

District of Innovation Committee

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LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY

Current Law: TEC 25.081– For each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes. A school day consists of 420 minutes of instruction.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: Walnuts Springs ISD plans to occasionally, throughout the school year, have school less or more than 420 minutes per day. Shortening or lengthening the school day will allow flexibility to provide accelerated instruction, staff development, and several possibilities to best serve the students of Walnut Springs ISD.

FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION

Current Law: TEC 25.08511: 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.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: District leaders will have flexibility in scheduling the start of school enabling them to begin school before the 4th Monday in August, for either the entire district or specific grade levels or student populations.

Starting earlier enables the semesters to be balanced with more uninterrupted instructional time prior to the winter break and standardized testing.

Our semesters will more closely align with community and university calendars providing continuity for our students utilizing these educational settings such as dual credit, internships and industrial certifications.

Starting school earlier than the 4th Monday allows for innovative programs to develop, creating a continuity of learning over the summer break.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Current Law: TEC 21.003 A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, or educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: The statutory certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and/or STEM courses.

Hiring quality industry professionals allow the district the ability to meet the local needs of our students and community.

Local qualifications will allow:

- Recruit knowledgeable people in a variety of fields and vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experiences.
- Offer dual credit in CTE courses.
- Develop relationships with community colleges and universities by hiring instructors from these settings.

Local Guidelines:

- The District will establish Local Criteria, such as years' experience, qualifications, and industry certification to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate.
- Principals, along with CTE and/or STEM teachers, will submit candidates to The Superintendent with credentials.
- The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual(s). The superintendent will present the candidates to the Board of Trustees for hire or contract as needed.

CLASS SIZE KINDERGARTEN– 4th GRADE

Current Law: TEC Sec. 25.112 Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: The District starts school with staff based on projections of student enrollment. There are times where enrollment may exceed projections.

Being exempt from the inflexible 22-to-1 requirement will allow students to remain in classes.

The District would have an extended time frame to meet the needs of the students regarding budgetary expenses such as hiring another teacher. This would allow the District time to evaluate the need and if needed, hire the best possible candidate for our students.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will strive to keep the class size below 22-to-1 as this is a recognized benefit for our students.

- If the student/teacher ratio in a grade level is to exceed 24-to-1 it will need both teacher and administrator approval.

- If the student/teacher ratio in a grade level is to exceed 25-to-1, the board will be notified as well as each parent.

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS

Current Law: Under Texas Education Code, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: Walnut Springs ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students electing to transfer, the ability to file a transfer application with Walnut Springs ISD each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services needed, the students' disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment in accepting inter-district transfer applicants.

On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (either in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion, in addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Walnut Springs ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Local Guidelines-

- Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.

- In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

-Parent/Guardian behavior, at extra-curricular activities or with teachers and/or administration can also result in the immediate revocation of a student's transfer.

TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT DAYS

Current Law: TEC 21.401(b) states an educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: Walnut Springs ISD requests freedom to consider a possible reduction in contract days to better align teacher and student days equated to the 75,600 minute requirement for attendance. This possible reduction must be approved by school administration and will have no negative effect on teacher salaries. This possible reduction is also requested to be considered a recruitment and retention tool for quality teachers.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORY CONTRACT

Current Law: Texas Education Code: §45.205(b,c)- 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. (c) The contract may be modified for each two-year extension if both parties mutually agree to the terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206.

Walnut Springs Plan: The Board of Trustees and District leaders will have flexibility to extend the existing bank contract beyond 6 years (throughout the term of the District of Innovation Plan). The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent retain the option to bid services at any point to maintain competitive pricing/and address operational or financial concerns.

SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SHAC) MEETINGS

Current Law: Texas Education Code Section 28.004 requires the school board of each district to establish a local school health advisory council to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. Further, the law requires the health advisory council to meet at least four times a year.

Walnut Springs ISD Plan: Walnut Springs ISD believes the health and wellness of all students is of utmost importance, the district feels that this exemption allowing the SHAC to meet at least twice per year, with other meetings scheduled as needed, will meet the needs of the district's students, as well as the values that are promoted within the community. The SHAC will make an annual report to the board each Spring.