

INTRODUCTION

The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842, allowing Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and thus permitting exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In an effort to promote systematic improvement and allow for more local control, Taylor ISD elected to become a District of Innovation. The current plan became effective March 28, 2017.

A District of Innovation plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed if the action is approved by a vote of the district-level committee and the board of trustees in the same manner as required for initial adoption of a local innovation plan. The plan will be reviewed annually by the Taylor ISD administration, District Educational Improvement Committee (DEIC), and the Board of Trustees. The term of the designation as a District of Innovation may not exceed 5 years

District of Innovation Renewal Timeline

November 2021	The Taylor ISD District Educational Improvement Committee will review the current plan and propose amendments.
December 2021	District level personnel will review and update the current District of Innovation plan.
January 2022	The Taylor ISD District Educational Improvement Committee will review the current plan and amendments. The committee will vote to renew. The DEIC must pass the District of Innovation renewal plan by majority vote.
February 2022	The Commissioner of Education will be notified of the Board of Trustees' intent to vote on renewing the Taylor ISD District of Innovation Plan.
February 2022	The Taylor ISD District of Innovation renewal plan will be posted on the district's webpage for 30 days.
March 2022	The public hearing will be held prior to the school board meeting. The Taylor ISD Board of Trustees must approve the District of Innovation Renewal plan by 2/3 majority vote.
June 2022	The Taylor ISD District Educational Improvement Committee reviewed the current plan with an amendment for teacher certification. The committee will vote to amend. The DEIC must pass the District of Innovation renewal plan by majority vote

District Educational Improvement Committee (DEIC)

Name:	Role:
Stacy Campbell	Business
Cheryl Webster	Business
Carol Bachmayer	Community

Mike Caplinger	Community
April Knapek	Community
Sandra Martinez	District
Devin Padavil	District
Jennifer Patschke	District
Tiffany Whitsel	District / DEIC Chair
Janis Barrois	Parent
Julie Snyder	Non-Teaching
Kimberly Flores	Parent
Susan Green	Parent
Quincy Griffin	Parent
Maris Heyward	Parent
Nicole Oman	Parent
Catherine Rochez	Parent
Taylor Stokes	Parent
Jennifer Carpenter	Teacher - Elementary
Rebecca Cohan	Teacher - Elementary
Sandy Oranday	Teacher - Elementary
Ashley Rush	Teacher - Elementary
Cindy Terrazas	Teacher - Elementary
Sarah Shurtz	Teacher - Intermediate
Rachel Wallace	Teacher - Intermediate
Parker Achord	Teacher - Middle School
Melody Hogate	Teacher - Middle School
Brianna Perry	Teacher - Middle School
Julie Hubbard	Teacher - High School
Vicki Rowe	Teacher - High School
Krystina Maldonado-Tellez	Teacher - High School
Nathan Thompson	Teacher - High School

PROCESS

On November 4, 2021 the District Educational Improvement Committee met and reviewed the District of Innovation plan and discussed possible revisions.

On February 7, 2022 the District Educational Improvement Committee met to review the current District of Innovation plan and discussed revisions. Upon review, the committee voted to recommend approval of the plan with the amendments.

The renewal of the plan with amendments was posted to the Taylor ISD website for review February 18, 2022.

The amended plan will be presented to the Taylor ISD Board of Trustees March 21, 2022 for approval. The board unanimously approved the amended District of Innovation plan.

TERM

The term of the renewal plan is for five years, beginning July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2027 unless terminated, amended or renewed by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District Educational Improvement Council and the Board of Trustees will review the plan annually. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board of Trustees will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment approved by the District Education Council and adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan.

INNOVATIONS

Taylor ISD proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

I. First Day of Instruction

Board Policy: EB, EC (Legal)

TEC §25.0811

A school district may not begin instruction before the 4th Monday in August.

Rationale for the Exemption:

The flexibility to set the start and end date of school allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of our students and community. An earlier start date allows teachers additional planning and preparation time, a better balance between semesters, more instructional days prior to Advanced Placement exams, college readiness exams, mandatory state assessments, and a school end date prior to June. This will allow our students the opportunity to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. In addition, removing the constraints of this statute will allow Taylor ISD the opportunity to provide more frequent breaks for students/staff and flexible professional development for teachers.

Parameters

- The district, through input from the Campus Leadership Team (CLT), Campus Educational Improvement Committee (CEIC), and DEIC, shall determine locally, on an annual basis, the upcoming school calendar.
- The District will design and adopt a calendar with a start date on or after the second Monday of August.

II. Teacher Certification

Board Policy DBA, DK

TEC §21.003(a), §21.053

States a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, education 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 for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

Rationale for the Exemption:

Taylor ISD is committed to providing an excellent learning experience and values the need for certified teachers. However, the District is experiencing difficulty hiring educators in certain areas. The District is pursuing this exemption to provide greater flexibility to fill these teaching positions. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. In addition, flexibility in this area will assist the district in hiring quality candidates to teach certain courses and allow a certified teacher to teach outside their field in order to avoid the disruption of an instructional path for students allowing Taylor ISD to reduce scheduling conflicts. This would allow the District the opportunity to increase course offerings while reducing scheduling conflicts.

Parameters

- The District will establish local requirements, such as years of experience, qualifications, and industry certifications, to qualify for a local district teaching certificate.
- The District is not seeking exemptions from Special Education, and Bilingual Education.
- For core classes Mathematics, Science, ELA, and Social Studies, this exemption will be considered a last resort working first to hire a certified teacher.
- The District will utilize this exemption in the areas of CTE, LOTE, dual credit, hard to fill electives, as well as, allowing a certified teacher to teach a course outside their field.
- Principals 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. The board will be notified prior to beginning employment.
- Teachers employed under a local District certification will receive pedagogy and classroom management training.

III. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Board Policy: FO, FOA; Student Code of Conduct

TEC §37.0012

Requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of TEC Chapter 37. This provision also allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator. Duties include, but are not limited to, promptly notifying parents by telephone and in writing when a student is suspended, removed to DAEP or taken into custody by the law enforcement.

Rationale for the Exemption:

TEC§37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the Campus Behavior Coordinator (CBC), who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of TEC Chapter 37. This provision also allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the CBC. Duties include but not limited to, promptly notifying parents, by telephone and in writing, when a student is suspended, removed to DAEP or JJAEP, or taken into custody by law enforcement.

This statute limits the ability of children to develop positive relationships with a variety of adults who have a vested interest in their mental and emotional development and wellness; therefore, restricting a collaborative disciplinary approach from campus administrators, counseling services, teachers, and parents.

Parameters

- A collaborative disciplinary approach, Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) will be implemented at the campus level.
- The appropriate staff member closely related to the disciplinary situation will notify the student's parent/guardian.

IV. Teacher Employment Contracts

Board Policy: DCA, DCB

TEC §21.102

TEC §21.102 states that a probationary contract 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 with the District. In this statute, "teacher" means a principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, school counselor, nurse, or other full-time professional employee. This statute in the TEC provides a three-year probationary period for newly hired teachers and only a one-year probationary period for teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. This limited period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the employee's effectiveness since contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the end of the school year.

Rationale for the Exemption:

Upon exemption from TEC §21.102, Taylor ISD will have the flexibility to extend a probationary contract for all professional employees in order to allow ample time for the District to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

Parameters:

- Experienced teachers new to the District that have been employed in public education for at least five of the previous eight years may be issued a probationary contract for up to two years from the date of District employment.
- District employees currently holding a probationary contract for the 2021-2022 school year, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the previous eight years, may be issued a probationary contract for up to two years from the date of District employment.

V. Class Size & Student/Teacher Ratio

Board Policy: BF, EEB

TEC §25.112, TEC §25.113

Rationale:

TEC §25.112 sets a limit of 22:1 student/teacher ratio for grades K-4.

TEC §25.113 requires the District to give written notice to the parents when granted the exception.

The District begins the school year with staff based on projections of student enrollment. Due to fluctuating enrollment during the school year, teachers and/or students must be moved from class to class to meet the 22:1 requirement. This exemption would give the District flexibility with the inflexible 22:1 requirement and allow students to remain with the teacher and classmates that they began the year with, fostering continuity and stability that will support increased student achievement. In addition, class sizes can be organized so that student groups who need specialized assistance, such as English Language Learners and those with IEP's, can have a reduced student/teacher ratio while remaining classrooms could accommodate the other students. Lastly, the District will not be forced to hire new teachers not accounted for in the Boards adopted budget; also negating the need to apply for a state waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Exemption from TEC §25.113 is sought as it pertains to TEC §25.112.

Parameters:

- The District will continue to strive to keep class sizes at or below 22:1, with the flexibility to go above 22:1 if needed.
- The student/teacher ratio in a single class will not exceed 24:1.
- The District will consider in the decision making process: the makeup and chemistry of the classroom, the potential for disruption to student learning from splitting a class, and the expertise of the teacher.

VI. 90 Percent Rule for Credit Recovery / Mastery

Board Policy: FEC

TEC §25.092(a) and TEC §25.092(b)

Rationale for the Exemption:

According to statute, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 shall not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance 90 percent of the days the class is offered. The 90 percent minimum and the 75 percent floor are arbitrary percentages that are based on “days in class” and not mastery of content matter. Taylor ISD has implemented a 1-1 technology initiative that provides students with greater flexibility in making up assignments or completing classwork. Students in grades 9-12 receive a device that allows them to communicate electronically with their teacher and complete assignments outside of the traditional classroom setting. Exemption from §25.092 will provide educational advantages by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered, and accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts or absences. Relief from §25.092(a)(1) and §25.092(b) will not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Opting out of §25.092(a)(1) and §25.092(b) in no way limits or modifies a teacher’s right to determine the final grade in accordance with Texas Education Code §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code §28.0216.

Parameters:

- Both the 90 percent and 75 percent rules governing attendance are based on “days in class”, and not mastery of content.
- The District is seeking an exemption to §25.092 to provide greater flexibility in awarding credit or a final grade to students who:
 - Earn a passing grade in order to receive credit;
 - Demonstrate mastery of the content;
 - Are present for less than 75% of days in class due to District-approved extenuating circumstances;
- Provide District-approved documentation supporting the extenuating circumstances; and
- Meet all requirements in the principal’s plan and/or the requirements of the attendance committee for receiving credit or a final grade.