absences in conjunction with a student's mastery of content should be used to determine class credit or final grade as long as the student does not fall below 75% attendance.

Consideration for awarding credit for legitimate reasons for student absences through this exemption would aim to reduce the number of student dropouts and increase the number of qualifying graduates. Attendance review committees will still be required to hear student petitions for class credit when students fall below 75% attendance.

Unexcused absences will continue to be monitored in accordance with compulsory attendance laws.

Goal 2: Provide a safe, secure, and disciplined learning environment.
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3. Campus Behavior Coordinator

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §37.0012 - FO (LEGAL) and (LOCAL)

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.

4. Student/Teacher Ratio and Class Size

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §TEC 25.111-113 - EEB (LEGAL) and (LOCAL)

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 prekindergarten through 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:

Prekindergarten – 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 Prekindergarten – 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 Prekindergarten – 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.

Local Guidelines:

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

Goal 3: Attract, develop, and retain excellent staff.
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5. Teacher Certification

TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section §21.003 - DBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL): DK (LEGAL) and (LOCAL)

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). Special education and bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

Benefit of Exemption:

The District seeks exemption from the teacher certification requirement set forth in Texas Education Code §21.003 only to the limited extent necessary to allow the District to hire teachers who are not currently certified, but who have a bachelor's degree and are qualified to teach. La Porte ISD is committed to hiring the best staff available; however, teachers are occasionally needed for difficult-to-fill positions. The District and hiring campus will assess appropriate professional learning needs for any teacher hired under this exemption. This exemption does not automatically transfer to another district.

Special education and bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

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.

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.

6. Teacher Appraisal Cycle**TEC Code Requiring Exemption: Section 21.203 and 21.352 - DNA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL)**

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.

7. **Chapter 21 – Educators, Subchapter C – Probationary Contracts**

TEC Code Section 21.102 Probationary Contract - DCA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL)

(a) Except as provided by Section 21.202(b), a person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by the district for two consecutive school years subsequent to August 28, 1967, shall be employed under a probationary contract.

(a-1) A person who voluntarily accepts an assignment in a new professional capacity that requires a different class of certificate under Subchapter B than the class of certificate held by the person in the professional capacity in which the person was previously employed may be employed under a probationary contract. This subsection does not apply to a person who is returned by a school district to a professional capacity in which the person was employed by the district before the district employed the person in the new professional capacity as described by this subsection. A person described by this subsection who is returned to a previous professional capacity is entitled to be employed in the original professional capacity under the same contractual status as the status held by the person during the previous employment by the district in that capacity.

(b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school 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.

Current Status TEC 21.102 (b)

Experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Proposed TEC 21.102 (b)

This exemption provides flexibility so that the superintendent may approve recommendations:

For a second and/or third year probationary contract for teachers employed by the District, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the District, in order to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

8. 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.