

Tulia ISD as a District of Innovation



House Bill 1842

This District of Innovation plan relates only to the specific exemptions outlined below. The district will adhere strictly to the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If it becomes apparent that changes to this plan are necessary, the district will reconvene the District of Innovation Planning Committee to discuss and potentially enact those changes. House Bill (HB) 1842 was passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session. This law gives Texas public school districts an opportunity to modify state requirements to meet the needs of their students. As a District of Innovation, Tulia ISO will have the increased flexibility necessary to customize student learning experiences. Every student is unique. If implemented properly, the unprecedented innovation enabled by HB 1842 can create a different schooling experience for every child. As a school district that puts the needs of students first, Tulia ISO cherishes the ability to make important educational decisions locally. TISO seeks, via this process, to fully bring to life the district's vision for the future. This plan requires us to evolve, to think drastically differently about critical systems in place in our school district. HB 1842 allows us to re-examine, free of unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, how we teach, how we recruit and retain talent, how we organize ourselves, how we involve our families, how we grow as a learning organization, and what kinds of educational experiences we provide. HB 1842 allows districts to exempt themselves from a limited subset of requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) "that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. . ." The purpose of HB 1842 is to spur innovation in school districts, and it the desire of Tulia ISO to become a more innovative district as a result of pursuing District of Innovation status. Because TISO seeks to make best use of local control of educational decisions for the benefit of students, we seek exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute:

Uniform School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code §25.0811)

Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposed

This flexibility of start date will allow Tulia ISO to annually determine, at the local level, what start date best meets the needs of the students and community. This enables us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, balance the amount of instructional time per semester, and provide more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff. In addition, this change will help enable students to enroll in college courses that start in early June, avoiding a hurdle that otherwise might hinder students' college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date would also allow TISO to

start classes on a Wednesday or Thursday, as a short week, easing the transition to schooling for students entering pre-k/kindergarten, as well as transitioning through the elementary schools, middle school, and high school. Students will start school no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August.

90 Percent Attendance Rule

(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code §25.092)

Currently

State law requires students to attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn class credits. The law currently requires the district to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.

Proposed

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the district to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow TISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they have attended a certain number of school days. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the district by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. TISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption. This exemption supports the district's overarching goals and provides the flexibility needed to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers. Relief from 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 Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

Teacher Contract Days

(DCB Legal, DCB Local) (Ed. Code §21.401)

Currently

Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed

This proposal reduces teacher contract days from 187 to no less than 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This stems from an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

- This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts.
- This proposal will significantly improve teacher morale.
- This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the year to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator:

(FO Legal) (TEC§37.0012)

Currently

Current law requires a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

Proposed:

The proposal is for the District to seek exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated Campus Behavior Coordinator. The district believes it can better meet the needs of its students by implementing a more personal discipline approach. This approach allows the campus principal to collaborate with and/or delegate assistant principals the responsibilities of the campus behavior coordinator. This enables administrators to spend the necessary time with students to develop a rapport that can hold students accountable while teaching them how to more effectively monitor their own behavior in the future.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation

(DNA LEGAL, DNA LOCAL) (Ed. Code §21.203) (Ed. Code §21.352) (Ed. Code §21.3541)

Currently

The state of Texas had used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) teacher appraisal system since 1997. This year a new teacher appraisal system called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) was implemented.

Proposed

A committee of administrators and teachers would have the option to develop a teacher evaluation system that would be a combination of PDAS, T-TESS, and other best practices to develop a local instrument and/or process that fits the needs and goals of TISD.

- a. Tulia ISD will utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool.
- b. This instrument will be developed with input from central administration, campus administration, and teachers. It will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-PESS, and any other relevant best practice.
- c. A minimum of 50% of a campus's teachers must be formally evaluated every year. All teachers must be formally evaluated at a minimum of every third school year. Every teacher will receive a minimum of six, informal walk-throughs per year.
- d. All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set classroom goals and a staff development plan.
- e. Principals will continue to be evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.
- f. These locally developed plans should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for Tulia ISD.

Length of School Day

(TEC§25.081)(TEC25.082)

Currently

State law currently defines a school day as 420 minutes of instruction (TEC 25.801). It also defines a school day as "at least 7 hours each day" (TEC 25.082).

Proposed

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Tulia ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days, whenever locally determined necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year. Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for our teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development. Tulia ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees, published, and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. Tulia ISD has every intent to adhere to the 75,600 minutes minimum requirement for instruction.

Teacher Certification

(TEC§21.003)

Currently

Current law requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

Proposed

The statutory certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE). Local Qualifications will allow the district to recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real world experience. The District will establish Local Criteria, such as years of experience, qualifications, and industry certifications,

to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate. Principals will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials. The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to certify the individual. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to beginning employment.

Also, to increase flexibility in course offerings and ability to hire the best qualified teacher, Tulia ISD also seeks to allow the Principal to request to Superintendent to allow a teacher to teach one section out of the certification field.

Employment Contracts

(TEC §21.102)

Currently

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.

Proposed

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member's effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Tulia ISD.