



Cherokee Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

In order to take advantage of the opportunities afforded to Independent School Districts by HB 1842, Cherokee ISD is seeking to modify Education Code requirements at the local level in order to better meet the needs of our student population.

Cherokee ISD is eligible for designation as an innovation district because the district's most recent performance rating under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §39.054, is at least Academically Acceptable, as indicated in the applicable year's academic accountability manual adopted under TEC §97.1001.

Cherokee ISD is seeking to become a District of Innovation in order to facilitate areas of concern created by traditional public school restrictions imposed by the legislature through various laws enacted. Those areas specifically addressed in this plan are Teacher Certification requirements, Probationary Contracts, Teacher and Principal Appraisals and the First Day of Instruction.

District of Innovation Committee

Eldon Franco, Superintendent

Colt Broyles, Community Representative

Randy Gartman, Principal

Kallie Bush, 3-5 Mathematics Teacher

Jennifer Bordner, Dean of Students

Chera O'Neil, Special Education Teacher

Vickie Baugh, Business Representative

Susan Shannon, 2nd Grade Teacher

Tiffany Berrio, 504/Inclusion Teacher

Valerie Valdez, Parent Representative

Stephanie Bond, 6-8 Math Teacher

Timeline

Timeframe	Activity	Date Implemented
October 2016 – February 2017	Community and Staff Involvement in exploring benefits of plan and seeking designation	January 2017 – February 2017
March 2017	Presentation to Board and Resolution	March 20, 2017
March – April 2017	Posting of Plan in the following areas: Post Office, Three Local Town Meeting Areas and the Administration Building* Plan sent to the Commissioner of Education	Minimum of 30 days from March 20, 2017
April 2017	Public Hearing with District of Innovation Committee	April 24, 2017
May 2017	Board of Trustees Plan Approval	May 8, 2017
June 2017	Implementation/Length of Plan	Implementation will be for a maximum of 5 years

The District of Innovation Plan

Certifications Required

(DK(LEGAL), DK(LOCAL), DK(EXHIBIT); TEC 21.003, 21.055)

Currently

State law requires teachers to hold appropriate certifications by the appropriate state agency in order for a district to employ them. In the likelihood that a district is unable to locate a person with the appropriate certifications, a certified person may teach a subject outside of his or her certification only if the district requests an emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

The current system makes it difficult to hire teachers for high needs core content areas as well as elective content areas. This system does not take into account the unique instructional, financial or community needs of our rural school district. Cherokee employs 20 educators who teach multiple areas within each day. In order for Cherokee to offer additional courses and be flexible in scheduling the district must have the ability to establish local qualification requirements. This would enable the district to employ community members, or current employees, who have working knowledge with limited certification(s). This flexibility would allow the district to hire professionals in areas of vocations, trades and languages. This would also enable the district to expand the CTE program by hiring professional tradesmen in areas such as welding, health science and criminal justice.

Innovation Strategies

- The process begins with the principal. The principal will interview the already certified teaching candidate and request all necessary credentials from the candidate as they relate to position. This will only be to allow the candidate to teach one subject outside of candidate's teaching certifications. Once the information is gathered the principal will begin the following process:
 - The reason for the request and credentials supporting qualification of the candidate to the superintendent
 - The superintendent will then evaluate the information presented and choose whether or not to take it to the Board for approval
 - The recommendation will be presented to the Board at the first meeting after the principal makes the request
- Individuals with trade experience, being considered for a CTE position, would be eligible to teach vocational skills through local district certification. The same process as above will be followed with the exceptions below.
 - The prospective employee would be considered at-will and not fall under a standard teaching contract
 - The Board would be notified, but not required to approve since the employee will be considered at-will

- Individuals with a college degree or certification in an elective or CTE area would be eligible to teach in his or her area of expertise through local district certification. The same process as above would be followed with the exceptions below.
 - The prospective employee would be considered at-will and not fall under a standard teaching contract
 - The Board will be notified, but not required to approve since the employee will be considered at-will

Probationary Contracts
(DCA(LEGAL); TEC 21.102)

Currently

State laws allows for those that are new to the profession be provided a probationary contract not to exceed three (3) years, and a new teacher who has taught five (5) of the last eight (8) may be offered a probationary contract not to exceed one (1) year.

Rationale for Exemption

The time period to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom is not long enough given the constraints put on the district by contract renewal guidelines, state assessment results and end of year progress testing.

Innovation Strategies

Experienced teachers that meet the current guidelines for a one (1) year probationary contract would be issued a probationary contract for no more than two (2) years. This will provide the administrative staff to more effectively evaluate the teacher's performance.

**Appraisal on Basis of Classroom Teaching Experience
Appraisal and Professional Development System for Principals**
(DNA(LEGAL), DNA(LOCAL); TEC §21.203, §21.352, §21.354, §21.3541)

Currently

The state requires that the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS) be used in appraising staff. These systems require that state standardized test scores be used as one of the main evaluation measures for teachers and administrators.

Rationale for Exemption

Cherokee ISD is developing an evaluation instrument for teachers, administrators and para-professional staff that will be used throughout the year. This instrument will be applicable to the programs offered by the district and address grade-level readiness, college readiness and implementation of the goals established by the district. For the district to promote professional development that focuses on individual growth the district will maintain its current practice of using a variety of measures, including observations, goal setting and tracking, student growth and progress toward established learning objectives and personal growth plans, as evaluation criteria on teacher and administrator appraisals.

Innovation Strategy

All staff members will be placed on a personal growth plan developed through collaboration that specifically provides measurable objectives, which are aligned with curriculum and district goals. These plans would be unique to the district and each staff member.

First Day of Instruction

(EB(LEGAL); TEC 25.0811)

Currently

State law requires that school districts may not begin school instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.

Rationale for Exemption

The current start time does not allow for the district to implement many research based scheduling techniques that will provide for flexibility to increase student learning and success, promote staff development and collaboration, provide opportunities to for college and career readiness and balance the semesters for instructional and remediation times.

Innovation Strategy

Cherokee ISD would develop a calendar that begins no earlier than the 3rd Monday in August and require staff to return to duty no earlier than the 1st Monday in August. This would provide the following opportunities for the district.

- More instructional days in the school year and better balance the semesters
- More opportunities for staff development during the school year for professional growth, collaboration and student growth analysis
- Allow time for students and staff to recover over the course of the year by flexible scheduling opportunities