

# Brookesmith Independent School District

## **District of Innovation Plan 2017-2018 through 2021-2022**

HB 1842 of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation. Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.

## **Introduction:**

*“The mission of the Brookesmith Independent School District is to educate, within a safe environment, all students to live and work effectively, efficiently, and responsibly to their maximum intellectual and physical capacities. At Brookesmith I.S.D., the focus of our mission is: ‘SCHOOL IS FOR ALL STUDENTS.’”* In order to facilitate the overall goal and mission of Brookesmith ISD, the district is seeking flexibility in areas allowed to Districts of Innovation. These areas would include flexibility with the school calendar, the district transfer policy, attendance and course credit policies, teacher certification and minutes/hour requirements. This flexibility will allow Brookesmith ISD to meet rigorous curriculum standards that need to be present for our students to be successful at a postsecondary level.

## **District of Innovation Committee Members:**

Steven Mickelson- Superintendent  
Sandra Lehman- Principal  
Adam Cline- Athletic Director/Teacher  
Kim Hancock- Elementary Teacher  
Kate Means- Elementary Teacher  
Raymond Gerth- Elementary Teacher  
Juakana Nelson- Elementary Teacher  
Angela Bradley- Elementary Teacher  
Branden Czarnecki- High School Teacher  
Doddie Drake- High School Teacher  
Mitsy Paz- Junior High Teacher  
Willie Schoen- HS/JH/Ag Teacher  
Pattie Boenicke- Community Member  
Nicole Burns- Parent  
Matilda Martinez- Business Owner

## **Term:**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning in the school year 2017-2018 and ending at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the plan.

## **Timeline:**

May 17, 2017 - Board Resolution signed by District Advisory Committee  
May 17, 2017 - Public hearing by school board  
May 17, 2017 - Board appoints committee to develop plan  
May 17, 2017 - DOI Committee Meeting to begin DOI Plan  
May 18, 2017 - Post Plan online  
June 28, 2017 - Board Approval of Plan  
Implement Plan

## **Beginning of School Year:**

*EB Legal, Texas Education Code 25.0811, Texas Education Code 25.0812*

**Current Law:** State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

**Proposed:** It is the intent of Brookesmith ISD to build and operate a calendar that best serves the instructional needs of our students and meets the needs of our community. The flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets these needs. This plan will allow a more balanced number of instructional days per semester and more instructional days prior to the state assessments given in early May. Benefits to this exemption include, but are not limited to:

- a. Better balance of the days in the fall and spring semesters.
- b. Provide more educational days prior to scheduled state assessments.
- c. Better align with dual-credit college courses in the Fall, Spring and Summer semesters.
- d. Create greater flexibility in the District Calendar to improve the overall district attendance rate.
- e. Improve student success on state and local assessments.
- f. Allow for innovative options with scheduling currently unavailable.
- g. Allow for greater opportunity for meaningful staff development throughout the school year.

## **Teacher/Administrator Appraisals:**

*(Texas Education Code 21.203)(Texas Education Code 21.352)*

**Current Law:** The State of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) since 1997. The state has issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). The domains within these systems are developed by the State to meet the needs of the entire State of Texas, but they do not necessarily meet the specific needs of the Brookesmith ISD faculty and staff. These systems also require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the valuation measures for teachers and administrators.

**Proposed:** Brookesmith ISD district and campus administrators will develop a teacher evaluation system, principal evaluation system, and a system of evaluation for non-certified instructional staff, as well as, non-instructional staff that can be catered to the non-traditional instructional programs that are going to be implemented. For example, T-TESS may not be the best instrument to evaluate every domain needing to be evaluated. In order to promote professional development that focuses on individual growth, the District needs to maintain local flexibility to continue its current practice of using various measures, including multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth progress toward learning objective, as evaluation measures on teacher and administrator appraisals. This alternative will allow for a unique and tailored process that could be created by local district stakeholders and that could include and acknowledge innovative instructional strategies not necessarily recognized under the current appraisal system.

## **Certifications:**

*DK Legal, DK Local, Texas Education Code 21.044, 21.003*

**Current Law:** 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

**Proposed:** In order to best serve Brookesmith ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a teacher to instruct and supervise students out of their certified field. The principal will document qualifications that would allow the teacher to teach this subject.
- b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve or deny the request based on if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individuals' employment. Local certificates will be valid for one year and the employee will be at-will.
- c. This proposal will provide more flexibility in scheduling and more options for students in class offerings.

The flexibility in allowing Brookesmith ISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill, high-demand dual credit courses. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire professionals from diverse academic or vocational fields that qualify the candidate to teach a particular course they may not be certified to teach, internal applicants seeking assignments outside their traditional certification area, as well as enrich applicant pools in specific content areas in order to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. At the same time, when best for the curriculum for our students, Brookesmith ISD will continue to seek and employ fully certified teachers. However, the exemption, when needed, will allow more flexibility and innovations in our scheduling and more options and innovative offerings for our students in class offerings.

## **Probationary Contracts:**

*(TEC 21.102 (b)) (DCA Legal) TEC 21.102 (b)*

**Current Law:** States that 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.

**Proposed:** This limited time is not always sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Brookesmith ISD that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming employed by Brookesmith ISD shall be for a period of up to two years with probationary contracts issued for each of the possible two years.

## **Transfer Policy:**

*Texas Education Code 25.036*

**Current Law:** A district may choose to accept students as transfers, even if they are not entitled to admission in the district. TEC 25.036, however, has been interpreted to require a student transfer to be for a period of one school year.

**Proposed:** Brookesmith ISD student transfer policy FDA (local) requires that all nonresident students who wish to transfer must file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary

history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. On the application, transfer students are informed that they are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. In past years, the form also informed nonresident students who had been accepted as inter-districts transfer students that they might have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences or suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program or expulsion. In addition, students who do not attend the state's minimum attendance standards or 90% of all classes in a semester/school year were subject to possible revocation of the transfer status.

TEC 25.036 has been interpreted by TEA to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. Brookesmith ISD is seeking to be exempt from any one-year commitment that might be interpreted or implied by the provisions of TEC 25.036 when accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants the kind of revocation consequences contemplated in the traditional Brookesmith ISD transfer agreement. Students who engage in the kind of misbehavior listed in the agreement and students who do not attend school for 90% of all classes interfere with our school district's ability to educate our student body in a way that is effective, tailored to students who are consistently at school, and ready to learn. Brookesmith ISD needs to be able to focus time and attention on developing creative and innovative instruction to prepare students for eventual success in the workplace and to prepare them for achievement on state assessments in the present. When students are disruptive and/or excessively absent, our teachers must take time correcting the behavior, catching those students up, and cannot adequately prepare the students who are behaving and want to learn. These teachers are hampered in their ability to have the time they need to implement any kind of truly innovative strategies, because they are spending their time disciplining students and catching up students that are falling behind the 90% state requirement. For these cases, Brookesmith ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

## **Attendance:**

*FEC Local, Texas Education Code 25.092*

**Current Law:** The state of Texas mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90% of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75% and less than 90% they may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

**Proposed:** The 90% rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on attendance rather than mastery of content. This exemption will allow the students to not be penalized for missing class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will allow the district to award credit to students when they show an understanding of the concepts regardless of their attendance rate. Brookesmith ISD will have the flexibility to set attendance requirements which reflect a student's specific situation and expectations.

This exemption does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or UIL rules. All students will still be held accountable to all compulsory attendance requirements. Further, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education code Section 28, (214), nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

## **Instructional Days/Minutes for 10-month Employees:**

*DCB Legal, DCB Local, Texas Education Code 21.401*

**Current Law:** The passage of HB 2610 and TEC 25.081 changed the required instructional days to minutes for students. However, the law did not address the contract days for 10-month employees.

**Proposed:** Brookesmith ISD proposes that the number of days required for teachers for staff development be a local decision. BISD will address areas of staff development and how many days it will take for that training. 10-month employees will meet or exceed the 75,600 minutes required of students with no decrease in teacher salaries.

## **420 Minutes/Day:**

*EB Legal, Texas Education Code 25.082*

**Current Law:** State Law requires an educational day to be no fewer than 420 minutes.

**Proposed:** Exemption from this will allow Brookesmith ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it is locally determined as beneficial to the district. The district would not be tied to 6 early release days, which is the maximum that can be requested when filing an early release waiver. Exempting the district from the 7 hour school day requirement would give the district local control over scheduling without fear of losing state funding or credit for instructional time. BISD will meet or exceed the 75,600 minutes/year of instruction. "Early release days" will be planned ahead of time and noted on the school calendar to the greatest extent possible.

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction within a designated school day will assist with personalizing learning to better meet student needs and accommodate professional learning/collaboration opportunities for teachers. Modification to the length of certain dates will be recommended when there is a clearly identified purpose, such as professional learning, or similar focus on meeting the needs of students and employees.