

Newcastle Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan 2017-2022

Adopted May 15, 2017



Enter to Learn and Go Forth to Serve

Ty Spitzer, Superintendent

Newcastle ISD
District Of Innovation Plan
2017-2022

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public schools to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The term of the plan will begin at the start of the 2017-2018 school year and ending with the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

Innovations

1. School start date

(TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL)

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August.

Rationale for Exemption

The current process does not allow flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter. Newcastle ISD exercises its ability under HB 1842 from the 84th Legislature to begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August.

2. Certification – General

(TEC 21.003)(21.053) (DBA LEGAL) (DBA LOCAL)

Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code provides guidance for the certification and professional training of certain school district employees. *Texas Education Code 21.003a states 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.* Chapter 21 gives the board authority to propose rules establishing the training requirements, including the minimum academic qualifications, a person must accomplish to obtain various professional certificates, enter an internship, or enter an induction-year program. The State also prohibits a District from paying certain employees without a valid certificate.

Rationale for Exemption

The current state certification requirements severely limit the District's ability to hire a range of education professionals to serve in hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit positions, as well as the District's options to hire professionals with work related experience or degrees to serve in a variety of CATE, STEM and Administrative positions. The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such positions and training courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

Newcastle ISD is located in a rural area which limits our course offerings and employee pool. These exemptions will allow more flexibility in our recruitment, retention and professional training of outstanding personnel, more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in course offerings.

3. Probationary Contracts (Amendment Aug 21, 2017)

(TEC 21.102)

State law currently limits the probationary contract period to one year for an employee new to the district, but who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the new district.

Rationale for Exemption

This period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since the teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data. Newcastle ISD will have the option to extend the probationary period for two additional years to allow more time for training/support for struggling teachers before considering nonrenewal of the probationary contract or offering a term contract.

4. Transfer Students (Amendment Aug 21, 2017)

(TEC 25.036)

State law allows a student to transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in the state if both the receiving district and the applicant's parent or guardian jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history, academic performance, and attendance records are also evaluated. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Rationale for Exemption

The administration will review disciplinary records, academic performance, attendance records, and other data of transfer students on an ongoing basis to determine if the transfer agreement is being upheld. Newcastle ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment to transfer students when they violate district expectations of attendance, discipline, academic achievement, and/or falsify documentation. This flexibility would allow the district to have the option of immediate revocation of a student's transfer status by the Superintendent or designee at any time during the school year.

Newcastle ISD District of Innovation Plan Timeline

February 20, 2017: Newcastle ISD Board of Trustees approved a Resolution to begin the District of Innovation process.

March 20, 2017: Newcastle ISD Board of Trustees held a Public Hearing to discuss District of Innovation.

March 20, 2017: Newcastle ISD Board of Trustees appointed the District of Innovation Committee.

March 21, 2017: Meeting held by the District of Innovation Committee to create the local innovation plan.

March 23, 2017: Plan posted on the Newcastle ISD website and notification sent to the TEA Commissioner of the District's intention to vote on the District of Innovation Plan.

May 1, 2017: TEA and the Commissioner were notified of the NISD Board of Trustees intention to vote on the District of Innovation Plan.

May 11, 2017: District Committee holds public hearing and the plan is approved by the District of Innovation Committee by a vote of (10-0).

May 15, 2017: Newcastle ISD Board of Trustees approve plan by a vote of (6-0). District of Innovation Plan is submitted to TEA and the Commissioner

August 10, 2017: Meeting held by the District of Innovation Committee to amend the local innovation plan. Plan was amended to add Transfer Students (TEC 25.036) and Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.102) by a vote of 10-0.

August 21, 2017: Newcastle ISD Board of Trustees approve amendments to the plan to add Transfer Students (TEC 25.036) and Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.102) by a vote of 7-0.

District of Innovation Committee

Ty Spitzer - Superintendent

Deborah Wilkinson - Dean of Students

Gordon Grubbs - Associate Administrator

Brad Wilkinson - JH/HS Teacher

Melanie Lowe - K-2 Reading Teacher

Latrisha Strawbridge - 3-5 Math Teacher

Courtney Bozeman - HS Math Teacher

Christy Eli - Technology Teacher

Delfina Garcia - Paraprofessional

Amy Ford - Parent

Rita Choat - Community Member