

Jasper

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Local Innovation Plan 2022-2027

HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation. Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.

JISD INNOVATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

HOUSE BILL (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates including the uniform school start date and required minutes of instruction.
- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.

TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning August 1, 2022 and ending July 31, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

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. School Start and End Date

Exemption from: 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 represents community interests in this matter.

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

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 JISD 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.
- c. Provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

2. Teacher Certification

Exemption from: TEC § 21.003; TEC § 21.053; TEC § 21.055; TEC § 21.057

Related 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 § 21.055 states that if a teacher is not certified, the District may issue a teaching permit to employee the individual. This process requires notice to the Commissioner and its usefulness is extremely limited. Additionally, the language of this section could be construed to prohibit the issuance of a local 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 30 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 flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question and to hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
- b. For Grades 5-12, 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 for a portion of the day. 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.
- c. An individual with experience in the content of an elective course could be eligible to teach 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: and experienced homebuilder teaching a building trade's course, a licensed corrections officer teaching a criminal justice course, or a retired CPA teaching an entry level accounting course.
- d. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in a partnership with the certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development for instructional resources, or other support.
- e. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignments.
- f. 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. Transfers

Exemption from: §TEC 25.036

Relevant Board Policies: FDA (LOCAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the goals of the plan:

TEC § 25.036 Any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer, but TEC § 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Innovation Strategies:

Jasper ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (LOCAL) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. TEC § 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. The district seeks for the superintendent to have the authority to revoke the provision of a one-year term for transfer students at any time during the school year based on certain criteria.

- a. 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.
- b. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard or having excessive tardies may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.
- c. Non-resident students who have been accepted as a district transfer may have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of out of school suspension, in school suspension, district alternative education placement, or expelled.