

PETTUS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN PROPOSED EXEMPTIONS

The District of Innovation Committee proposes the following flexibilities with the Texas Education Code to provide the best instructional opportunities for students at PISD.

1. First Day of Instruction

Exemption from Statutory Citation:

Texas Education Code (TEC) §25.0811 (First Day of Instruction)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years, this was the rule. However, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August.

This law restricts flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community.

Proposal: PISD will be exempt from the first day of instruction requirements listed in TEC §25.0811. PISD will develop and seek board approval of a localized school calendar which best meets the needs of the Pettus Independent School District's students, parents, staff, and community by incorporating the flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters and more instructional days prior to mandatory testing. The PISD calendar development process will be localized with the District Site-Based Decision Making Committee assisting the District of Innovation Committee in the development of two or more school year calendars. The calendars will then be submitted to the district staff for a vote and the calendar with the most votes will be presented to the Board of Trustees for their review and consideration for approval. Final calendar approval, including when the PISD school starts, will be made by the locally elected PISD Board of Trustees.

2. Teacher Certification Requirements

Exemption from Statutory Citation:

Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.003(a)

Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.053(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher or other certified position unless the person holds an appropriate certificate.

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TEC §21.053(b) states that an educator may not be paid for teaching or work done before the issuance of a valid certificate.

These laws restrict flexibility in the in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

Proposal: PISD will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) for the position in question. In the case that an appropriately certified teacher cannot be found, 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.

Pettus ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in area of high demand to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to, Career and Technology Education (CTE) and languages other than English. Special Education teachers will continue to be required to hold a standard teaching certificate. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Pettus ISD will notify parents if a locally certified teacher is employed for their child's class.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in course offerings leading to industry-recognized certifications.

3. Probationary Contracts

Exemption from Statutory Citation:

Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.102(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

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.

Due to the unique nature of Pettus ISD, including our processes and initiatives, this period of time may not be sufficient to properly evaluate the teacher's instructional effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student performance data.

Proposal: Upon exemption from Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.102(b), all new, experienced contract certified employees to Pettus ISD subject to TEC Chapter 21, will be subject to up to a two year probationary period set out in TEC §21.102(c), in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance. Partial years will not count toward the full year requirement. The term of employment will be based on performance.

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Probationary contracts for first-year teachers will remain at up to a three year probationary period with term of employment based on performance.

With the challenges that our district faces, this allows those teachers more time to develop professionally before a long-term decision on their employment is made.

4. Minimum Service Required

Exemption from Statutory Citation:

Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.401(a)

Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.401(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

TEC §21.401(a) states that a contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service.

TEC §21.401(b) states that an educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposal: Pettus ISD seeks the freedom to reduce the number of teacher contract days from 187 days to 185 days without an anticipated reduction in salary during the 5-year length of the district of innovation plan. The move will better align teacher contracts to the 75,600 minutes of instruction requirements for our students.

The teachers will fulfill the required 75,600 minutes of instruction and any additional professional development days as determined locally by the PISD Board of Trustees. This strategy will provide opportunities for teachers to seek out beneficial content area staff development during summer months and may improve teacher morale.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION SUMMARY

Exemptions are **NOT** locked in for five years. They can be evaluated each year and changes made **with** Pettus ISD Board of Trustees Approval.

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