

Stratford ISD District of Innovation 2022-2027

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides Texas public school districts an opportunity to become Districts of Innovation, allowing modification of state requirements found in the Texas Education Codes. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility to improve educational outcomes for the students and the community.

Term

The plan's term is for five years, beginning June 28, 2022, and ending on June 27, 2027, unless terminated or amended by the Stratford ISD Board of Trustees per the law. If within the term of this plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility, 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.

The District seeks exemption from the following statutory requirements:

1. School Start and End Date: TEC §25.0811; TEC §25.0812

TEC §25.0811 states a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August, and TEC §25.0812 states a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Innovative Plan:

The goal is to allow for a school calendar that fits the local needs of our community, emphasizing active learning, college & career readiness, and the social and emotional needs of students. In addition, we want to improve the district attendance rate and student success through flexibility in the calendar. An exemption from the requirements of TEC 25.0811 and TEC 25.0812 will permit the District to accomplish the following goals:

- Begin instruction earlier and develop a school calendar that meets the district's needs.
- Students will begin instruction no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.
- Utilize the flexibility to complete the fall semester in December and create a better balance of days between the fall and spring semesters.
- End the school year before June 1st to allow students and teachers to participate in summer courses.
- Build-in breaks (Staff development or holiday days) each month or six weeks. Tie these to traditional business holidays if possible.
 - Starting the school year mid-week may be beneficial.
 - Look at days of staff development requirements for teachers. This will allow for greater flexibility district-wide to improve student

success and provide various staff development opportunities for employees.

2. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade: TEC § 25.092

TEC § 25.092 prohibits a student from being given credit or a final grade in a class unless the student's attendance rate is at least 90%. It permits a student with an attendance rate between 75 and 90% to receive credit if the student completes a plan approved by the school principal. It allows for an attendance committee to give a student who fails to reach the minimum attendance requirements credit or a final grade because of extenuating circumstances. Relief from TEC § 25.092 would give the District more flexibility to the District's students by permitting them to receive class credit or a final grade without placing a burden on the District's resources when students have excessive absences due to extenuating circumstances.

Innovative Plan:

- It is the District's desire and goal that students should be in attendance as much as possible.
- Students may receive class credit or a final grade if they have an attendance rate of at least 90%
- The school principal may consider extenuating circumstances, permit a student to receive class credit or a final grade if the student fails to have an attendance rate of at least 90%

3. Teacher Certification: TEC §21.003(a); TEC §21.057

TEC § 21.003 requires a certification for the positions of teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor. TEC § 21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents of students in a classroom when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the classroom for more than 30 consecutive days. TEC § 21.003 makes it difficult for the District to hire otherwise qualified staff, and TEC § 21.057 places administrative burdens on the District.

Innovative Plan:

The current state certification requirements and the district's rural, isolated location inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, and career and technical courses. This limits course offerings and the utilization of creative instructional methods district-wide. Stratford ISD will continue its quest for highly effective educators. To provide more students the opportunity to take specialized and advanced courses, the District seeks to establish its local qualification requirements for such courses in place of the requirements outlined in the law. All decisions on teacher certifications and assignments will be handled locally to serve the best interests of students.

- Allow (Certification) based on skills and experience outside the traditional teacher certification pathway. An individuals with certain qualifications who are not certified

as a teacher will be eligible to teach on a local permit in hard-to-fill positions, including:

- Advanced courses to be guided by individuals qualified at the college and university level
- Languages Other Than English (LOTE) specialty teachers/areas
- Career & Technical Education (CTE) for CTE purposes, the district could assign uncertified personnel to an assignment within their professional field of expertise.
- The DOI allows filling positions where a Texas certified professional is not available. (Allow out-of-state certifications and/or allow one or more subject(s) out of the field). Teachers must agree to teach out of subject on a local permit.
- This would allow non-certified teachers to teach for no more than two years.
- English as a Second Language (ESL/EB) and Special Education instructors are not allowed local certification under District of Innovation
- A non-certified person seeking to teach in Stratford ISD should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.
- The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee a request for DOI certification outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications.
- All hiring of new employees will be pending board approval.

4. Teacher Contract Days: TEC 21.401

TEC § 21.401 requires Chapter 21 10-month contracts to provide a minimum of 187 days of service. It also permits, when less than 180 days of instruction for students is anticipated as indicated by the district's academic calendar, a district to proportionately reduce the minimum days of service. The determination of how many days are required should be a local decision, so long as the district does not reduce the annual pay of the employee's contract based upon the number of days in the contract.

Innovative plan:

The District will determine the number of services required under teacher contracts each year at its sole discretion. The number of days will be at the district's discretion when selecting the school calendar each year and will be a combination of instructional days and staff development days to be set each year. This will allow the district to take bad weather days, provided the students have met the annual minute instructional requirements, without requiring staff to make up those days.

5. Transfer Students: TEC 25.036

TEC 25.036 states, any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district

and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

Innovative plan:

The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment, by the district, when accepting transfer students. The reason for possible revocation, during the school year, include:

- a. Suspension from school
- b. DAEP placement
- c. Expulsion
- d. Repetitive code of conduct violations
- e. Failure to maintain 90% attendance