

**GHOLSON
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**



**District of Innovation Plan
April 15, 2025 – April 14, 2030**

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 – Assistant Principal
Samantha Ybarra – Special Education
Zac Hanna – High School
Susan Sayen – High School
Jessie Pierce – Junior High
Nancy Cox – Elementary
Randall Ballew – Athletic Director
Jamie Karl - Parent
Teresa Noey - Parent
Reese Goates – 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.
- **February 10, 2025** District of Innovation plan posted to Gholson ISD website.
- **April 14, 2025** Public hearing to allow public comment on the final version of the proposed District of Innovation with the plan approved by a majority vote of committee members.
- **April 14, 2025** Gholson ISD Board of Trustees adopts the District of Innovation plan renewal.
- **April 15, 2025** Superintendent notified Texas Education Commissioner of the approval of the plan along with TEC exemptions.
- **April 15, 2025** District provided a copy of the link to the current local innovation plan to TEA.

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

I. 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, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits and attendance records. Transfer students are also expected to follow attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District (TEC 25.036).

Innovation Strategy

Gholson ISD is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment to accept 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 set forth by Gholson ISD.

II. 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.

Innovation Strategy

Gholson ISD would like to have the flexibility to develop a calendar that better fits the needs of community and school. Having greater flexibility would allow the district to better balance the first and second semesters and provide more instructional days prior to state testing. The District would like to begin the school year prior to the fourth Monday in August.

III. TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIRED

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

CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. (a) 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.

Innovation Strategy

Gholson ISD would like to make decisions regarding certifications locally and based on the needs of the campus and students for hard to fill positions. In the event that the district cannot locate a certified candidate for a position GISD would like to be afforded the flexibility to consider entering into contract agreements with noncertified individuals. Field experience in a CTE, STEM field or vocational skill that would provide more options for students and flexibility in scheduling would also be considered.

Gholson ISD would also like to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject outside of their certified field in the event there is a need. GISD will locally document the reasoning for the request and the credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach the subject. The district understands teachers for bilingual/ESL, prekindergarten and special education must be SBEC certified.

IV. 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.

Innovation Strategy

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.

V. 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.

Innovation Strategy

The 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 administrators 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 periods, for a maximum of three school years, for all teachers, librarians, school counselors or nurses 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.

VI. CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

(Ed. Code 37.0012)

BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR. Section 37.0012 of the Texas Education Code 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.

Innovation Strategy

Gholson ISD will partner with and involve our diverse community to support GISD students and staff. Flexibility regarding the designation of campus behavior coordinators allows for greater collaboration when addressing the social and emotional learning of students. Time and resources can be spent on fostering positive school culture and implementing multi-systemic prevention and intervention programs. The district will decide which employees and systems to involve in maintaining student discipline instead of a single person designated as a campus behavior coordinator. Disciplinary responsibilities will be included in an employee's job description when applicable. The maintenance of student discipline will be appropriately addressed in the Student Code of Conduct.

VII. 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 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.

Innovation Strategy

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.

VIII. 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.

Innovation Strategy

In small districts, the same staff members are required to sit on several different committees thus limiting their ability to effectively serve 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 meet the district's needs. Gholson ISD views this Council as a more efficient and effective way to serve our students, parents, and community.

IX. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/MENTOR TEACHERS

(TEC §21.451) (TEC §21.458)

TEC 21.451 prescribes staff development requirements for educators. These requirements impede the District’s ability to provide timely professional development to employees based on newly emerging issues, data, and student needs. TEC 21.458 sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees. This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, despite the fact that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. The District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers in need of assistance. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers.

Innovation Strategy

Gholson ISD will exercise local discretion in determining the areas of need, content, duration, and frequency for professional development for its instructional and non-instructional staff. The District will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.

X. TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT DAYS

(TEC 21.401(b)) (DCB Legal)

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

Innovation Strategy

Gholson ISD would like to have the local control to consider the reduction in contract days to better align with the required 75,600 minutes of student instruction. This potential decrease in days would have no effect on teacher salaries, with an increase in a teacher’s daily rate and enhances teacher recruitment and retention.

XI. THREE-DAY LIMIT ON SUSPENSIONS

(TEC §37.005, FOB Legal)

Texas Education Code §37.005 states that suspensions “may not exceed three school days.” This law has been interpreted to apply to both in and out of school suspensions.

Innovation Strategy

Relief from this law would allow Gholson ISD more options for providing appropriate disciplinary consequences for student misconduct in situations where a 3-day suspension is not sufficient, but a 45-day DAEP placement is too severe.

XII. REMOVAL OF UNWANTED VISITORS (TEC §37.105) (GKA Legal; GKA Local)

Texas Education Code §37.105 applies to ejecting unruly guests from campuses and school events. In 2017, the Texas Legislature changed the law on how school administrators can eject unruly guests from school events. This applies to parents and community members, not students. Under the law, the guest must be given a warning before he or she is ejected. Upon ejection, the guest must also be given notice of how they can appeal the ejection.

Innovation Strategy

Exemption from this law would allow Gholson ISD administrators to remove parents or visitors whose behavior is deemed inappropriate without warning or written notice.

XIII. OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION FOR STUDENTS BELOW GRADE 3 (TEC 37.005) (FOB Legal)

TEC 37.005 currently states: “A student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension, unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, the student engages in:

1. Conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Penal Code 46.02 or 46.05.
2. Conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense related under Penal Code 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, 22.021
3. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of an amount of:
 - a. Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, or by 21 USC Section 801 et seq.;
 - b. A dangerous drug, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 483; or
 - c. An alcoholic beverage, as defined by Alcoholic Beverage Code 1.04.

Innovation Strategy

To best serve the students of Gholson ISD and provide a high-quality learning environment for all students, the District proposes that school administrators be able to exercise professional judgment and place students of any grade level in out-of-school suspension when they deem it **necessary for safety and in order to maintain an**

orderly learning environment for all students. Specifically, the District seeks the flexibility to authorize school administrators to suspend students out-of-school below grade 3 when necessary. The District currently monitors the suspensions of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure that District policy and the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the district. Should an exemption from TEC §37.005 be granted, the District would continue to monitor the suspensions of all students, which would now include students in grades below 3, to ensure that suspensions are appropriate. The benefits of the proposed innovation are to allow for school-based decision making, assist in maintaining an orderly learning environment for all students, and allow school administrators to more effectively ensure the safety and security of all students.