

Poolville Independent School District
Local Innovation Plan
Approved by PISD Board on March 21, 2019

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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. On December 21, 2018, the Poolville Independent School District's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a resolution to adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community. On January 17, 2019, the Board

approved the District of Innovation Advisory Committee (“Committee”) comprised of diverse representation of District stakeholders. The committee met on February 6, 2019 to discuss the process of becoming a District of Innovation and to discuss and draft an Innovation Plan. On February 13, 2019, the committee held a public meeting to discuss the district’s innovation plan. Following a discussion of the plan, the plan was approved by the committee with a 12-0 vote.

Term

The term of the Plan is for five years beginning July 1, 2019 and ending June 30, 2024, 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 nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Innovations

The district proposes exemptions from current law/regulations and seeks flexibility in the following areas:

Certification Required (TEC 21.003)(TEC 21.051)(TEC 21.053) (DBA LEGAL)(DBA LOCAL) TEC 21.003 states that “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 appropriated certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.” The current certification requirements inhibit the District’s ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CATE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Math (STEM) courses. In addition to STEM and CATE instructors, there are often other content areas in which instructors are in high demand and/or low supply. The current teacher shortage in Texas warrants a desire to secure flexibility in hiring individuals who are both knowledgeable and capable instructors. Poolville ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in content areas of high demand and/or low supply, and the independence to do so without unnecessary restrictions. The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher benefits.

The following sections of the Texas Education Code are also relevant to the exemption sought with regard to teacher certifications and thus exemption from them is sought as well.

TEC 21.051(b) stipulates that “Before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hour of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities. The district is seeking exemption from this requirement.

TEC 21.053(a) stipulates that “a person who desires to teach in a public school shall present the person’s certificate for filing with the employing district before the person’s contract with the board of trustees of the district is binding.” The district is seeking exemption from this provision as people hired who are not certified would not be working under contract. They would be at-will employees.

TEC 21.053(b) states that “An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate.” The district is seeking exemption from this provision.

Flexibility to establish its own teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and/or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- Greater number of CATE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.
- The ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.
- The ability to hire high quality and capable individuals in content areas that are in high demand and/or low supply.

Uniform School Calendar (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB LEGAL) (EB LOCAL) Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Texas Education Code Section 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15th. The district seeks flexibility and local control in developing a school calendar. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.
- Allows for more instructional days before STARR/EOC exams.

- Allows District to better support students who are in need of remediation prior to summer testing.
- Ending the school year earlier in May allows students to be better positioned to enroll in college classes that start in early June.

Probationary Contracts TEC 21.102 (b) 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. This period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior the availability of end-of- year classroom and student data.

The district seeks exemption from this requirement. Upon exemption from TEC 21.102(b), all new contract employees will be eligible to the probationary period of up to three years, allowing more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

Principal Evaluation (DNB LEGAL) (DNB LOCAL), (TEC 21.3541)

Current Statute: The state issued a new principal appraisal system in 2016-2017, Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS).

Proposed Flexibility: Administrators would have the option to develop a principal evaluation instrument based on a combination of T-PESS and other relevant best practice. The locally developed tool should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for PISD. Poolville ISD will follow DNB (LOCAL) guidelines for annual evaluation requirements, frequency, and annual review process.

Transfer Students (TEC 25.036), FDA (LEGAL), FDA (LOCAL) – Under current law, (TEC 25.001), a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

We are seeking exemption from this provision in statute and its interpretation that the district make a one-year commitment to transfer students.

We propose that the administration have the ability and authority to review disciplinary records, academic performance, attendance records, and other data of transfer students on an ongoing basis to determine if the transfer agreement is being upheld. Furthermore, we propose that the administration have the authority to immediately revoke a student's transfer status for violating the district's expectations for attendance, academic performance, student discipline, and/or for the providing of false documentation.

Flexibility that allows immediate revocation provides the district with an additional tool to help maintain the integrity of a disciplined instructional program for all students. Students residing within district boundaries have an unquestionable right that allows access to a free public education. Attendance for students not residing within district boundaries is a privilege.

Implementation

This innovation plan is designed for the benefit of our students and the flexibility provided by the exemptions being sought will allow the district to operate in a manner that provides more educational opportunity while providing a better overall educational program for our students. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campus and district level staff. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.

Summary of Relevant TEC Sections of which the District is Seeking Exemption:

- *TEC 21.003 (a) Certification Required*
- *TEC 21.051(b) Rules Regarding Field-Based Experience*
- *TEC 21.053(a) Presentation and Recording of Certificates*
- *TEC 21.053(b) Teacher Pay – Valid Certificate*
- *TEC 21.102(b) Probationary Contracts*
- *TEC 21.3541 Principal Evaluation*
- *TEC 25.0811 First Day of Instruction*
- *TEC 25.0812 Last Day of Instruction*
- *TEC 25.036(a) Transfer Student*