

# **PEARSALL I.S.D.**

## **District of Innovation Plan**

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*Approved by the Pearsall ISD Board of Trustees: April 25, 2018*



*Learning Today...Leading Tomorrow*

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is a District of Innovation?**

In 2015, the 84th session of the Texas Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842 which allows traditional independent school districts the ability to access flexibilities previously reserved for Texas' open enrollment charter schools. The bill provides an opportunity for districts to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC). To qualify and access allowable exemptions, districts must seek designation as a District of Innovation (DOI), as set forth in Chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code and Texas Education Agency (TEA) rules.

### **Why become a District of Innovation?**

This designation provides freedom to make decisions about Pearsall ISD at the local level. A local school district may want to pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, budgeting, or other ideas. Essentially, innovation plans are about local control. Pearsall ISD's innovation plan will be unique to the needs of the school district and the community. It will provide a more differentiated educational setting for students in a manner that contributes to its overall academic success.

### **How long does an innovation plan stay in effect?**

Once adopted, the Pearsall ISD District of Innovation plan will be in effect for five years (as long as Pearsall ISD meets the required financial and academic accountability standards). This plan is specific to the exemptions as written. Pearsall ISD intends to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If at some point it is decided that amendments, additional exemptions, or termination of the plan should be considered, the District of Innovation Committee will reconvene to explore the request. Amendment, Rescission, or Renewal(s) of the plan will require approval from the DOI committee, a public meeting by the DEIC, a majority vote of the DEIC, and a 2/3 majority vote of the Board of Trustees.

### **Where can I find more information about districts of innovation?**

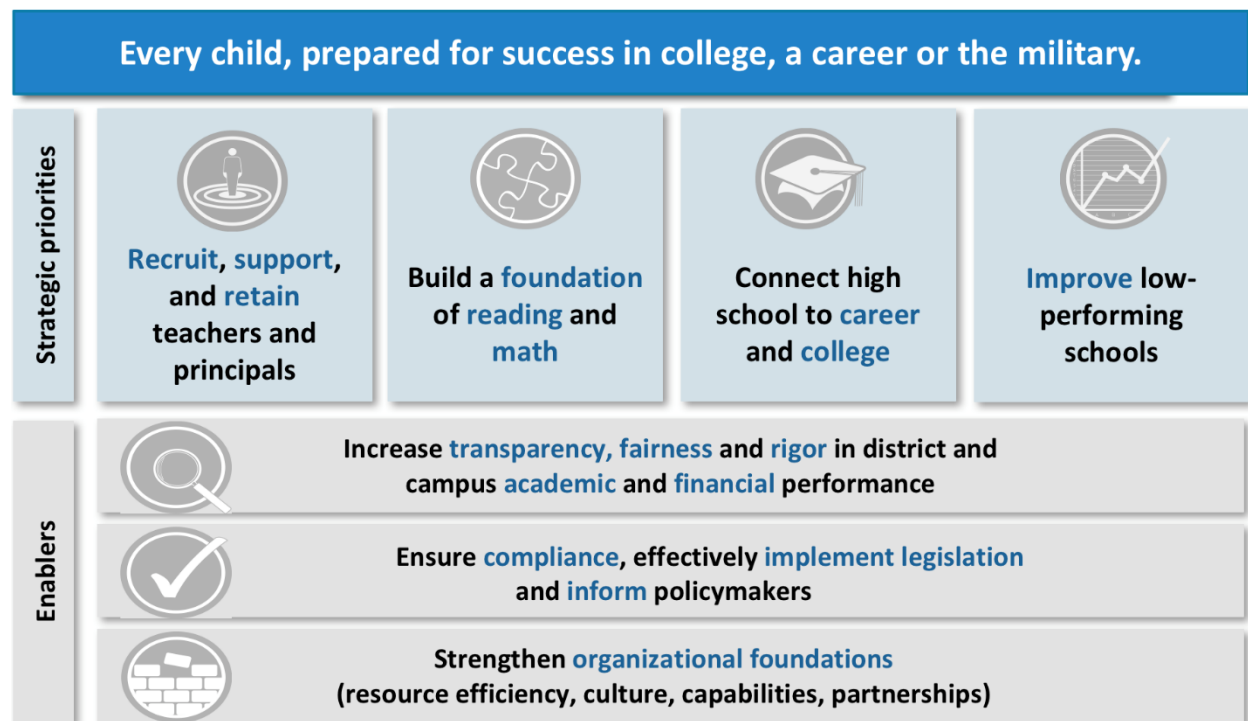
1. Texas Education Agency (TEA):  
[http://tea.texas.gov/Texas\\_Schools/General\\_Information/Innovation/Districts\\_of\\_Innovation/](http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/General_Information/Innovation/Districts_of_Innovation/)
2. Texas Association of School Boards (TASB):  
<https://www.tasb.org/Services/Legal-Services/TASB-School-Law-eSource/Governance/Districts-of-Innovation.aspx>

# COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

## TEA Strategic Plan and Priorities

The Strategic Plan is a five-year planning document required every two years that contains the agency's mission, philosophy, goals, objectives, and strategies. It is the agency's plan that documents what we intend to achieve with the funding we receive for public education.

The TEA works to improve outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems, working towards the vision that every child in Texas is an independent thinker and graduates prepared for success in college, a career, or the military, and as an engaged, productive citizen. To achieve this vision for public education in Texas, the Agency has outlined specific strategic priorities to guide and focus our work on behalf of the more than five million school children in our State.



### Pearsall ISD Vision

Leading the way, we will be the recognized leaders in preparing students for college, careers, and life.

### Pearsall ISD Mission

In partnership with families and community, our purpose is to have a learning environment that is safe, nurturing, and student-centered where everyone is accountable and all students are empowered to succeed.

### **Pearsall ISD Goals**

- Improve Academic Achievement for All Students
  - Create and implement a comprehensive curricular framework in all core subject areas for all students.
  - Develop and support effective instruction that focuses on high performance of all students.
  - Ensure a safe environment in which all students and staff are accountable.
  - Prepare all students to be college and career ready.
- Ensure Effective Communications
  - All departments will conduct a system analysis of operational processes
  - Develop an accountability, monitoring, and reporting structure for all departments and schools.
- Ensure Effective Communications
  - Develop and implement a district-wide plan to maximize two-way communication among school, family, and community.

### **Pearsall ISD Priorities**

- Students will be proficient in both reading and math at every grade level.
- Teachers will successfully incorporate engaging activities, which integrate technology, fine arts, and college and career readiness standards into the curriculum.
- Student, parent, and community engagement rate will increase.
- District personnel retention rate will increase.
- Ongoing support, to include professional development and training, for District personnel will be provided.

## TIMELINE

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>February 21, 2018</b> | Adoption of a resolution by the Board of Trustees to pursue DOI designation                                         |
| <b>February 21, 2018</b> | Public hearing considering the development of an innovation plan                                                    |
| <b>February 21, 2018</b> | Appointment of DOI Committee by the Board of Trustees to develop a local innovation plan                            |
| <b>March 1, 2018</b>     | DOI Committee meeting to develop a plan                                                                             |
| <b>March 7, 2018</b>     | DOI Committee meeting to review drafted plan                                                                        |
| <b>March 20, 2018</b>    | DOI Committee meeting to review drafted plan                                                                        |
| <b>March 21, 2018</b>    | Posting of proposed innovation plan to the Pearsall ISD website for 30 days, to allow staff and community to review |
| <b>March 22, 2018</b>    | District notification to the Commissioner of Education of intent to adopt an innovation plan                        |
| <b>March 26, 2018</b>    | DEIC meeting to review proposed DOI plan                                                                            |
| <b>April 23, 2018</b>    | DEIC Public Meeting to consider proposed DOI plan for recommendation to the Board of Trustees                       |
| <b>April 25, 2018</b>    | Board of Trustees meeting to consider proposed DOI plan                                                             |

## COMMITTEE

1. Melissa Bass, TFE Faculty/Staff
2. Laura Bernal, TFE Faculty/Staff
3. Laura Berrelez, PJH Faculty/Staff
4. Brian Blackburn, Parent
5. Susie Blackburn, INT Faculty/Staff
6. Brandy Callis, PHS Faculty/Staff
7. Rochelle Camacho, Board Member
8. Linda Chavera, TFE Administrator
9. Amy Dugosh, Parent
10. Kristi Duran, Parent
11. Brandi Feldhousen, District Administrator
12. Eric Fletcher, Board Member
13. Leticia Hernandez, Parent
14. April Hinojosa, Parent
15. Sarah Lindsey, INT Faculty/Staff
16. Juliana Lingo, INT Administrator
17. Jorge Martinez, PJH Faculty/Staff
18. Tommy Navarro, Board Member
19. Sharon Neumann, PHS Administrator
20. Victoriana Perez, PHS Faculty/Staff
21. Jenny Shafer, Parent
22. Dana Torres, Parent
23. Brenda Trevino, Parent
24. Devon Zamzow, PJH Administrator

## INNOVATIONS AND EXEMPTIONS

**First and Last Day of Instruction:** *EB Legal/Local; TEC 25.0811, 25.0812*

Currently, it is mandated that students may not begin school before the fourth Monday in August and may not end prior to May 15.

### Rationale of Exemption:

The restriction of a specific start and end date prohibits the creation of a balanced and student-centered calendar. This exemption would allow the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of our district.

### Benefits of Exemption:

Flexibility would have the following advantages:

- A better balance between instructional days during each semester.
- More instructional days in advance of standardized assessments, such as Advanced Placement, STAAR and EOC exams.
- Additional instructional time after the last official day of school to provide accelerated instruction for students retaking a STAAR or EOC exam over the summer.
- More flexibility to offer a full array of dual credit courses and better serve students, thus working more collaboratively with our institutions of higher education.
- More balanced distribution of instructional time for one-semester coursework, as students who currently take a one-semester course in the fall have fewer instructional days to master course content than students who take the same one-semester course in the spring.

### Implementation Guidance:

When planning the student and staff calendars, the District shall ensure the following:

- Winter Break should serve as the midpoint of the school year.
- Adjustments to the student and staff calendars must be budget-neutral.
- Each CEIC shall have the opportunity to develop calendar options. District faculty and staff shall have the opportunity to vote for a calendar option. Parents will be informed of the different calendar options. The DEIC shall take survey data and other practical concerns into consideration prior to making a final calendar recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
- Not starting school before the first Monday in August.

**Probationary Contracts:** *DCA Legal; TEC 21.102*

Currently, it is mandated that experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Rationale of Exemption:

The restriction of a one-year probationary period for experienced teachers new to the District is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract renewal timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to District receipt of state assessment results.

Benefits of Exemption:

Flexibility would have the following advantages:

- Provide more time to support teacher growth.
- More time to gather performance data to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Implementation Guidance:

When establishing the type of contract renewal for experienced teachers new to the District, the District shall ensure the following:

- Campus principals shall use current data to determine the type of contract renewal experienced teachers new to the District will receive.
- Experienced teachers new to the District will be limited to three years of a probationary contract.



**Teacher Certification:** *DBA Legal/Local, DK Legal/Local/Exhibit; TEC 21.003, 21.053, 21.057*

Currently, it is mandated that a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a school district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside her or his certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification. This system is complicated and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district, especially for innovative classes where certification may not exist or educators with those credentials may not be readily available. Additionally, a teacher is required 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.

Benefits of Exemption:

Flexibility would have the following advantages:

- More ability to provide advanced specialized courses in Career & Technology Education (CTE), Dual Credit courses, and other non-core areas.
- Allow the district to take into account unique financial and/or instructional needs.
- Students will have more access to specialized courses to better prepare them for their future, whether college or career.

Implementation Guidance:

When establishing use of this provision, the District shall ensure the following:

- In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator is not found for an offered class, the campus principal shall submit to the Superintendent a request for local certification that may allow a non-certified yet highly qualified professional to teach OR a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not credentialed by the state.
- The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what qualifications the individual possesses to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
- Whenever possible, lesson plans or curriculum guides to support the uncertified yet highly qualified educator will be developed or provided in partnership with certified teachers.
- In the event an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional is assigned to a course, the superintendent will inform the board of trustees. Parents will also be notified in writing.
- A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.
- All approved requests will qualify the individual for a local teaching certificate for one academic year.
- If a request is approved for an individual that is not currently SBEC certified, the employee will be at-will.

## **90 Percent Attendance Rule: *FEC Local; TEC 25.092***

Currently, State law mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, the law provides provisions for students that are in attendance at least 75 percent and less than 90 percent may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.

### **Benefits of Exemption:**

Flexibility would have the following advantages:

- Gives flexibility in time, location, and instructional methods of meeting the needs of students that allow for blended learning.
- Empower students and parents by providing them with a voice and choice in determining how educational needs can be met.
- Increased active learning opportunities.
- Provide individual student education plans.

### **Implementation Guidance:**

When establishing use of this provision, the District shall ensure the following:

- To allow students additional opportunities to obtain and/or recover credits in an innovative format. The district believes that a student's learning outcomes should be the determining factor in earning credit and a grade rather than measures such as "seat time" that do not consider the real objectives of the educational experience.
- The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Flexibility in the abstaining from the requirement means the District will not have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances, as approved by the campus principal or an attendance committee; that supports PISD's goal to improve achievement for all students.
- To meet the needs of 21st century learners, PISD would like to investigate the option to provide students credit for courses based on content mastery, not the amount of time the student spends in the classroom. This exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement for course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime and any place apart from the traditional way of delivering instruction. Additionally, our students attain valuable and meaningful learning from extra/co-curricular activities and experiences that currently count against the student's 90% attendance availability if a student has to miss part of the traditional school day.
- Relief from TEC Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of TEC Section 25.092 and in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with TEC Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with TEC Section 28.0216.