



**Texarkana**  
Independent School District

*The Place To Be!*

# MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**TISD BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT,  
STATE EXPEDITED WAIVERS, POLICY AMENDMENTS AND TAX RATE  
DURING AUGUST 2017 REGULAR MEETING**

**Texarkana, TX** – During their Tuesday, August 15, 2017 regular session, TISD Board of Trustees approved several key items for the 2017-18 school year.

The Student Code of Conduct was approved with many of the changes related to new Senate Bill 179 which was approved by Governor Greg Abbott on Friday, June 9, 2017. Referred to as “David’s Law,” SB 179 now makes cyberbullying a crime in Texas when it leads to injury or suicide and the victim is a minor. Senator Jose Menendez (D-San Antonio) worked closely with the family of David Molak when creating the legislation.

The bill classifies cyberbullying as a misdemeanor, allows courts to issue subpoenas to unmask people who anonymously harass minors online and requires public schools to report and intervene in any suspected cyberbullying cases. It also allows victims to sue cyberbullies’ parents if the parents could have intervened but didn’t.

Cyberbullying was added to the Texas Education Code in 2011 under the “bullying” classification but without any legal punishment. School districts were required to develop their own policies to prevent and intervene in bullying and cyberbullying situations.

With SB 179, school district board of trustees are required to create a mental health plan that addresses suicide prevention and bullying, but still allows schools to move or expel student if they bully minors.

“Student safety is our number one priority,” said Paul Norton, Superintendent of Schools. “David’s Law helps ensure that our campuses and parents will work together to ensure the safety of each and every student. Cyberbullying is not to be taken lightly but rather to be taken seriously. By working together, we can reinforce with students that cyberbullying is not acceptable at any level.”

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Also approved were state expedited waivers that are to be submitted to the Texas Education Agency in three-year intervals. Waivers covered 2017-18 through 2019-20 and include:

- Staff Development Waiver – allows districts to train staff on various educational strategies designed to improve student performance in lieu of a maximum of three (3) days of student instruction;
- Early Release Waiver – allows districts to conduct school for less than seven (7) hours for a total of six (6) days of student instruction to provide additional training in educational methodologies and/or to provide time to meet the needs of students and local communities;
- Modified Schedule State Assessment Testing Days Waiver – allows districts to modify the schedule of classes on state assessment testing days during the current school year to reduce interruptions during testing period;
- Timeline for Accelerated Instruction Waiver – allows districts to adjust the timeline for providing the accelerated instruction required for placement in/promotion to the next grade. This waiver is limited to students who fail the third administration of the grade 5 or 8 STAAR reading and/or mathematics test;
- Teacher Data Portal of the Texas Assessment Management System Waiver – allows districts to waive participation in the teacher portal component of the Texas Assessment Management System. A waiver is granted if a district can provide assurance that the local teacher data portal meets the statutory requirements outlined in Texas Education Code 32.258
- Foreign Exchange Student Waiver – allows districts to limit the number of foreign exchange students to a number that is not less than five (5) per high school.

Trustees also approved an amendment to Policy EIE (LOCAL) on Academic Achievement Retention and Promotion. Essentially, a kindergarten standards-based report card has been developed by a committee of kindergarten teachers and administrators. This report card will help teachers, students and families focus on specific essential skills throughout the school year based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Kindergarten. The recommended promotion policy is based on the skills included on the kindergarten standards-based report card.

In final business, Trustees approved the 2017-18 tax rate at \$1.425. The rate, which has been the same for the past three years, is represented by \$1.17 for Maintenance & Operations (M&O) and \$.255 for Interest & Sinking Funds (I&S) which is used to repay bonded indebtedness and other debts. Certified appraised values are \$1.997 billion.

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