



TEXARKANA
Independent School District

**DISTRICT OF
INNOVATION PLAN**

January 15, 2019 – January 15, 2024

INTRODUCTION

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability.

PROCESS

On October 16, 2018 the Texarkana Independent School District's Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

On November 27, 2018 the Texarkana ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public discussion on whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a District of Innovation. With there being no objection from the hearing, the Board of Trustees appointed the District Quality Improvement Council (DQIC) to discuss and draft this Local Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, district administration and local business owners. The committee met initially on November 29, 2018, to discuss and develop the plan. A follow up meeting to finalize the plan was held on December 6, 2018.

The plan will be posted on the District website for 30 days, effective December 7, 2018. The DQIC will vote on the final District of Innovation Plan on January 8, 2019. Texarkana ISD will notify the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final District of Innovation Plan and the plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on January 15th.

TERM

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in January 2019 and will remain in effect for five years, through January 15, 2024, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DQIC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

AMENDED PLAN

On May 3, 2022, the Local Innovation Committee will vote to approve an amendment to our existing District of Innovation. The plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval May 25, 2022. Texarkana ISD will notify the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final Amended District of Innovation Plan on May 26, 2022.

TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity/Task
October 16, 2018	Board of Trustees passed Resolution to initiate District of Innovation Plan
November 27, 2018	Board of Trustees held public hearing and appointed DQIC to draft Plan
November 29, 2018	Initial meeting of DQIC to discuss District of Innovation Plan
December 6, 2018	Meeting to finalize District of Innovation Plan
December 7, 2018	Post District of Innovation Plan on TISD website
January 8, 2019	DQIC vote on District of Innovation Plan
January 8, 2019	District of Innovation Plan Submitted to Commissioner of Education
January 8, 2019	Notification of Board of Trustees Intent to Vote on District of Innovation Plan Submitted to Commissioner of Education
January 9, 2019	District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education
January 15, 2019	Board of Trustees vote on District of Innovation Plan
January 15, 2019	Approved District of Innovation Plan Submitted to Commissioner of Education
September 11, 2019	DQIC vote on Amended District of Innovation Plan
September 17, 2019	Board of Trustees vote on Amended District of Innovation Plan
September 18, 2019	Approved Amended District of Innovation Plan submitted to Commissioner of Education
May 3, 2022	DQIC voted to Approve Amended District of Innovation Plan
May 25, 2022	Board of Trustees Approved Amended District of Innovation Plan
May 26, 2022	Approved Amended District of Innovation Plan Submitted to Commissioner of Education

PLANNING COMMITTEE

First Name	Last Name	Member Category
Christie	Alcorn	Classroom Teacher
Hank	Bergt	Parent
Doug	Brubaker	Superintendent
Anita	Clay	Chief Financial Officer
Jo	Cochran	Classroom Teacher
Jennifer	Cross	Principal
Brad	Davis	Parent
Shawn	Davis	Director of Special Populations and Federal Programs
Dan	Debenport	Business Representative
Anita	Dillahunt	Classroom Teacher
Amanda	Eisley	Director of Student Services
Michael	Folse	Classroom Teacher
Romegan	Ford	Classroom Teacher
Bryana	Fountain	Classroom Teacher
Chelsea	Glass	Classroom Teacher
Meredith	Gross	Classroom Teacher
Dani	Hamblett	Business Representative
Jamie	Hammonds	Classroom Teacher
Cory	House	Classroom Teacher
Christi	Hoyt	Parent
Carol	Hubbard	Classroom Teacher
Derek	Jenkins	Classroom Teacher
Ben	King	Business Representative
Kristi	Lewis	Assistant Principal
Todd	Marshall	Director of Communications, Marketing, and Development
Casey	Martin	IS Specialist

Sharon	Maynard	Committee Chair
Christy	McCarter	Classroom Teacher
Melissa	McHenry	Parent
Amber	Merrick	Classroom Teacher
Patti	O'Bannon	Principal
Laurie	Pace	Director of Humanities
Michael	Poret	Community Representative
Sherri	Penix	Chief Innovation Officer
Amanda	Petty	Classroom Teacher
Jo Ann	Rice	Associate Superintendent Family & Community Engagement
Richard	Stahl	Director of Facility Services
Tiffany	Studebaker	Classroom Teacher
Angela	Taylor	Classroom Teacher
Autumn	Thomas	Deputy Superintendent
Christy	Tidwell	Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Holly	Tucker	Chief Academic Officer
Vickie	Vital	Parent

EXEMPTIONS

§25.0811 Uniform School Start Date

A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.

Proposed

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. It also offers the below opportunities:

- An improved balanced instructional calendar results from being able to begin school earlier in August each year. With this exemption, the 2018-19 calendar for TISD has 83 fall semester student days and 89 spring semester student days. Without this exemption, the semesters would likely have been 75/97, creating a significant instructional imbalance.
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments.
- Students will be afforded opportunities to enroll in summer college sessions with finalized official transcripts and staff will be able to attend summer school classes as well.
- Creates Flexibility for District to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

Local Guidelines

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

§25.112 Class Size and Notice of Class Size

Texas Education Code 25.112 limits the number of students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 4th grade to 22. While the maximum number of students in PK-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, and inform them the waiver has been submitted.

Proposed

By seeking an exception from TEC 25.112, the District would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our PK-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching, creative ways of delivering instruction, and ability to manage increases in class sizes. Research shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning and not the absolute class size. Small class sizes may have a positive effect in the classroom, but must also be balanced with the timing of adding staff, the qualifications of staff available, the makeup and chemistry of the classroom and other classroom influences.

Local Guidelines

In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades PK-4, the class sizes will be reviewed by appropriate district and campus administration. The Board of Trustees will be informed of PK-4 classes that exceed 22:1. TEA waivers for class sizes exceeding 22 will not be required. An exemption from TEC 25.113 is also requested.

§25.036 Inter-district Transfers

Under Texas Education Code 25.036, 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.

Proposed

Texarkana 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 25.36 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. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (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, Texarkana 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.

§21.002 Employment Contracts

Currently, experienced teachers new to the district 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.

Proposed

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member's effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Texarkana ISD.

Local Guidelines

At the time of contract recommendation consideration, newly hired teachers and counselors with the district, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the district, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

§21.003 Certification

TEC 21.003(a) states 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. TEC21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.

Proposed

In order to best serve Texarkana ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 will allow the district to consider flexible hiring, such as part time professionals to teach courses, industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology and also assist in staffing high need areas, such as STEM and dual credit. Out of state certified teachers will be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. Often there are experienced certified teachers in our district who could teach a course outside of their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in hiring and scheduling to meet student needs.

Local Guidelines

- a) An administrator may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject and/or grade level out of their field.
- b) An individual may hold a teaching certification in another state. The individual may be recommended for hire based on the out-of-state certification.
- c) An individual may possess a degree and/or experience or knowledge in a particular content area, including a Career and Technology field. An administrator may submit a request to the superintendent for local certification. The administrator must specify the reason for the request and document credentials/experience the individual possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.
- d) The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification.

§37.005 Out-of-School Suspension for Students Below Grade 3

Currently, under Texas Education Code 37.005, 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; or;*
- 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.*

Proposed

To best serve the students of Texarkana 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.

Local Guidelines

Campus principals would have the option to place a student below grade 3 in out-of-school suspension based on violations of the Student Code of Conduct and documented interventions and office referrals.

§37.105 Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

Currently, a district must maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under Section 37.105 (a)(2)(A), including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property under Section 37.105, the district must provide the person a written information explaining how to appeal. Each school board must adopt a policy that uses the district's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal, unless the appeal is granted sooner.

Proposed

Texas Education Code section 37.105 includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate for the school setting.

To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in Texarkana ISD, we propose that the District not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities, nor be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to district property/facilities or removed from district property/facilities. The District currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities. Should an exemption from TEC §37.105 be granted, the District shall continue to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities in situations where the administrator on site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so.

Local Guidelines

Campus and District administrators, as well as school resource officers and District police officers if applicable, may refuse to allow a person to enter or may eject a person from property under the District's control in accordance with law.

An appeal notice must be filed with the Superintendent, in writing, and submitted to the Administration Office for review.

§45.205, 45.206 Bank Depository Contract

Currently, the District must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

Proposed

The District is seeking an exemption from TEC 45.205 and 45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term, if the District determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the District's business.

Local Guidelines

The District will only go out for bid if it is determined that contract-pricing is not competitive and there is an operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. The District will continue with two year contracts for our banking depository.

§21.203. 21.352 Teacher Evaluations

The State of Texas issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (TTESS). Under T-TESS, all teachers on a teacher contract and paid on the teacher payscale are currently evaluated every year utilizing TTESS unless they are exempted under criteria in DNA (Local).

Proposed

Texarkana ISD will continue to utilize TTESS to evaluate identified teachers in the classroom setting. Teachers that are in varied positions not providing whole group instruction but more individualized and varied instruction as well as other duties, need a more defined appraisal tool relevant to their position. Teachers with specialized positions will be exempted from TTESS and a local specialized alternative appraisal tool will be developed to better align with their duties and position. This exemption will allow local flexibility to evaluate performance measures for the particular job duties and expectations.

Local Guidelines

The specialized positions exempted and will utilize the local alternative appraisal tool are as follows:

- Interventionist
- Teacher, Dyslexia
- Teacher, ESL
- Instructional Coach
- RTI Specialist
- 504 Specialist
- Teacher, Visually Impaired
- Teacher, Deaf Education, Auditory Impaired
- Teacher, Homebound General and SPED
- Technology Specialist
- Reading/Technology Specialist
- Other Specialized Positions not providing whole group instruction

Annual Local Specialized Alternative Appraisal Exception

Teachers who are eligible for less frequent evaluations in accordance with law [see DNA(LEGAL)] and the local criteria established in this policy shall be appraised in accordance with the provisions below.

Less Than Annual Eligibility

To be eligible for less than annual evaluations under specialized alternative appraisals, a teacher shall:

1. Be employed on an educator term or continuing contract;
2. Hold SBEC certification;
3. Serve on a campus that has not been rated “improvement required” on the basis of state standards;
4. Have been employed by the District for at least one year;
5. Have served in the current content or program assignment for at least one year;
6. Have served at the current campus for at least one year;
7. Have received ratings of at least “proficient” in most dimensions, with no more than one dimension “developing” in each domain on the most recent full appraisal; and
8. Have not received a rating of “improvement needed” on any area in any of the dimensions on the most recent full appraisal.

Frequency

Eligible teachers shall be appraised every three years. During any school year when a complete appraisal is not scheduled for an eligible teacher, either the teacher or the principal may require that an appraisal be conducted by providing written notice to the other party. A teacher's supervisor shall have the authority to return a teacher to the traditional appraisal cycle as a result of performance deficiencies documented in accordance with state rule.

Action Plan

- Appraisal tools drafted and developed for specific job performance measures relevant to position
- Present and discuss with the DQIC committee
- The Superintendent will notify the Board of the evaluation tool for the specialized positions for board consideration
- Upon board approval, impacted teachers will be notified and provided a copy of the appraisal tool aligned with their position.
- Training will be provided to supervisors utilizing the new appraisal tool for specialized teacher positions.

COMMENTS

If you have any comments or concerns regarding the TISD District of Innovation Plan, we want to hear from you. Please email us your thoughts to: tisdpr@txkisd.net

Thank you.