



Jasper Independent School District

Local Innovation Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, provides the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to allow more flexibility and local control for innovative programming. On October 8, 2018, the Jasper Independent School District passed a Resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students in the community. On October 29, 2018, the JISD School Board held a Public Hearing to allow the public to learn more about the designation and provide feedback. The School Board appointed a Local Innovation Committee comprised of community members, of teachers and other qualified person to serve and prepare a Local Innovation Plan to address the needs of the District on December 10, 2018. This Local Innovation Committee met to develop an initial draft of the Local Innovation Plan. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback on Friday, February 22, 2019, and remained online until March 25, 2019. The Local Innovation Committee met to consider feedback received and finalize the plan on XXXXXXXX. The Local Innovation Committee presented the plan to the School Board, and the Board adopted the plan on XXXXXX.

II. Term

The term of the Local Innovation Plan will begin at the start of the 2019-2020 school year and end at the end of the 2023-2024 School Year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The committee will revisit the plan annually to ensure that the recommendations are still in line with the needs of the district. Any changes recommended would be on the website for 30 days and require approval of the Innovation Committee, the Educational Improvement Committee and the School Board.

III. Continual Improvement

The Local Innovation Plan is guided by and aligned with the Board's Vision, Mission, Strategic Priorities, and Strategic Plan for the District as follows:

Mission Statement

The mission of Jasper ISD is to provide an excellent education for all students.

Vision Statement

The Vision of Jasper ISD, in partnership with parents and the community, is to educate with compassion and dedication so that every child can be successful.

Innovations Recommended:

AREAS OF INNOVATION

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

1. Calendar Flexibility

TEC §25.0811; TEC §25.0812 Related Board Policies: EB LEGAL Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

Previously, districts had the option of applying to TEA for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Innovation Strategies

a. Relief from the statute will allow Jasper ISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days

- b. Alignment of the district calendar with local universities, advanced placement exams, and STAAR timelines to increase student instructional days prior to assessments
- c. Provide for equalized instructional days to balance semester long courses
- d. To equalize the hiring timeframe with surrounding districts as related to the 45 day resignation period prior to the first day of instruction

2. **Teacher Certification Exemption from:**

TEC §21.003; TEC §21.053; TEC §21.057 Relevant Board Policies: DBA LEGAL/LOCAL; DK LEGAL/LOCAL Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board for Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

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.

TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

Innovation Strategies

- a. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where 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.
- b. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed

- subject. Special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.
- c. An individual with experience in the content of an elective course could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or elective course through a local teaching certificate. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Examples: an experienced homebuilder teaching a building trades course, a licensed corrections officer teaching a criminal justice course, or a retired CPA teaching an entry level accounting course.
 - d. The campus principal will request to the superintendent for approval to allow an individual who holds a four-year degree to teach in the classroom; if the individual is willing to pursue a certification and is eligible to take the certification exam and or be enrolled in an appropriate alternative certification program. Acquisition of the certification must be obtained within 2 years of hire date.
 - e. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.
 - f. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
 - g. Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

3. **Teacher Contract Days**

(DCB Legal, DCB Local) (Ed. Code 21.401)

Currently Texas Education Code § 21.401 currently requires a contract between the District and an educator to be for a minimum 10 months. Additionally, an educator employed under a 10- month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Innovation Strategies

This proposal reduces teacher contract days from 187 to 182 with no impact on teacher salaries.

This stems from an attempt to provide flexibility to better align teacher service days to instructional days.

- a. This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- b. This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment and retention, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with surrounding districts.
- c. This proposal should significantly improve teacher morale.
- d. This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the year to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field

SUMMARY

This District of Innovation Plan will help JISD to better support our students, employees, and families in more innovative ways. Propelling our district toward the locally-customized environment our students deserve will enable us to better prepare them according to their individualized needs and their unique talents and traits. Through HB 1842, JISD will be able to utilize innovative approaches to make the best decisions for our children because we will be able to make them locally.

In many cases, the implementation of exemptions from the TEC will require the revision of JISD policies. JISD will utilize a local policy development process that includes stakeholder input. This District of Innovation Plan will be implemented upon Board approval and will be in effect for 5 years from the date of implementation. The guidelines and procedures will be reviewed and revised as necessary to reflect and implement the District of Innovation Plan.

The committee will revisit the plan annually to ensure that the recommendations are still in line with the needs of the district. Any changes recommended would be on the website for 30 days and require approval of the Innovation Committee, the Educational Improvement Committee and the School Board.

We are grateful to the legislators who campaigned for Districts of Innovation through HB 1842 and to Commissioner Morath and his team for furthering our ability to create innovative strategies. We are committed to the children of our community and pledge to implement this plan with their best interests at heart.