

**GHOLSON
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**



**District of Innovation Plan
May 2020 – April 2025**

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
Laura Reed – Special Education
Jarratt Shipp – Coach and High School CTE Teacher
Karla Pokraka – Junior High Teacher
Lois Ward – Kindergarten Teacher
Sue Hurst - 1st Grade Teacher
Nancy Cox – 5th Grade Teacher
Rebecca Lane – Counselor
Christy McKinney – Junior High and High School Theatre Teacher
Keri Walpole – Parent
Carlos Mercado - 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.

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.

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

Administration will strive to seek and employ fully certified teachers; however, when a position is hard-to-fill or the district would like a teacher to teach outside of their certification area Gholson ISD would like to make decisions regarding certifications locally and based on the needs of our students and school. Gholson ISD Administrators are seeking the flexibility to employ noncertified individuals that have field experience in CTE, STEM or vocational skills that would provide more options for students and flexibility in scheduling. Also, Gholson ISD would like to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject outside of their certified field in the event there is a district need.

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 ours students via multiple administrators. The exemption would also allow for local processes for multi-systemic prevention and intervention programs.

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 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 Gholson ISD 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 Council 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).