

Higgins ISD District of Innovation Plan

1. TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Exemption from: TEC 21.003, 21.053, 21.057

BOARD POLICY

DBA (Legal)

DBA (Local)

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of his/her certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board for Educator Certification. This system doesn't take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC 21.053 requires a teacher 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.

TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Rational:

Higgins Independent School District will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not reasonably possible, 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. In core subjects, K-12, individuals will preferably have a Bachelor's Degree. In case the Higgins District is not able to hire a sufficient certified teacher in core subjects (K-12), the Principal may submit a request to the Superintendent to hire a non-certified teacher. The principal and Superintendent will establish a plan of action which includes sufficient professional development hours and some type of mentorship to help the teacher become a certified in a reasonable time period. The Superintendent will present the plan to the board of Trustees prior to the employment of the individual.

The principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possess that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.

An individual with experience in the content of a course could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or a course through a local teaching certificate. The Superintendent will approve or deny the request and report the action to the board of Trustees prior the individual beginning employment. The local certificate will require an employee agreement rather than a contract. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possess that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Example: A retired CPA teaching an entry level accounting course.

The District will develop criteria requirements for individuals seeking a local certification. Those individuals with a local certification will not be guaranteed teacher contracts as outlined in TEC 21. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher

mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.

The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignments

Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

All teachers will still be required to complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board of Education rules.

2. SCHOOL START DATE

Exemption from: TEC 25.0811

Board Policy

EB Legal

EB Local

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August.

Rational:

Higgins ISD will start class no earlier than the second Monday in August (as decided by committee). This will better balance the days in the fall and spring semester and provide more educational days prior to scheduled state assessments.

Relief from the statute will allow Higgins ISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minute's requirement, rather than days.

Exemptions will allow alignment of the district calendar with dual credit classes, local universities and advanced placement exams. This will increase our college and career readiness.

Exemption will also provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES/LENGTH OF INSTRUCTIONAL DAY

Exemption from TEC 25.081, 25.082

Board Policy

EB/EC Legal

EBEC Local

TEC 25.081, 25.082 House Bill (HB)2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), 25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity. State law currently requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day (7 hours) in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75, 600 minutes required annually.

Rational:

Exemptions from the 420- minute day requirement would allow HISD the flexibility needed to alter the School day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as 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. It also has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of a school day, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time which will accommodate additional professional development/collaboration opportunities.

Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would 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 teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

4. TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS

Exemption from: TEC 21.352, 21.3541

DNA Legal

DNA Local

The State of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), teacher appraisal system since 1997. The state issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, that is called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-Tess), and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support-System (T-PESS). These systems require that the state standardized test scores be used as one of the evaluation measures for teachers and administrators.

Rational:

Higgins ISD believes it is essential to maintain flexibility in using a variety of measurements, including goal setting, observations, student growth progress toward learning objectives, and other formative assessments in determining the performance of its educators. Higgins ISD will utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool. This instrument will be developed with input from administration. It will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-TPESS and any other relevant best practice. All teachers must be formally evaluated at a minimum of once every three years. All teachers will have a pre-conference and an annual summative conference to discuss the year and set classroom goals. A local plan will be developed to evaluate both certified and non-certified instructional staff, as well as non-instructional staff. Principals will continue to be evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.

5. 90 PERCENT ATTENDANCE RULE

TEC 25.092

FEC LEGAL

FEC LOCAL

TEC 25.092 State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit.

Rational:

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than content mastery. Exemption from this requirement will allow Higgins

ISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they've attended a certain number of school days. It would also provide educational advantages to students by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with scheduling conflicts, reducing drop-outs, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. Higgins ISD will explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption.

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.

6. Number of College Days Attendance Rule

TEC 25.087

FEC Legal

FEC Local

State law allows a school district to excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that:

(1). the district may not excuse for this purpose more than 2 days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year

(2). the district adopts:

(A). a policy to determine when an absence will be excused for this purpose

(B). a procedure to verify the student's visit as the institution of higher education

Rational:

Higgins ISD has a very isolated location in relation to a number of schools that the students express interest in. Limiting students to only 2 days does not allow for students to travel round trip as well as visit a campus. Higgins ISD will waive the 2-day limit per year and adopt a policy allowing seniors to miss 4 days per year, juniors to miss 4 days per year, sophomores to miss 2 days per year and freshman to miss 2 days per year.

Higgins ISD will expand its college and career program by allowing students 9 – 12 to be excused to visit colleges that they are interested in. This will allow students to gain a greater understanding of the steps needed to achieve their college/career goals at an earlier age, before it is too late.

7. Campus Planning and Site-Based Making

TEC 11.253 and TEC 28.004

BQ, BQA Legal

BQ, BQA Local

TEC 11.253 requires the District to establish campus-level planning and decision making committees as provided by Sections 11.251 (b)-(e).

TEC 28.004 requires a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)

Rational:

Higgins, Texas is a small rural town with approximately 300 residents. The district has an enrollment of 121 students, PK through 12. The district is on one campus. Committees are limited without asking the same people to serve on several committees. The proposal to allow the Campus Planning Committee to become synonymous with the District Level Planning

committee to be known as the District of Innovation Committee with the same duties as required in law of the District Planning Committee. In addition, the functions of the SHAC will be incorporated with the DOI Committee. This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve the community of Higgins.

8. Inter-District Transfers

TEC 25.036

FDA Legal

FDA Local

TEC 25.036 Currently, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Rational:

Higgins ISD will reserve the right to revoke the transfer of a student at any time during the school year based on behavior, excessive tardies, attendance, or not remaining in good academic standing. Revocation of transfers for the above reasons is final and may not be appealed.

The principal will notify student and parent of any issues as they arrive in order to be proactive and give both the parent and student a chance to change any negative behavior affecting to these issues. In extreme cases of misbehavior, such as, but not limited to, assaults against another student or staff, revocation of transfer may occur immediately in order to maintain an effective and safe educational setting.