

**GHOLSON
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**



District of Innovation Plan

May 2020 – April 2025

Amended July 10, 2023

INTRODUCTION

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session House Bill (HB) 1842 was passed which allowed Texas Public Schools to formulate a District of Innovation (DOI) Plan. This District of Innovation designation allows eligible school districts to exempt certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC) in an effort to allow local school district flexibility in the district planning and decision-making process. On December 9, 2019, the Gholson ISD Board of Trustees approved a Resolution to explore the development of a District of Innovation Plan in order to increase local control and create the flexibility for the school district to implement practices that will support innovation.

TERM

The term of the (DOI) Plan is for five years, beginning May 2020 and ending April 2025, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of (HB) 1842, the Board will propose additional amendments to the initial Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend beyond the 5-year term the district may not implement two plans at any one time.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Heather McCartney – Superintendent
Stephanie Taylor – Principal
Kathy Mitchell – Interventionist
Macy Kauffman – Special Education
Randall Ballew – Coach
Lindsey Holmes-Lindloff – Junior High Teacher
Megan Varga - 1st Grade Teacher
Nancy Cox – 5th Grade Teacher
Christy McKinney – Junior High and High School Teacher
Jamie Karl – Parent
Keri Walpole - Parent
Linda Heese – Community Representative

PROCESS

- **December 9, 2019** Gholson ISD Board of Trustees adopted a District of Innovation Resolution to begin the process to develop a District of Innovation Plan.
- **January 13, 2020** Public Hearing to allow public comment on the proposed District of Innovation planning.
- **January 13, 2020** Gholson ISD Board of Trustees approved a District of Innovation committee
- **February 7, 2020** District of Innovation committee met to discuss options available to GISD under the District of Innovation designation.
- **April 3, 2020** District of Innovation plan approved by the committee.
- **April 7, 2020** Superintendent notified Texas Education Commissioner of the intentions for Gholson ISD to pursue a District of Innovation designation.
- **April 7, 2020** District of Innovation plan posted to Gholson ISD website.
- **May 11, 2020** Gholson ISD Board of Trustees vote to approve the DOI plan.
- **July 6, 2023** Gholson ISD District of Innovation Committee approved changes (amendments) to the District of Innovation Plan. Plan will go to GISD Board for amendment approval.
- **July 10, 2023** Gholson ISD Board of Trustees approved changes (amendments) to the Gholson ISD District of Innovation Plan.

GISD District of Innovation Plan: Areas of State Law Considered for Exemptions

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFER STUDENTS

(FDA (Local) & TEC §25.036)

TRANSFER STUDENTS. Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept (as transfers) students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. TEC §25.036, however, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Gholson ISD's student transfer policy (FDA Local) requires that a nonresident student wishing to transfer into the District shall file an application for transfer each school year with the Superintendent or designee. In approving transfers, the Superintendent or designee shall consider availability of space and instructional staff as well as the student's disciplinary history and attendance records. Transfer students are also expected to follow attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District (TEC §25.036).

Gholson ISD Proposed

Gholson ISD is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants and allow the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year due to violations of the terms of the agreement as set forth by Gholson ISD.

SCHOOL START DATE

(eb Legal) (Ed. Code 25.0811 (a))

FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION (a). 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.

Gholson ISD Proposed

Current law mandates a school start date of the fourth Monday in August. This requirement creates problems throughout the academic year (uneven semesters, school years not ending until June, etc.). Gholson ISD would like to have the flexibility to develop a calendar that better fits the needs of community and school. Also, having this flexibility would allow the district to better balance the first and second semesters and provide more instructional days prior to state testing.

SITE BASED DECISION MAKING

(TEC §11.251, §11.252 and §11.253)

Gholson ISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision-making process and the convening of the school health advisory committee and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements as set forth for by Texas Education Code in Chapter 11 and 28 are burdensome, time consuming, and ultimately cause a misdirection of resources from the primary focus of schools: the education of students. Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of this 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 TEC §11.251, TEC §11.252, and TEC §11.253. This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this community.

Gholson ISD Proposed

In place of the district and campus level planning and decision-making processes outlined in TEC § 11.251, TEC § 11.252, and TEC §11.253, 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, students' success. The Site-Based Decision-Making Committees at the campus level will still be used as a necessary part of the SAC, but will coordinate decision making at the district level. This council will convene a minimum of once a year and generate the general direction of district resources and efforts. This consolidation of committees will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multitude of needs as opposed to having one meeting after another throughout the year.

SCHOOL DAY INTERRUPTIONS

(EC Local) (Ed. Code 25.083(a))

SCHOOL DAY INTERRUPTIONS. (a) The board of trustees of each school district shall adopt and strictly enforce a policy limiting interruptions of classes during the school day for nonacademic activities (such as announcements) to once during the school day except in the case of an Emergency.

Gholson ISD Proposed

Gholson ISD would like to have the freedom to make announcements as needed during picture days and other days that are not routine for greater efficiency.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIRED

(DK Legal) (Ed. Code 21.003(a) (DBA Legal)

CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. (a) A person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Gholson ISD Proposed

Gholson ISD will maintain its current expectation for teacher certification, and continue to seek highly effective certified educators for all teaching positions. The district will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position(s) in question at the time of hire. However, where that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to issue a local teaching permit and hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and are fully equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question based on local certification criteria without requesting a waiver from T.E.A.

TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT DAYS

(DCB Ed. Code 21.401(b)

Minimum Service Required. (b) An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Gholson ISD Proposed

Gholson ISD would like to have the freedom to consider the reduction in contract days to better align with the 75,600 minutes required of students. This potential decrease in days would have no effect on teacher salaries, which increase a teacher's daily rate and enhances teacher recruitment.

CLASS SIZE IN GRADES KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 4TH GRADE

(EEB Legal) (TEC §25.112)

CLASS WAIVERS. (A) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in kindergarten, first, second, third or fourth grade classes. Notice of Class Size in Kindergarten through 4th grade (Ed. Code 25.112 & 25.113). (B) A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112(d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or a person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.

Gholson ISD Proposed

By gaining an exemption from this statute, Gholson ISD would no longer have to submit redundant class size waivers that are continuously approved by TEA and prevent multiple

communications to parents each time a new student enrolls. Gholson ISD will continue to adhere to the student teacher ratio but would gain flexibility if the ratio is exceeded during the school year. The flexibility would also allow the superintendent to report to the Board of Trustees instead of filing a waiver with TEA.

TEACHER PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

(DCA Legal) (TEC §21.102(b))

PROBATIONARY CONTRACT. (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.

Gholson ISD Proposed

Current legal policy allows experienced teachers new to the district to 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. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. An exemption from this law, would allow Gholson ISD administrations sufficient time to determine a staff member's effectiveness which in turn provides an effective learning environment for students. Gholson ISD would like to have the ability to issue a probationary contract two additional year periods, for a maximum of three school years, for all teachers, librarian, school counselor or nurse that are new to the district who have been employed as a teacher, librarian, school counselor or nurse in public education for at least five of eight years preceding employment by the District.

CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

(Ed. Code 37.0012)

BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR. Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus to maintain student discipline. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.

Gholson ISD Proposed

Gholson ISD is seeking an exemption from this requirement in order to provide a more collaborative approach towards emotional and social support to our students via multiple administrators. The exemption would also allow for local processes for multi-systemic prevention and intervention programs.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

GISD FOD (LEGAL) and FOD (LOCAL) TEC §37.007 (c)

Exempt from: 37.007(c)

Serious misbehavior while in DAEP:

(33) Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others

(34) Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat

(35) Conduct that constitutes coercion

(36) Public Lewdness

(37) Indecent Exposure

(38) Criminal Mischief

(39) Personal Hazing

(40) Harassment of a student or employee

Gholson ISD Proposed

To implement this innovation, the district's Student Code of Conduct will authorize the principal at the DAEP campus to recommend expulsion to the JJAEP when a student has committed multiple offenses of verbal or physical insubordination or has otherwise repeatedly disrupted the educational environment of the DAEP. A principal's recommendation for expulsion to the JJAEP must be supported by specific, written documentation of each incident of such misbehavior, as well as behavioral interventions and corrective actions by the DAEP staff.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORIES CONTRACT

(BDAE Legal & Local) (TEC Subchapter G. 45.205)

TERM OF CONTRACT. (A) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. (B) A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year-terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206. (C) The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Gholson ISD Proposed

District choices for its depository bank are limited in a small district/town. By gaining exemption from these statutes, Gholson ISD would be able to allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 8-year allowable contract period if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is are no other banking institutions within district boundaries available to bid on the district's business.

LOCAL SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL AND HEALTH EDUCATION INSTRUCTION

(BDF Legal) (TEC §28.004)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the goals of the plan Sec. 28.004 (d) 1 of this code requires the SHAC to meet four times annually.

Gholson ISD Proposed

In small districts, the same staff members are required to sit on several different committees thus limiting their ability to effectively serve on those that meet at the same time, or require several meetings throughout the year. The District claims exemption from the requirement to hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year under Sec. 28.004(d-1) The Superintendents Advisory Committee shall meet at least once each year to address all required actions in a single meeting. This should be a matter for the district and the committee members to determine how often they need to meet to range the district's needs. Gholson ISD views this Committee as a more efficient and effective way to serve our students, parents, and community.

Insurance Plans

Texas Education Code: §22.004(i); CRD (LEGAL) and CRD (LOCAL)

Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented.

Gholson ISD Proposed

TEC §22.004 (i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage 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. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Gholson ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverage for its employees and at a lower cost. Gholson ISD would like to have local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to the community and employee needs.

Texas Education Code §22.004 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code §12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309. Therefore, in order to have the option to offer additional benefit options to employees and increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs , the district proposes that the District of Innovation Plan exempt the district from the health insurance requirements in TEC §22.004(i).