

# **Proposed DOI Plan for 2022-2027**

Please email Cesily Peeples at [peeplesc@fruitvaleisd.com](mailto:peeplesc@fruitvaleisd.com) if you have any questions.

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## **FRUITVALE ISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN 2022-2027**

Fruitvale ISD created a Visioning Document with input from our parents, community, teachers, staff, and students. This document drives every decision made regarding teaching and learning at FISSD. The Mission Statement that was developed is “Learners today, Leaders Tomorrow.” The district belief statements are as follows:

1. The Partnership of families, community members, students, and Fruitvale Independent School District employees is critical to each student’s growth and success.
2. We believe in the value of instilling work ethic, integrity, perseverance, and motivation in future generations.
3. We believe in providing a 21st century education interwoven with real world applications.
4. We believe in modeling and guiding students toward becoming good citizens.
5. We believe in unlocking each individual student’s potential.
6. We believe in a supportive and collaborative school culture for students, teachers, and families

In order to best serve our students, we have developed a five-year District of Innovation Plan to provide the Fruitvale ISD Board of Trustees the ability to use their best judgment to make decisions regarding the students of Fruitvale. By giving the board local control of these decisions, the district of innovation plan will allow the board to make positive progress for the students at Fruitvale ISD.

### **1. FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION**

Exemption from TEC §25.0811, TEC §25.0812

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August.

TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Proposal: These laws restrict flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community. The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in FISSD. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters, more instructional days prior to mandatory testing, and a school end date prior to June. By ending earlier, FISSD can support students who need remediation, as well as students who are entering college or trade school. An earlier school start date allows these students to register for summer classes and attend new student orientation meetings without missing instructional time.

### **2. TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Exemption from TEC §21.003(a), TEC §21.053, TEC §21.055(c), TEC §21.057

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TEC §21.003(a) states that 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.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator their salaried rate if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC §21.055(c) requires a school district to send the commissioner a written statement identifying the person, the person's qualifications as a teacher, and the subject or class the person will teach. The person may teach the subject or class pending action by the commissioner.

TEC §21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Proposal: The district will strive to maintain the state's current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for open positions (TEC §21.003). However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district needs the flexibility to hire individuals who hold qualifying college degrees (bachelors, masters, or doctoral) and who possess knowledge and experience from coursework, professional training, trades, industries, and/or vocations. In addition, Fruitvale ISD shall have the authority to allow certified teachers to teach one subject outside their certified field. District leadership shall determine whether it is in the best interest of its students to locally certify individuals based on these factors in lieu of an appeal to the Texas Commissioner of Education as stated in Sec. 21.055(c). In effort to provide additional support, the district shall establish local criteria for locally certifying and training individuals rather than adhere strictly to mandates outlined in Sec. 21.053-21.055. With authority to locally certify teachers, the required parental notification for "inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers" under Sec. 21.057 would no longer be necessary, regardless of any adjustments or changes made to the certification laws. This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and provide more options for our students in class offerings. In addition, this process will allow more flexibility in our hiring decisions, so we can ensure we staff our classrooms with the strongest teaching candidates.

### **3. PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEE PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT**

Exemption from TEC §21.102(b)

TEC §21.102(b) states 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.

Proposal: Fruitvale ISD holds this limited probationary contract time period proves insufficient in some cases to fully determine the professional employee's effectiveness. Fruitvale ISD shall have the option to issue a probationary contract for a period in length of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses newly hired by the district. This extended

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probationary period will allow the district additional time to evaluate professional performance regardless of any adjustments or changes are made to Texas Education Code employment laws. Fruitvale ISD believes this will provide time for adequate coaching, support, and professional development as new employees transition to Fruitvale ISD from other school districts or professions.

### **4. INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFER STUDENTS**

Exemption from TEC §25.036

TEC §25.036 states any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer **annually** from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

Proposal: Under this statute school districts may elect to accept students who are not authorized to enroll in the district, deeming them inter-district transfer students. Transfer request are not guaranteed. Availability of staff and space as well as the students' disciplinary history, academic records, and attendance records are taken into consideration. When a transfer is granted, a district is committing to accept the student for the school year. This commitment in most cases does not pose any concerns and typically proves beneficial to the district (e.g., increase in enrollment and average daily attendance). However, great concerns arise when a transfer student continuously struggles to maintain the outlined student code of conduct, satisfactory academic performance, and/or daily attendance. These actions can impact the safety and security of other students, the overall academic performance of the campus and district, and funding related to average daily attendance of students. In these cases, TEC §25.036 prevents the school district from rescinding the students transfer until the end of the school year. Fruitvale ISD seeks exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer students. Under this exemption, Fruitvale ISD will establish a local transfer criterion. This local transfer criterion will accompany the transfer application. The enrolling parent/guardian and student (if age appropriate) will acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of local transfer criterion with their signatures on a inter-district transfer student contract.

### **5. DISTRICT SITE-BASED DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE**

Exemption from TEC §11.251-11.255

TEC §11.251 states the board shall adopt a policy to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process that will involve the professional staff of the district, parents, and community members in establishing and reviewing the district's and campuses' educational plans, goals, performance objectives, and major classroom instructional programs. The board shall establish a procedure under which meetings are held regularly by district- and campus-level planning and decision-making committees that include representative professional staff, including, if practicable, at least one representative with the primary responsibility for educating students with disabilities, parents of students enrolled in the district, business representatives, and community members.

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TEC §11.251-11.255 outlines the requirements of the committee as well as the district and campus improvement plans.

Proposal: Through a collaborative effort that requires the membership of various stakeholders, the district and campus site-based decision-making committees aim to decentralize decisions to improve the education outcomes of the district and campuses. The site-based management committee centers their work around assessing the educational outcomes of all students, determine goals and strategies for improvement, and ensuring implementation and adjustment of strategies to improve student achievement. Fruitvale ISD recognizes the value of this process and our stakeholders' voice as we navigate district and campus decisions. However, we recognize that membership to these committees can pose a great burden for our staff, business, and parent representatives, so we have employed a number of strategies to garner feedback from our stakeholders throughout each school year. We also recognize that parent and business members may struggle to contribute adequately to the work of these committees when conducted in a traditional format. This traditional format mandates recurring meetings that serve to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and outline measurable performance objectives, strategies, resources (including staff), and evaluative measures. The mandated strategies outlined in TEC §11.252 continue to overwhelm the process and the overall improvement plan, requiring a great deal of time and attention from all committee representatives.

Fruitvale ISD seeks exemption from the specific provisions in TEC §11.251-11.255, which would allow the district to determine the processes and memberships of its site-based management committees. Fruitvale ISD will continue to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to develop district and campus improvement plans; however, the district seeks exemption from the specific mandates of these sections and authority to determine the contents of the improvement plans. Fruitvale ISD will continue to honor federal mandates that cannot be excluded.

### **6. TEACHER PLANNING PERIODS**

Exemption from TEC §21.404

TEC §21.404 states each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Proposal: Fruitvale ISD acknowledges and respects the time teachers need to prepare and plan for classroom instruction. However, Fruitvale ISD recognizes the burden placed on staff when meetings and professional developments are scheduled before and after school as well as during instructional time. TEC §21.404 limits teacher conference time to instructional preparation tasks and excludes activities that support professional development and collaborative planning needs. Fruitvale ISD seeks exemption from this mandate in order to provide each campus with local control needed to determine how best to use staff time in regard to professional development and collaborative planning. District and campus administration will limit the number of adjustments

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to a teacher's planning period to no more than two times per week and preferably one or less most weeks.

### **7. MINIMUM ATTENDANCE FOR CLASS CREDIT OR FINAL GRADE**

Exemption from TEC §25.0929(a)

TEC §25.092(a) states a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, a student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class.

Proposal: TEC §25.092(a) restricts our ability to award class credit or a final grade to a student who has not been in attendance for 90% of the school year. The statute provides a 75% in attendance consideration, which requires a principal approved action plan in order to earn credit or a final grade. With this exemption, Fruitvale ISD would have the flexibility to consider awarding credit or a final grade in cases where the attendance falls below 75% and the student is demonstrating mastery of the course. This exemption would apply to absences related to co-curricular, extra-curricular, academic activities, and other extenuating circumstances. Students would continue to be expected to complete a principal approved action plan to earn credit and/or a final grade. This exemption does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Furthermore, this exemption does not limit a teacher's right to determine the student's final course grade (TEC §28.214), and it does not restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades (TEC §28.216).