

Lorenzo Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

May 17, 2024

Through

May 16, 2029



Reviewed by Superintendent Advisory Committee on February 15, 2024

Lorenzo Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the spring of 2015, permitting public school districts the opportunity to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code and allow public schools to have some of the same flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed.

In an effort to better serve and accommodate the diverse needs of all Lorenzo ISD stakeholders, including students, staff, parents and community members; Lorenzo ISD seeks to renew the District of Innovation plan for a term beginning on May 17, 2024 through May 16, 2029 for a term of 5 years. The plan will be approved by the Board of Trustees. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- Take greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increase freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and,
- Increase empowerment and encourage innovative thinking.

Lorenzo ISD District of Innovation Timeline

November 7, 2023

District of Innovation Committee meeting to discuss renewal and any changes to current DOI Plan.

February 15, 2024

3:45 - 2nd meeting of DOI committee to finalize and confirm additions/deletions for the renewal. This will be a Public Meeting and must have a majority vote from the Committee.

February 16, 2024

Post the District of Innovation Plan on the Lorenzo ISD website for 30 days.

March 21, 2024

Recommend final DOI plan to Board of Trustees for approval ($\frac{2}{3}$ vote of approval).

March 25 - April 5, 2024

- 1) Notify the Commissioner of approval of the plan with the list of exemptions and provide a copy to the Commissioner,
- 2) post a copy of the plan on the website in a prominent place,
- 3) Send changes to TASB for policy updates.

District of Innovation Committee Members:

Kayla Morrison - Superintendent	Jessica Crabb - Asst. Superintendent/CFO
Tanner Bales - Sec. Principal/Safety Coordinator	Mandy Haire - Elementary Principal
Shelby Estrada - Asst. Principal	Kris Lamm - Sped Co-op Director
Dr. Julianna Carpenter - Sped Coop Dep. Dir.	Glenda Cheeks - Elem Teacher
Emily Fletcher - Elem Teacher	Yvette Garcia - Elem Parent
Angela Moreno - District Counselor	Cheryl Norton - District RN
Debbie Kirksey - School Board Member	Julie O'Neal - Sec. Teacher
Shannon Parum - CTE Teacher	Tammy Ramos - Parent
Gladys Salinas - Spanish Teacher/Coach	Regina Surles - Cafeteria Director from SFE
Karla Tiner - Business Representative	Rhonda Cypert - Community Member
Nolan Ellis - Student	Preslea Ellis - Student
Mia Moreno - Student	Connor O'Neal - Student

Lorenzo ISD Board of Trustees:

Larry Birdwell - President	Brandon Aycock - Vice President
Ruben Garcia - Secretary	Deborah Kirksey - Member
Tony Mendoza - Member	Rebecca Mendoza - Member
Erasmus Garcia - Appointed member 1/18/24	

- 1) **Teacher Certification:** TEC §21.002; §21.003; §21.053; §21.057; DB (Legal & Local); DK(Legal & local)

Current state law TEC §21.002 Teacher Employment Contracts - states “a school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under: 1) a probationary contract, 2) a continuing contract, or 3) a term contract. A district is not required to employ a person other than an employee listed in Subsection (a) under a probationary, continuing or term contract.

TEC §21.053 - Presentation and Recording of Certificates - states “a person who desires to teach in a public school shall present the person’s certificate for filing with the employing district before the person’s contract with the board of trustees of the district is binding. An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate.

TEC §21.057 - Parental Notification - states “a school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom.

TEC §21.003 states that “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 (Certification of Educators).” In the event that Lorenzo ISD cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or where an experienced, certified teacher will teach a subject(s) outside of his/her field of certification, the district must submit a request for an Emergency Permit to the Texas Education Agency/State Board of Education.

Proposal and benefit for exemption:

This exemption would allow for the following:

- Provide more flexibility in scheduling
- To best serve the students of LISD, decisions on certifications will be determined locally.
- Provide more options for students in class offerings
- Allow experienced, certified teachers to teach a course in an area they have qualified knowledge but do not have that particular certification.
- Allow industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses which would expand opportunities for students

Innovation Strategy:

- The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate state-mandated certification for the position in question; however, when that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are

knowledgeable in the area of study and are equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position.

- The principal will submit, in writing, a request to the Superintendent to allow certified teachers to teach subjects out of their certified area. The request must state the reason and document the credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching permit. The principal would submit the request to the Superintendent with all the documents/credentials that the person holds that would qualify them to teach the course.
- The Superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification and report the action to the Board of Trustees.
- The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment.
- This employee will be at-will.
- The superintendent may approve teaching certification from other states.
- The superintendent will report this action to the Board prior to the individual beginning any employment.
- The teacher will be given a probationary contract until they have received a Texas Teaching Certification.

2) **First Day of Instruction (Starting before the 4th Monday in August) and Last Day of Instruction (Ending before May 15th):**
TEC §25.0811 and 25.0812; EB (Legal & Local)

Current law TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. **TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school year before May 15th.**

Proposal and Benefit for Exemption:

The flexibility of a locally approved start **and end** date allows the district to determine, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and **local** community. This would also offer the following benefits, as well:

- The instructional days of the fall semester could be increased making the number of days in each semester closer to an equal number. This allows for a more balanced approach to the scope and sequence of all classes but greatly benefits single semester courses.
- Allows for more balanced grading periods.
- Allows for MORE instructional days prior to state assessments.
- Allows for more flexibility in scheduling professional development during the school year rather than front loading them all in August.

- Removing the uniform start date could also let the school district start classes as a short week, easing the transition for students entering elementary and secondary schools.
- Also having the flexibility to end the school year after state assessment testing and when students have completed all course requirements.

Innovation Strategy:

- The start and end date for each school year will be determined, on an annual basis, by administration with input from staff members.

3) **Teacher Contract Days:** TEC §21.401; DC (Legal & Local)

Current education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days

Proposal and Benefits for exemption:

Lorenzo ISD can reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries. Flexibility in the contractual days for certified personnel will:

- Enhance teacher recruitment
- Significantly improve teacher morale
- Increase the daily rate the district pays teachers
- Flexibility in aligning Teacher professional development with school calendar of 75,600 minutes

Local Guidelines: To allow flexibility in the contractual days for certified personnel, Lorenzo ISD will:

- Evaluate the number of contract days needed for certified staff in that school year and shall set the number of calendar work days, with the objective of reducing the days from 187. The administrative staff will also, annually, determine the number of professional development days required to meet the needs of all students and when they will be fulfilled during the academic year.
- Maintain, at minimum, the current salary schedule for all certified employees.

4) **Teacher Probationary Contracts:** TEC §21.102 (b), DCA (Legal & Local)

Requires teachers who have been employed in Texas school districts for 5 of the previous 8 years to be placed on a probationary contract not to exceed one year.

Proposal and Benefits for Exemption:

The one year period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand the employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. Relief from TEC §21.102 will permit Lorenzo ISD the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to three years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Lorenzo ISD.

- Principal will inform the Superintendent with the recommendation of extending a probationary contract.
- Board will be informed when reviewing all contracts of professional personnel.

5) **Class Size Ratio Requirement in K through 4:** TEC §25.112; TEC §25.113; EEB (Legal & Local)

TEC 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size no larger than 22 students for Kindergarten through 4th grade. TEC 25.113 requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. Districts are required by state law to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for Kinder – 4th grade classes.

Proposal and Benefits for exemption:

Lorenzo ISD recognizes and believes that smaller class sizes are beneficial and will continue to use the 22:1 student/teacher ratio for K – 4th grade in projecting the number of staff needed for future school years. We also recognize that this fact must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff and continuing to employ the best qualified teachers. Often it is not the number of students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influences the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

Innovation Strategy:

- Lorenzo ISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classes to a 22:1 ratio.
- If the class size exceeds this ratio, the Superintendent will notify the Board of Trustees.
- If the class size exceeds a 24:1 ratio for more than 10 consecutive school days, the campus will notify the parents of the students in that class.

6) **Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator:** TEC §37.0012; FO (Legal & Local)

This statute requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator (CBC).

Proposal and Benefits from exemptions: Lorenzo ISD will abstain from the state requirement that each campus has a designated campus behavior coordinator. LISD's approach to discipline is more collaborative with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person (CBC). Exemption from the requirement will allow the LISD administrative team to create a more personal and effective approach to student discipline and better communication with parents. The CBC duties will be shared by all administrators.

Innovation Strategy:

LISD will not designate a CBC on each campus but will collaboratively work together as an administrative team to provide a disciplined environment at LISD but provide our students emotional and social support when needed.

7) **School Health Advisory Council & Site-Based Decision Making Committee:** TEC §28.004; TEC §11.251; BDF (Legal); BQA (Legal & Local), BQB (Legal & Local)

These TEC §28.004 requires school districts to establish a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to assist a district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction and **must** meet 4 times a year. TEC §11.251 requires school districts to establish a district/campus-level committees to advise the Board in establishing and reviewing the District's educational goals, educational programs and approve staff development. This committee must meet at least 2 times per year.

Proposal and benefits from exemption: Lorenzo ISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision-making process and the convening of the SHAC and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements set forth in the TEC in Chapter 11 are burdensome, time consuming, and ultimately cause a misdirection of resources from the primary focus of our school: the education of students. Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of the District, school, and community as opposed to the broad brush of statutory requirements leveled down from a one size fits all approach as detailed in the code. In place of the SBDM and SHAC, a **Superintendent's Advisory Council (SAC)** will be established, meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the district's success and most importantly, student's success.

This council will convene two times per year and generate the general direction of the district's resources and efforts. Also, as a very small 1A school district there are not very many folks to be on so many different committees and combining these two committees will be an effective and efficient use of staff members' and community members' time.

Innovation Strategy:

This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this school and community. This consolidation will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multitude of needs and create solutions/plans as opposed to having 6 separate meetings with a different focus.

8) Inter-district Transfer of Students: TEC §25.036; FDA(Legal & Local)

TEC §25.036 states that a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, and this code has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one year.

Proposal and Benefit of the exemption: Lorenzo ISD seeks exemption from the one-year commitment. LISD will be allowed to revoke a transfer if the student's behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in DAEP (hearing shall be held first), or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the state's 90% attendance standard. In these rare cases, after other corrective measures have been attempted, a student's transfer status may be revoked by the superintendent at any time during the school year.

LISD will follow the inter-district transfer policies as stated in FDA(local).

- Discipline and character expectations can be better enforced and upheld while providing all students the opportunity to join and attend LISD.
- Attendance guidelines and classroom participation can be enforced without using additional resources and keeping personnel from other duties and responsibilities.
- Nonresident transfer students may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year if:
 - 1) The student is assigned a discipline action resulting in suspension, placement in a discipline alternative program or expulsion.
 - 2) The student is truant.
 - 3) The student's attendance does not meet the State's 90% attendance standard for earning class credit.

9) School District Depository Contracts: TEC§45.205, §45.206; BDAE (Legal & Local)

Description of the Current Provision: The depository for the District shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. A district and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for two additional two-year terms. Per S.B. 754, passed by the 85th Texas Legislature, effective September 1, 2017, TEC §45.205 will allow the District to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year terms. The contract term and any extension must coincide with the district's fiscal year. An extension is not subject to the requirements of TEC 45.206, 45.205 and 45.204.

Proposal and Benefits for Exemption: In a small district and a small town, the District's choices for its depository bank are limited. Lorenzo ISD uses services provided by the bank on a daily basis. LISD will continue to use the local depository for the District without rebidding. At the end of each two-year term, the District and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for multiple additional two-year periods. The District must review the contract to ensure the best value and support for the District and obtain Board approval for each of the two-year periods. Nothing in this process would hinder the District's ability to undertake bidding at the District Depository Bank at the end of any of the two-year periods. The District believes it can operate most optimally if it is not limited to two or even three additional two-year extensions of its depository contract and allow the Superintendent and Board of Trustees more time for planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the District's educational goals.

10) Counselor Duties: TEC §33.006; DP (Legal), DP (Local) Will be FFEA (local) but this policy does not exist yet.

Currently, state law provides that Trustees must “adopt a policy that requires a school counselor to spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor's total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program.” Lorenzo ISD is seeking to be exempt from this provision of the TEC.

Proposal and Benefits for Exemption: While the District realizes the need for the school counselor to spend work time on duties that are components of a comprehensive counseling program as outlined by the Education Code, the counselor is sometimes the best resource for the District to use for duties outside of those stated components. In a district as small as Lorenzo ISD , it is hard to put a percentage of 80/20 on the counselor's duties, even though the counselor is always working for the welfare and education of our students but those tasks are not listed in the Code. Additionally, due to staffing shortages experienced by Lorenzo ISD, it is not feasible to appoint additional personnel to undertake some of the important and necessary duties that have been assumed by and/or assigned to our counselor.

Innovation Strategy: Lorenzo ISD will determine the best and necessary allocation of the duties and time that our District counselor will undertake during the school day/week and year, in order to implement the comprehensive and innovative programs for the whole educational experience of our students. LISD uses, and will continue to use, additional resources, including contracted employees, agreements with Texas Tech University, and partnerships with mental health and behavioral institutions to supplement the counseling program for our District. Lorenzo ISD will not report the counselor's time spent on other duties nor will it track this data. LISD will make the determination regarding how this time is spent in order to serve the best interest of and provide the best education to our student, and the District will use outside resources as needed to provide additional help to accomplish this task.

11) DAEP for E-Cigarettes (and other vape devices) (TEC 37.006)

Currently, Texas Education Code § 37.006 requires that a student must be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program if the student possesses, uses, or distributes an e-cigarette (or other vape device). Also, Texas Education Code 37.006(a) requires that students who possess, use, or are under the influence of, or sell, give, or deliver to another person marijuana or electronic cigarettes shall be sent to DAEP. This requirement restricts Lorenzo ISD's ability to assess an appropriate disciplinary consequence based on the unique circumstances of each student, including consideration and application of the mitigating factors as required under Texas Education Code section 37.001(a)(4). Exemption from this requirement allows Lorenzo ISD to implement meaningful consequences while also giving due consideration to all relevant circumstances as they pertain to each individual student and to each specific disciplinary incident considered by Lorenzo ISD.

Lorenzo ISD does not have a DAEP program on-site. The District uses the Plainview ISD DAEP to serve this need for the District. With the new requirement to place students in DAEP for the use, possession, or distribution of e-cigarettes (vaping devices or similar), Lorenzo ISD will experience an increased demand for placement in the Plainview ISD DAEP and realize **additional** costs for both the use of the program. When vacancies are not available in the Plainview ISD DAEP program, Lorenzo ISD will have to place students in violation of e-cigarette (vaping devices or similar) on site in the Lorenzo ISD ISS room. This will cause many hardship on administration, as well, due to the unfair fact that some students had to attend in Plainview before it was "full" and those that did not have to go to Plainview. Additionally, Lorenzo ISD has had success in handling disciplinary situations with e-cigarettes (vaping devices) using its own resources in a locally-determined disciplinary setting and process.

Proposed: Exemption from this requirement allows Lorenzo ISD to implement meaningful consequences for while also giving due consideration to all relevant circumstances as they pertain to each individual student and to each specific disciplinary incident considered by Lorenzo ISD.

- Lorenzo ISD will use discretion in disciplinary placement for students possessing, using, or delivering e-cigarettes on or near public school property or at certain school events.
- A student may be placed in a DAEP if the student possesses, uses, or is under the influence of, or sells, gives, or delivers to another person marijuana, as defined by Section 481.002, Health and Safety Code, or tetrahydrocannabinol, as defined by rule adopted under Section 481.003 of that code.
- A student may be placed in a DAEP if the student possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.081, Health and Safety Code.

Innovation Strategies: Lorenzo ISD will determine the best course of action for discipline of students using, possessing, or distributing e-cigarettes (vaping devices or similar). This will allow the District to determine the best allocation of financial and staffing resources for students, based on District disciplinary methods and experience. This will provide additional financial resources that can be used on innovative and enriching educational programs for all District students.

May 18, 2020 Amendment -**REMOVE THIS AMENDMENT** due to law change.

Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented. TEC 22.004(i) and TEC 22.004(b) (New Amendment)

Texas Education Code 22.004(i) states that a school district may not make group health 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.

Proposal and Benefits of Exemption: The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all District employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision does not give the District the flexibility needed to acquire benefits packages that would potentially more attractive to prospective employees.

Proposed in order to have the option to offer additional benefits options to employees, the District proposes that the District of Innovation Plan be amended to exempt the District from the health insurance requirements in Texas Education Code 22.004(i). The benefit of this allows Lorenzo ISD to give our employees a better opportunity to secure a health insurance package at a reasonable rate.