

Terrell County Independent School District

Sanderson Schools

Excellence Is Our Expectation



District of Innovation Local Innovation Plan August 1, 2022 – July 30, 2027 (Renewed and Amended Plan)

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During the 84th Texas Legislative Session, House Bill 1842 was passed. HB 1842 provides Texas public school districts with the opportunity to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. Through HB 1842, District of Innovation, local school districts may obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code, providing flexibility and local control for innovative programming.

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from certain statutes, giving them:

- Greater local control as the decision maker over the educational and instructional model for students.
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Under House Bill 1842, districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum, graduation requirements, academic and financial accountability.

Districts wishing to become a District of Innovation must hold at minimum, an academic performance rating of “met standard.” **During the 2018-2019 school year, Terrell County ISD received a rating of “B.” In 2019-2020, Terrell County ISD was not rated due to COVID-19 closures. In 2020-2021, school ratings were not issued to school districts due to the disaster declaration; however, Terrell County ISD’s performance was at or above the State average on 90% of the indicators.**

Terrell County ISD’s Innovation Plan will begin in the fall of 2022 and continue until the Spring of 2027.

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District of Innovation Timeline and Process

Wednesday, January 26, 2022, 4:00 p.m. - TCISD School Library
Initial meeting with TCISD CEIC to discuss preliminary thoughts on District of Innovation Process.

Week of February 3, 2022 – Inform faculty of intent to re-apply for District of Innovation.

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m. to review and discuss the possibility of continuing with District of Innovation

Regular Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m. review and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation

- **Action to Consider:** Board of Trustees to consider approving resolution to continue as a District of Innovation.
- **Action to Consider:** Board of Trustees to consider approving the members of the District of Innovation Committee

Friday, February 18, 2022 – Post District of Innovation information on the TCISD website

Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.: TCISD School Library
Initial meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

Monday, February 28, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.: TCISD Conference Room
Meeting to finalize the District of Innovation Plan with the District of Innovation Committee

Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.: TCISD Conference Room
Public Meeting to discuss and present the finalized District of Innovation Plan
The DEIC will be in attendance to vote on the approval of the District of Innovation Plan

Wednesday, March 2, 2022: Target date to email Plan to TEA

March 1 – March 4, 2022 - Window for campus faculty meetings to preview District of Innovation Plan.

March 7 – April 7, 2022 - Post the District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days

Wednesday, April 20, 2022: Regular TCISD board meeting in order to consider approving the District of Innovation Plan

- **Action to Consider:** Board of Trustees to consider approving the District of Innovation Plan

Thursday, April 21, 2022 – Provide TASB with the District of Innovation Plan for policy updates

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The District of Innovation Planning Committee

The Terrell County ISD Local Innovation Committee is comprised of administrators, teachers, staff members, parents, and a community member. These members were approved by the Board of Trustees and charged with formulating a plan of action that promotes innovation within the school district, focusing on the academic success of ALL students.

Local Innovation Members

- Amanda Magallan – Superintendent
 - Sam Magallan – Director of School Operations
 - Virginia Garza – District School Counselor
 - Tanna Lowrance – Elementary Teacher
 - Tami Carrasco – Elementary/JH Teacher
 - Micaela Fuentez – Secondary Teacher
 - Danny Armstrong – Special Education Teacher
 - Mary Alice Rodriguez, PEIMS Coordinator
 - Kristy Billings, Parent/Business Office Accounts Receivable
 - Judy Houston – Parent
 - Anna Garza – Community Representative/Parent
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The Local Innovation Committee met on the following dates:

- Tuesday, February 22, 2022
- Monday, February 28, 2022

During the committee meetings, the committee reviewed the options within the TEC Chapter 12A, reviewed the district's goals, reviewed the district's needs assessment, and then drafted a plan that was focused on improving the academic success of the students within Terrell County ISD.

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What is Terrell County ISD trying to accomplish?

Terrell County ISD wants to provide a school calendar that will provide traditional holiday breaks for families and a calendar that maximizes the amount of instructional time prior to state mandated testing. The district would also like to make adjustments in state requirements in order to return decision making to the local school board to ensure that student and community needs are met. Specifics for each exemption are listed in District of Innovation Local Plan..

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The District of Innovation Local Plan

1) Teacher Certifications:

TEC 21.003 and 21.053

TEC 21.003 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.” These certification requirements do not provide a district with the flexibility to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM), or Health Science courses. The Texas Education Code sections 21.003 and 21.053 inhibit the development of post high school plans. They also inhibit the improvement of work force skills. These TEC Codes limit the district’s ability to find qualified applicants.

In the event that Terrell County ISD is unable to hire a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is not certified for a specific content area, the district must submit waiver forms to the Texas Education Agency requesting that a teacher be allowed to teach a subject/grade level outside his/her certification area. This causes problems in communities such as Sanderson, Texas, where there is no draw for applicants to move to the area. Applicants are rare and often times do not have the correct certifications for the positions that are vacant. This exemption would allow Terrell County ISD to find the best teacher for vacant position and use current staff in an effective manner.

Rationale:

The district seeks the ability to establish its own local qualification requirements in lieu of TEC 21.003. This will assist the district with hiring in trades and vocations such as welding, health science, architecture, career, and technical studies. This exemption will also provide the district with the flexibility to hire certified teachers outside their content or grade level and place them in classroom where they will positively and effectively impact students, without filing Teacher Certification waivers. This exemption

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provides TCISD with the flexibility to hire professionals with the skills that fit the needs within the district.

The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. 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 in question.

Terrell County will NOT use this exemption for special education teachers and/or bilingual/ESL teachers. Special education teachers and bilingual/ESL teachers will still be required to be SBEC certified to teach in these areas.

Innovation Strategy:

The District Superintendent will submit to the Board of Trustees a request for local certification that would allow a certified teacher to teach in a related field for which he/she is not certified, with the exception of special education and bilingual/ESL certified vacancies. Special education and bilingual/ESL vacancies MUST be filled with SBEC certified teachers. The Superintendent would specify, in writing, the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject/s. Financial situations and/or emergencies creating the need for this type of assignment must also be noted when appropriate.

To promote the CATE/STEM courses, the district will consider the qualifications necessary to create a local requirement for these courses instead of the requirements that are set forth in TEC 21.003(a). This exemption will allow TCISD to:

- Consider part-time professionals to teach courses
- Give an opportunity for professionals to transition from other work-related jobs to the teaching profession
- Increase the number of CATE/STEM courses available
- Offer trade related professionals the ability to teach related courses.

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Through this exemption, the district will **not** submit teacher certification waivers, state permit applications or other paperwork currently required by the Texas Education Agency for Teacher Certifications. The district will continue to notify all parents of the inappropriate certified or uncertified teacher who is working for the school district.

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2) Uniform School Start and End Date: **TEC 25.811 and 25.0812**

Terrell County ISD is seeking exemptions from TEC 25.0811, dictating that schools must not start prior to the 4th Monday in August and TEC 25.0812, requiring that the last day of instruction not be set prior to May 15th. These statute requirements do not take into consideration the needs for the students within specific communities.

Rationale:

Terrell County ISD seeks local control over the start and end dates of a school year. This provides TCISD with the flexibility needed to address the instructional needs of the students while addressing the professional development needs of the district staff. This flexibility would help balance the days of instruction in each semester and align the district's calendar with Midland College and/or another college/university for dual credit courses. This calendar flexibility would work in conjunction with the new instructional minutes rather than instructional day requirements.

The flexibility with the start and end dates within the district's calendar allows for a more balanced number of days in the fall and spring semesters. This would also allow the district to maximize the number of instructional days prior to state-mandated testing in April and May.

Innovation Strategy:

Terrell County ISD will have the flexibility to start class prior to the third Monday in August, depending on the needs of the district. This would also allow the district to end classes before May 15th, depending on the needs of the district.

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3) Length of School Day:

TEC 25.081

(While 25.081 (e) and 25.082 (a) were both repealed by the 85th Legislative Session (2017), the District of Innovation Committee and District Educational Improvement Committee have requested that this section remain in the plan for future references. Please note, that this section of the plan is NOT requesting exemption from the required annual minutes of operation.)

The Texas Education Code 25.081 addresses the length of the instructional day by providing a definition of 420 minutes of instruction to encompass a day of instruction.

Rationale:

Remaining in compliance with the required 75,600 instructional minutes, TCISD is seeking exemption from the 420 minutes of instruction to encompass a day of instruction. With this exemption, Terrell County ISD would have the flexibility to develop a school calendar that meets the needs of the district. It would also allow the district to alter the school day schedule on selected days, whenever locally determined necessary or beneficial to the district. The calendar and adjustments made throughout the year would uphold instructional integrity and would continue to meet the 75,600 instructional minutes required for funding.

This exemption would allow TCISD greater control over scheduling which would lend time for analysis of student data, attending targeted professional development, increase targeted instruction opportunities, and parent involvement.

Innovation Strategy:

TCISD will ensure that “early release” days are planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar. To the greatest extent possible, all “early release” days would be approved by the Board of Trustees, published, and distributed to stakeholders in advance.

Through this exemption, TCISD will no longer submit waiver day requests to the Texas Education Agency; however, they will continue to present these requests to the Board of Trustees for approval.

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4) Class Size Waiver K-4 **TEC 25.112 and 25.113**

The Texas Education Code states that a school may not enroll “more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third or fourth grade class...”

Rationale:

Due to the fact that our district currently has to double up classes, Prekindergarten/Kindergarten, 1st/2nd, and 3rd/4th, the enrollment classes with one class may exceed the 22:1 ratio, not because there are over twenty-two third graders in a class, but because there are over twenty-two students in a class because they are combined with another grade level. Due to financial constraints and difficulty recruiting teachers to the area, the elementary classes have to be doubled-up and taught by one teacher. While this is not always the ideal situation, it is the solution to the staffing problems that are experienced within the school district.

Innovation Strategy:

Terrell County ISD will ensure that class size decisions are made in the best interest of the students, staff, and district. Parents will be notified of the possibility of classes enrolling more than twenty-two students in a K-4 classroom. The intent is to stay as close to 22:1 as possible. It is also the district’s intent to begin separating combined classrooms to ensure that effective teaching and learning is being provided to the students within the elementary grade levels.

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5) Teacher Appraisal System

TEC 21.352, 21.353, 21.354 (c), (d), and 21.3541 (f), (g)

The T-TESS system for evaluating or appraising the teaching staff has been implemented at TCISD. This system calls for the addition of a component which ties student achievement to the appraisal of each teacher.

Rationale:

TCISD uses various methods for breaking down student data and for disaggregating the data. Data from many sources is critical in making educational decisions; however, the specific T-TESS approach to connecting student STAAR scores to teacher evaluations is not our district's goal. The use of test scores creates disparity between teachers who teach core subject areas tested in STAAR versus non-core testing area teachers. Finalized state standardized test scores are not received until after teacher appraisal deadlines. Current uncertainties with legislative decisions and processes concerning testing and accountability systems make the student performance factor unreliable.

Innovation Strategy:

TCISD will implement locally developed systems aligned with district goals and strategic plans to monitor student progress and various growth measures.

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6) Teacher Contract Days

TEC 21.401

The Texas Education Code defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract with 187 days.

Rationale:

Recent legislative changes to the law regarding the length of a school year from 180 instruction days to a minimum of 75,600 minutes allows for substantial calendar changes. The calendar committee and school board may alter the number of days from year to year based on the needs of the students, the community, and the district.

Innovation Strategy:

When developing the school calendar based on the minimum minute requirement of 75,600 minutes, the number of student days may change based on the length of each school day. This exemption will allow for the board to reduce the number of teacher days as appropriate without a reduction in salary. The reduction in teacher days must still allow for a minimum of seven professional development days included throughout the calendar.