

EDEN CISD

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

August 2017-July 2022

HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas district to qualify as a District of Innovation. Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency. We feel this is a great opportunity for our local district to tailor plans based on the needs of our students and community. Eden CISD will exercise this authority to exempt itself from certain requirements listed in our following plan for a five year period.

TEXAS EDUCATION CODE EXEMPTIONS

The Innovation Committee reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the students who attend Eden CISD.

1. Probationary Contracts (Ed. Code 21.102)

Current Law

Eden CISD teachers with less than five years of the previous teaching experience are considered probationary the first three consecutive years of employment with the district. Teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience within the last eight years are considered probationary during the first year of employment with the district.

Rationale for Exemption

This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to state assessment results.

Innovative Strategy

Eden CISD will have the authority to offer a probationary contract for up to two years from the last date of district employment for experienced teachers new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

**2. Length of School Day
(TEC 25.081)**

Currently

State law currently requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long each day in order to count for ADA calculations, funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Rationale for Exemption

Exemption completely from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Eden CISD 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 exemptions from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.

Innovative Strategy

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.

Eden CISD 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. We will also stay inside the state minimum of minutes required for funding for the year.

**3. Contract Service Days
(TEC 21.401)**

Currently

State law currently requires educators employed in a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Rationale for Exemption

With the passage of 25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees.

Innovative Strategy

The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee’s contract should be a local decision. Determination by the district to reduce the number of teacher contract days from 187 days of service will have no effect on teacher salaries.

4. Class Size Ratio

Currently

State law states a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third or fourth grade class. (TEC 25.112)

Rationale for Exemptions

When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the agency. The school then notifies parents of the waiver or exception to class size limit. While Eden CISD recognizes that small class sizes play a positive role in the classroom, we recognize that it must be balanced with the best staff and the logistics of the timing of adding staff. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size.

Innovation Strategy

A TEA waiver will not be filed when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22.1 ration. The Superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval. This allows Eden CISD Local control over class size ratios but does not disregard the intent of the ratio requirements. This enables Eden CISD to have flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passion and needs. It allows flexibility in class size at all times for success, small groups, or large groups. This will minimize the paperwork requirements in order to free up time to place focus on student success. This will allow the district the ability to group students based upon academic, social and emotional needs without adding ongoing filings of waiver when the need arises.

5. Teacher Certification (TEC 21.003, 21.053 and 21.057)

Currently

State law states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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 their certification, the district must request emergency certification from Texas Education Agency and/or State Board Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, as well as career and technical courses. Eden CISD is located in a rural area which limits course offerings. The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

Innovation Strategy

In order to best serve Eden CISD students, decisions on certifications will be handled locally. The Principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject(s) out of his/her certification field. The Principal will be required to provide valid

reasoning for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which 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 may submit to the Superintendent a request including all the individual's credentials. The Superintendent will approve or deny the request and report the action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning employment. The local certificate will require an employee agreement rather than a contract.

In case the District is not able to hire a sufficient certified teacher, 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 certified in a reasonable time period. The Superintendent will present the plan to the Board of Trustees prior to the employment of the individual.

**6. Uniform Start Date
(TEC 25.0811)**

Currently

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Rational for Exemption

The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the need of the students, the school and the community. In addition, this flexibility allows the district to better align its starting date to accommodate the start date of colleges in which the district uses for dual credit courses. Another benefit of exempting this restriction is it allows the school to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school and high school. Additionally, the ability to change the school start date can also help to better balance the amount of days in each semester.

Innovative Strategy

Eden CISD will locally determine on an annual basis what best meets the need of students, the school and the community as it relates to the start date of school.

**7. Appraisal for Teachers & Administrators
(TEC 21.352, TEC 21.354. TEC 21.3541)**

Currently

The Texas Education Code 21.352, 21.354, 21.3541 establish the basic standards for teacher and administrator appraisal.

Rational for Exemption

Eden CISD 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.

Innovative Strategy

By claiming exemption from Secs. 21.352, 21.354 and 21.3541, the district can determine locally the most appropriate appraisal instrument to evaluate its educators. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the state-mandated appraisal system and laws, Eden CISD believes this issue should be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.