

District of Innovation

Friona ISD Local Innovation Plan

1. Introduction

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On July 14, 2016 the Friona Independent School's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

On July 14, 2016, the Board of Trustees nominated a District of Innovation Advisory Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on July 21, 2016 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation Plan.

2. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning August 16, 2016 and ending August 15, 2021, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

3. Innovations

A. Certification Required (TEC 21.003) (DBA Legal) (DBA Local)

TEC 21.003 states that "a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person hold an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B." Due to the lack of fully certified candidates and the rural location, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for all courses, in lieu of the requirements set forth in law except for Bilingual, English as a Second Language (ESL), or Special Education per (TAC 102.309 (a)(1)). The District does not wish to be exempted from

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any existing laws relating to teacher benefits. Flexibility to establish its own teacher certification requirements affords the District the ability to hire qualified individuals who may not hold a teaching certificate at the time.

B. *Uniform School Calendar (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB Legal) (EB Local)*

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Texas Education Code Section 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.
- Alignment of calendar with dual credit classes, Advanced Placement Exams, and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- Ensure hour/seat time requirements are met for certification courses. • Creates flexibility for Fisd to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

C. *Minimum Service Required (TEC 21.401)*

Texas Education Code 21.401 states that an educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

- The district is unable to offer competitive salaries due to current financial status. Teacher contracted days will be reduced by up to three calendar days in lieu of pay raises.

D. *Texas Education Code §22.004(i) Inhibits the Goals of the Local Innovation Plan*

TEC §22.004(i) Group Health Benefits for School Employees states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC §22.004(b) after the date a district implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all district employees. This provision also prohibits the district from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees at a lower cost. This provision does not give the district the flexibility needed to acquire benefits packages that would potentially be more attractive to prospective employees.

Exemption from Texas Education Code §22.004(i)

TEC §22.004 is not included in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to TEC §12A.004 or the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in the Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309. Therefore, in order to have the option to offer additional benefits options to employees and to increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs, the district proposes that the District of Innovation Plan be

amended to exempt the district from the health insurance requirements in TEC §22.004(i).

4. Implementation

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses and departments. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.