

Cushing I.S.D.



District of Innovation Plan 2022-2027

Approved by the DEIC on 1/26/2022

Approved by the School Board on 2/8/2022

Ratified by the School Board on 3/14/2022

Amended by the DEIC 9/25/2023

Amendment Approved by the School Board 10/9/2023

I. Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas public schools with sufficient academic ratings to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The allowable exemptions are for those sections of code that do not apply to charter or private schools in an attempt to reduce the extra administrative or operational burdens placed on public schools.

To obtain exemptions, the district must create a Local Innovation Plan detailing the code requirements that inhibit the goals of the District and the benefits to the District expected from the exemption.

II. Term

The term of the plan is five years and will begin on the first day of the 2022-23 school year and is set to terminate at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless amended, rescinded, or renewed by the Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees. The Innovation Committee will review the plan annually to confirm consistent alignment with the needs of the district. Any recommended plan changes will be posted to the district website for 30 days and require the approval of the Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees.

Refer to CISD policy AF (Legal)

III. Innovation Committee

The Innovation Committee developed this plan with the following members:

Dr. Brandon Enos,
Superintendent

Shane Smelley, Principal

Stefani Jackson, Principal

Tracy Crumpton, Teacher

Laurie Williamson, Teacher

Carrie Langham, Librarian

Gina Gresham, Counselor

Lesia Grams, Parent

Becky Fitzgerald, Parent

Jennifer LoStracco, Parent

Deanna Egan, Teacher

Dee Cruz, CISD Testing
Coordinator

Charity Alvy, District Nurse

Jacob Matlock, Business
Owner

The 2023 Amendments developed by

Dr. Brandon Enos,
Superintendent

Shane Smelley, Principal

Stefani Jackson, Principal

Tracy Crumpton, Teacher

Laurie Williamson, Assistant
Principal

Gina Gresham, Counselor

Lesia Grams, Parent

Jennifer LoStracco, Parent

Dee Cruz, CISD Testing
Coordinator

Charity Alvy, District Nurse

Logan , Business Owner

IV. Timeline

January 12, 2022 – Initial Meeting: CISD Board Room at 4:00pm

- Introduction of members
- Purpose of committee
- Identification of points of emphasis
- Petition School Board to Recognize District Level Planning Committee

January 19, 2022 – Second Meeting: CISD Board Room at 4:00pm

- Discussion on plan and proposed innovative additions
- Review other area plans

January 26, 2022 – Third Meeting: CISD Board Room at 4:00pm

- Public Hearing to hear final deliberations of proposed District of Innovation Plan
- Vote to approve and take to February School Board meeting for board vote

February 8, 2022 – School Board Approval: CISD Board Room at 6:00pm

- Presented the plan for approval to the CISD board of trustees

March 14, 2022 – School Board Ratification: CISD Board Room at 6:00pm

- Board ratified the plan so that the TEA would be notified before board approval

September 25, 2023 – Planning Meeting: CISD Board Room at 3:30pm

- Created the wording and plan for amended procedures regarding the discipline of students who use, poses, or sell an e-cigarette while on or near a school campus or while at a school sponsored activity

October 9, 2023 – School Board Approval: CISD Board Room at 6:00pm

- School board unanimously approved the amended DOI plan

V. Strategic Plan

This Innovation Plan is guided by and aligned with the Mission, Vision, and District Improvement Plan.

Vision:

CISD students will become successful, responsible, and productive citizens with a strong sense of community and a respect for cultural diversity. Embodying the American tradition of personal responsibility coupled with a sense of generosity and caring, they will become lifelong learners through the support of the education community and through their own academic endeavors. Students will graduate from Cushing ISD with self-respect, confidence, and an ability to make sound decisions. They will be well-prepared to enter the workforce or college, with good communication and social skills, as well as a solid educational foundation. As tomorrow's leaders, they will achieve to their maximum potential in safe, orderly schools with high learning standards and opportunities for real-world applications of their acquired skills.

Mission:

All students need to develop essential skills and to acquire a knowledge base on which to build lifelong learning. All students will be taught a core curriculum of English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, health, physical education, and technology literacy. All students will acquire knowledge of citizenship and economic responsibilities and an appreciation of our common American heritage including its multicultural richness. To the full extent of their abilities, students will be provided the opportunities to develop the ability to think logically, independently, and creatively and to communicate effectively. Educating our children to be productive in a changing future necessitates an excellent educational system. A system that can accomplish this mission must be characterized by quality, fairness and accountability.

VI. Innovation Plan Items

Class Size in Kindergarten through 4th Grade

TEC Code: § 25.112. CLASS SIZE. (a) 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.

§ 25.113 NOTICE OF CLASS SIZE. (a) 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 person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- The district would no longer have to submit annual class size waivers that are continuously approved by TEA and do multiple communications to parents each six weeks allowing the district to redirect resources more effectively.

Local Guidelines:

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times, it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom, which influence the learning environment.

- A. Cushing ISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22 to 1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees
- B. A teacher may be hired at any time during the school year if the campus principal, and the superintendent agree that it is in the best interest of the students to do so.
- C. A TEA Waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th core classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio
- D. The district will continue to maintain established class size thresholds of kindergarten at 23 students to 1 teacher and Grades 1-4 at 24 students to 1 teacher. The district will provide parents class size notification at the start of school.

First Day of Instruction (School Start Date)

TEC Code: Subchapter C – Operation of Schools and School Attendance - §25.0811 First Day of Instruction (a) A school district may not begin instruction before the 4th Monday in August, unless the school operates year-round, or if district has more than 190,000 students: the days are financed by local funds, or the campus is under comprehensive reform, or the majority of the students at the campus(es) are educationally disadvantaged.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Restricting school start date to the 4th Monday in August operationally challenges Cushing ISD because the 75,600 instructional minutes must be calendared between the 4th Monday in August and generally May 28 due to High School graduation constraints. Flexibility to the start date would allow the district to address the following issues caused by the current calendar constraints:
 1. Increased student regression due to longer summer break.
 2. Lack of flexibility to schedule student breaks or other options during the school year.
 3. Condensed employee work schedules limiting flexibility to schedule holidays, personal days, and professional development days impacting employee work / life balance.
 4. Increased teacher absences and related substitute teacher expense.
 5. A lack of true choice for the Calendar Committee in development of the school calendar.
 6. The flexibility will allow students who are need of retest opportunities on state testing, additional instructional days prior to the retest opportunities.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will have the flexibility to designate the first day of school each year.

Ch. 21 Contracts

TEC Code: TEC 21.401 - Requires a teacher who is on a 10- month contract to work and equivalent of 187 days.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- To align the number of teacher contract days to the 75,600 minutes required of students, plus appropriate number of staff development days during the school year, the district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries. Due to low property values, it is difficult for Cushing ISD to compete with area schools in the area of teacher salary. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule would make our salaries more competitive.
 - A. This plan will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
 - B. This plan should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with neighboring districts.
 - C. This plan would significantly improve teacher morale.
 - D. This plan will provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

Local Guidelines:

- The calendar planning process is utilized to maintain the reduced number of teacher duty days and teacher contract days.

Teacher Certification

TEC Code: Sec. 21.003. 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.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Cushing ISD will maintain its current expectation for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not possible, this exemption will allow the district to have the flexibility to hire individuals who have knowledge or life experiences in the area and is able to perform the duties assigned to that position. The exemption is to allow the district to establish local requirements including the current requirements in Sec 21.055 for teacher preparation (including all background checks, training and classroom management preparation) to enhance our ability to compete for teaching resources with knowledge, life experience, and/or industry expertise. Additionally, an exemption to section 21.003 allows for further flexibility to not be limited to only those industry certifications where specific curriculum has been written by an industry group.

Local Guidelines:

In order to best serve CISD students, decision on certification will be handled locally.

- A. The district seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for positions designated by the district as critical need, including:
 - a. Career and Technology Education,
 - b. Math (grades 9-12),
 - c. Science (grades 9-12),
 - d. and Elementary Education (EC-6).
- B. For CTE Certification: An industry certification and/or experience is required. The campus principal must specify in writing the reason for the request to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted. The superintendent will report these actions to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment. A teacher

certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

- C. For any other core subject area:
- a. A Bachelor's degree is required,
 - b. fully certified teachers will be hired first if available,
 - c. the non-certified teacher is an at-will employee until they become fully certified,
 - d. the individual will complete training on pedagogy of student learning, classroom management, and lesson planning,
 - e. the individual will be paired with a mentor teacher and complete specified mentorship activities,
 - f. the individual will not receive any critical needs bonus stipend until fully certified by SBEC,
 - g. and parents will receive a letter within the first four weeks of instruction notifying them of the status of the non-certified teacher.

Student Discipline

TEC Code: TEC 37.007 states that a student placed in DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled.

Serious misbehavior includes (1) Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; (2) Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat; (3) Conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Penal Code 1.07 ;-(4) Conduct that constitutes the offense of: Criminal mischief under Penal code 28.03 (d), Personal hazing under Penal Code 37.152, or Indecent Exposure under Penal Code 21.08, Public Lewdness under Penal Code 21.07, and Harassment, under penal Code 42.07 (a)(1), of a student or district employee.

If the student is expelled, the board or its designee refers the student to the authorized officer of the juvenile court for appropriate proceedings under Family Code Title 3 (Juvenile Justice Code).

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Cushing ISD DAEP has a strong and structured system of discipline. The Texas Education Code makes no allowance for the expulsion of students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental the educational environment.

Local Guidelines:

- A. A student placed in DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior (as defined above) while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from the DAEP and expelled.
- B. A student placed in DAEP who engages in documented persistent misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented interventions suspended or expelled.
- C. All students expelled from a DAEP campus will be given the option of attending night school one night per week for the term of his/her expulsion in order to gain and or maintain as many credits as possible during the period of expulsion.
- D. Night school transportation will not be provided
- E. Days sent home or suspended will not count towards days served in DAEP.

Inter-District Transfers

TEC Code: Under Texas Education Code 25.001, 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.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Cushing ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to 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. 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 by the district. The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants in efforts to ensure responsible usage and allocation of time, money, and energy on Cushing ISD students.

Local Guidelines:

A one-year transfer commitment may be rescinded on rare occasions including but not limited to:

- A. A student's behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school);
- B. Placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion;
- C. Student attendance falling below the TEA truancy standard;
- D. Parents/guardians of transfer student unwilling to accept responsibility or work with CISD staff for the betterment of the transfer child;
- E. Student's academic effort is significantly below what is expected at Cushing ISD.

College Visits

TEC Code: TEC §25.087 b-2A states that a school district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization for a maximum of two days during the student's junior and two days during their senior year of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Cushing ISD recognizes the importance of the college selection process in our student's futures. Many of our students apply to many colleges, some out of state. More than two days are needed by many students.

Local Guidelines:

This innovation allows the counselor/administrator to decide on a case-by-case basis for extending more days when needed.

Counselor Time

TEC Code: TEC §33.006 states that a school district is to require each counselor to track his or her time so that the cumulative time spent on counselor duties is equal to or greater than 80% of the counselor's overall time spent working in the capacity of a school counselor.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Cushing ISD recognizes the importance the time our counselors spend in each of their assigned duties. However, by adding a requirement of each counselor to track time so that a particular time is tracked would only ask these employees to conduct a task that does not directly tie to meeting student needs. Therefore, this exemption would recognize the importance of the 80% rule and work with each counselor to ensure an abundant amount of time is spent with students.

Local Guidelines:

- Our counselor will not be required to track their cumulative time spent on counselor duties. The ISD will be hiring a student services secretary to support our counselor in tasks that require an abundant amount of time away from students.

DAEP for E-Cigarettes and other Vape Devices

TEC Code: TEC §37.006 provides that a student must be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program if the student possesses, uses, or distributes an e-cigarette (or other vape device).

Rationale for the Exemption:

Cushing ISD does not have a DAEP program on-site. The district uses the Nacogdoches ISD DAEP to serve this need for the district. With the new requirement to place students in DAEP for the use, possession, or distribution of e-cigarettes (vaping devices or similar), Cushing ISD will experience an increased demand for placement in the Nacogdoches ISD DAEP and realize additional costs for the use of the program. Cushing ISD has had success in handling disciplinary situations with e-cigarettes (vaping devices) using its own resources in a locally determined disciplinary setting and process.

Local Guidelines:

The district will be exempt from mandatory removal to DAEP based on offenses related to e-cigarettes or other vape related devices.

- Cushing ISD will use discretion in disciplinary placement for students possessing, using, or delivering e-cigarettes on or near public school property or at certain school events.
- A student may be placed in a DAEP if the student possesses, uses, or is under the influence of, or sells, gives, or delivers to another person marijuana, as defined by Section 481.002, Health and Safety Code, or tetrahydrocannabinol, as defined by rule adopted under Section 481.003 of that code.
- A student may be placed in a DAEP if the student possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.081, Health and Safety Code.
- **Innovation Strategies:** Cushing ISD will determine the best course of action for discipline of students using, possessing, or distributing e-cigarettes (vaping devices or similar). This will allow the district to determine the best allocation of financial and staffing resources for students, based on District disciplinary methods and experience. This will provide additional financial resources that can be used on innovative and enriching educational programs for all District students.