

Panhandle INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Local Innovation Plan

2017-2022

Purpose

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in spring 2015, and provides flexibilities to Texas public school districts designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision maker over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increase freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

District are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability

Term

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning August 1, 2017 and ending July 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended by the PISD Board of Trustees in accordance with 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 use the Panhandle Improvement Group (District Site Base Team) to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Amendments adopted by the Board of Trustees will adhere to the terms of the original plan. The District may not implement two plans.

Tentative PISD District of Innovation Timeline

Tuesday, May 23, 2017	PISD Board of Trustees adopts Resolution for District of Innovation and appoints Panhandle Improvement Group to study and come up with DOI plan for Panhandle ISD.
Wednesday, May 24, 2017	Submits letter of intent to Commissioner of Education.
Wednesday, May 31, 2017	PISD receives letter back from commissioner's office acknowledging intent to go forward with DOI process.
Monday, June 12, 2017	PIG Committee meets and votes on DOI for PISD.
Monday, June 26, 2017	Community wide public hearing
Monday, July 6, 2017	DOI Plan posted to website

Monday, July 25, 2017

Public Forum for the discussion of the DOI plan.

Tuesday, August 28, 2017

Plan presented for review to Board of Trustees and Board will consider proposed recommendation of the District of Innovation and the designation of Panhandle ISD as a District of Innovation.

Wednesday, August 29, 2017

Submit final letter to Commissioner of Education

Panhandle Improvement Group

Blair Brown Superintendent

John Strother Federal Program

Callie Land Parent

Kelly Haney Parent

Nichole Kuehler Parent

Maria Brinkley Business Representative

Shawn Wink Business Representative

Marva Roselius Elementary Teacher

Kristi Cameron Elementary Teacher

Jana Kennedy Elementary Teacher

Debbie Jones Junior High Teacher

Jessica Cates Junior High Teacher

Dane Ashley High School Teacher

Chris McKeown High School Teacher

Maria Walker High School Teacher

Exemptions

- I. Teacher certification requirements
- II. School start/date/last day of school
- III. Class size
- IV. Teacher contract days
- V. Probation/Term Bank Contracts
- VI. Bank Depository Contracts

EXEMPTIONS

1. Teacher Certification

(DK Legal) (DK Exhibit) (DBA Legal) (DBA Local) (TEC 21.002) (TEC 21.003) (21.057)

Current Law

In the event a District cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

TEC 21.002 states that “a school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under either a probationary, continuing, or term contract.

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 holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter b.”

Plan

In order to serve the students of Panhandle ISD, the decisions on certification will be made at the local level. This exception will allow Panhandle ISD to establish local qualifications and training requirements to hire teachers for hard to fill teaching positions. This exemption directly supports the move from “highly qualified” requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Panhandle ISD is committed to hiring certified applicants; however, under this plan Panhandle ISD will have the flexibility to hire external and internal applicants that do not have traditional state certifications. This will enrich applicant pools, in specific content areas if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. This exemption will also allow the district flexibility in the parent notification requirements listed in the Texas Education Code 21.057.

- The principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The
- The principal may submit to the superintendent a request to forego the reporting requirement for a teacher who is not certified under TEC 21.057 but enrolled in an alternative certification program.

Superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. The employee will be given a probationary contract until certified.

2. School Start Date/Last Day of School

(EB Legal) (EB Local) (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812)

Current Law

Texas Education code Section 25.0811 states that a school district 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. Waivers to alter the start date are no longer available. These changes occurred through the lobby of the tourism groups that argued the loss of business due to local control of school calendars.

Plan

To meet local community needs and offer a more balanced calendar through the design of the instructional periods, start dates and end dates. Instruction will not begin before the second Monday of August

- Balance six-weeks grading periods and semester schedules.
- Allow first semester to end before holiday break.
- Align curriculum of dual credit courses through neighboring Clarendon College.
- Allow calendar to be more efficient following May STAAR/EOC assessments.

3. Class size

(EEB Legal) (Ed.Code 25.112)

Current law

Kindergarten-Fourth Grade class sizes are to remain at or below a 22 student to one teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are completed at the start of the school year as well as any time a child enrolls in an elementary school at a grade level where the ratio is already maintained according to staff projections from the previous year.

Proposed Flexibility

This flexibility allows Panhandle ISD the time to staff campuses effective teachers granting local control over class size ratios. Small class sizes enable effective teachers to provide more individualized attention to each student. Having the latitude and time to seek and hire teachers enables us to best serve students with an effective student-teacher ratio. Our vision is to have the time and latitude to hire the right teacher for kids and not just any teacher to fulfill a mandate.

4. Teacher Contract Days

(DCB (legal), DCB (local), TEC 21.401)

Current Law

TEC Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten- month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Plan

Allow local control over the teacher contract days.

Requirements and advantages:

- Teachers will be required to attend a minimum of 7 days beyond scheduled student instruction days.
- Staff development will include professional development and workdays for teachers.
- Increase daily rate on professional salary scale (teachers only)
- Enhance teacher recruitment and retention
- Improve teacher morale.

5. Contract Employees

(TEC Chapter 21)

Current Law

The definition of teacher for purposes of Chapter 21 is a principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, counselor or other full time professional employee who is required to hold a certificate issued by the State Board for Educator Certification (as well as diagnosticians and nurses).

Superintendents may receive term contracts, but not probationary or continuing contracts.

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Plan

Allow local control over the issuance of a probationary or term contract.

- Relief from the Texas Education Code 21.102 will allow the district the option to increase a probationary contract out to three years for incoming teachers that were currently on a term contract in another district. This will allow the district to mentor a teacher before moving the teacher to a term contract.
- District may offer a term contract to an incoming teacher for the purposes of recruitment as long as teacher meets the needs of the district and the teacher is certified in the needed area.

6. Bank Depository Contract

(BDAE Legal) (ED. Code 45.205, 45.206)

Current Law

Currently, each district must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd numbered years. In accordance with Texas Education Code, the school district must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education

Plan

This exception is to allow the district to allow the district's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term if the district determines contract- pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the district's business.

7. Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented. Amendment approved by board 01/22/2020

(Ed. Code 22.004(i))

Currently Texas Education Code 22.004(i) 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 and at a lower cost. This provision does not give the District the flexibility needed to acquire benefits packages that would potentially more attractive to prospective employees.

Proposed

In order to have the option to offer additional benefits options to employees, the District proposes that the District of Innovation Plan be amended to exempt the District from the health insurance requirements in Texas Education Code 22.004 (i).

Summary:

PISD will use the exemptions allowed through the “District of Innovation” if the district feel like it can offer “alternative medical plans” that benefit its employees.