

# **CHILLICOTHE**

## **Independent School District**

### ***LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN***

#### **Background and Timeline**

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of Innovation. On March 6, 2017, during the regularly scheduled board meeting, a public hearing was conducted to consider whether Chillicothe ISD should develop a plan for designation as a District of Innovation. The Chillicothe ISD Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution to consider developing a Local Innovation Plan. The board of trustees appointed a 6-person Local Innovation Committee to research, discuss and develop the Local Innovation Plan.

#### **Local Innovation Committee**

Todd Wilson, Superintendent – Chair  
Brenda Dunlap, Principal  
Tony Martinez, Principal  
Clint Miller, Athletic Director  
Kristie Harris, Teacher  
Katy Tabor, Teacher

On March 6, 2017 the Chillicothe ISD Board approved a resolution to have a committee investigate becoming a District of Innovation. A committee was appointed to investigate and build a plan.

The committee met on the following date, March 21<sup>st</sup>. In addition to the face-to-face meetings the committee collaborated on-line and each member reviewed plans.

The Local Innovation Committee reviewed provisions in Texas Education Code that apply to HB1842 and identified those exemptions that would provide for greater local control and more flexibility therefore benefitting the students of Chillicothe ISD.

It is the belief of the committee that we, the professionals that work with our students on a daily basis and are a part of our community, are in the best position to make decisions for the betterment of students of Chillicothe ISD. We believe we have developed a plan that will allow us to do just that.

Our committee voted unanimously, 6-0, on March 21, 2017 to post the following plan on-line for public comment and feedback. On May 9, 2017 a public meeting was held to discuss the plan. On that same date, the board of trustees approved the District of Innovation Plan and informed the Commissioner of that action.

### **1. Uniform Start Date (TEC §25.0811)**

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

#### Innovation Strategies

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.

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

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

#### Innovation Strategies

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Chillicothe ISD 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.

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 teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Chillicothe ISD 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 and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media.

### **3. Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.044, §21.053 and §21.057)**

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 the Texas

Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

#### Innovation Strategies

The current certification requirement severely limits the districts options to hire professionals with work related experience or degrees to teach a variety of courses from CTE and STEM related courses along with other required courses, such as fine arts, needed throughout the district. In order to maximize the opportunities for students to take such courses, the district will consider the qualifications necessary to create a local requirement for these courses instead of the requirements set forth in TEC 21.003(a). Exemption will allow the district to consider professionals, those with proven skills, and trade related professionals to teach courses on a full-time or even part-time basis.

The campus principal shall submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a certified or non-certified teacher to teach a subject(s) for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Background checks will be conducted and finger prints required. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following these assignments.

A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

#### **4. Class Sizes and Student-Teacher Ratios (TEC §25.111, §25.112, §25.113)**

State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio at most of 20 to 1 for average daily attendance. In Kindergarten through grade fourth the class student-teacher ratio must not exceed 22 to 1. Districts are also required to notify parents of waivers or exceptions submitted to TEA due to class size limits.

#### Innovation Strategies

At the beginning of each school year, the goal of Chillicothe ISD will be to meet the suggested student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per K-4 homeroom class. In the event that any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees and to the parents of the affected students. The determination of whether to add another teacher to bring the class under the 22:1 mandate will be made by the campus administration and superintendent. This recommendation will be reported to the Board of Trustees. A waiver will not be filed with TEA.

#### **5. Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.102(b) and DCA(Legal)**

States that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

#### Innovation Strategies

This period of time 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 the availability of end of year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Chillicothe ISD that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming

employed by Chillicothe ISD shall be for a period of two years with probationary contracts issued for each of the two years.

#### **6. Reduction in number of days for teacher contracts.**

Currently state law requires a minimum of 187 days of service for a 10-month teacher contract.

##### Innovation Strategies

Chillicothe ISD wants to implement a recruitment and retention strategy for our district employees. We currently struggle to meet the pay of area districts above the state minimum pay schedule. Reducing the number of days without reducing the current pay will be incentive to come to our district or stay in our district thereby establishing a better applicant pool and retaining good teachers.

It is understood for the potential 5 years of implementation of the agreement that this will increase the daily salary rate for the teachers due to reduction in contract days. At any time this plan ceases for any reason the contracts can revert back to 187 days and the daily rate will be recalculated to the adjusted number.