

District of Innovation
Dimmitt ISD Local Innovation Plan
April 1, 2022 through April 1, 2027
School Board Approval
March 21, 2022

Introduction

During the 84th Legislative Session, HB 1842 passed which allows Texas public schools to become Districts of Innovation. As such, districts are able to gain local control of certain operations currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency and become exempt from certain sections of the Texas Education Code that inhibit the goals of the district as outlined in the locally adopted Innovation Plan. Dimmitt ISD is seeking the District of Innovation status to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

Term

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning April 1, 2022 and ending April 1, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with HB 1842. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan. Any future amendments will adhere to the same term of the original plan.

District of Innovation Committee Members

Jill Millican, Superintendent
Patrice Hill, Director of Special Education
Stacy Boozer Federal Programs Director
Jason Hamlin, DMS Assistant Principal
Angelica Okamoto Student Services
Clint Seward DHS Assistant Principal
Jeanie Birkenfield DHS Counselor
Tracy Venhaus RES Teachers
Mandi Chavira DMS Teacher
Callen Edwards Counselor
Michelle Cure DMS Teacher

District of Innovation Timeline

DEIC Renewal Discussion September 30, 2021
Public Hearing December 13, 2021
Public meeting/ Website Posting January 12, 2022
School board notifies Commissioner of intent to vote January 10, 2022
DEIC passes with a majority of a 2/3rd's vote February 16, 2022
School Board Votes to approve plan Approved March 21, 2022

Innovations

School start / end date (TEC §25.0811a) (TEC §25.0812) (EB Legal)

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school 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. Local control of the instructional calendar offers the District the following advantages:

Alignment of calendar with dual credit and AP courses
Creates balanced days of instruction for each semester
Moves more instructional days prior to state mandated assessment dates

Certifications Required (TEC §21.003) (DK Legal)

Texas Education Code Section 21.003a 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. Flexibility to establish local certification requirements has the following advantages: Allows for flexibility in hiring professionals transitioning from industry to teaching

Increases possibility of course offerings, particularly in CTE and STEM
Allows for increased scheduling flexibility

Teacher Contract Days (TEC §21.401) (DCB Legal)

Texas Education Code Section 21.401 states that a contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service. An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service. Local control to reduce teacher contract days provides the following advantages:

Increase daily rate paid to teachers
Improve recruitment potential of teachers from surrounding areas

Probationary Contracts DCA(LEGAL)

TEC Code/s Requiring Exemption

TEC §21.102(b) *A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.*

Rationale

*Dimmitt ISD's desire is to have the best teachers possible for its students. When an experienced teacher is hired by DISD, an additional year beyond the one year probation is sometimes needed by the principal to observe that teacher to determine if that teacher is meeting the student's academic needs. **TEC §21.102(b)** does not allow for an additional probation year for teachers who have taught at least five of the prior eight years. The decision to keep a teacher in this circumstance on probation for a second year should be awarded to the district.*

Proposal

Dimmitt ISD administration will monitor probationary teachers who have been hired and who have taught five out of the preceding eight years. A recommendation will be made to keep a teacher on a probationary contract for a second year if warranted by the campus principal. Documentation will be on file outlining the Rationale for the decision. The principal will notify the Superintendent before renewal of any contract for the next year. The Superintendent will bring the recommendation before the Board for approval.

Kindergarten – 4th Grade Class Size (EEB LEGAL)

TEC Code/s Requiring Exemption

TEC §25.112 *A school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.*

TEC §25.113 *A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112(d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.*

Rationale

State law requires districts to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for kindergarten – 4th grade. If a class goes over the 22:1 ratio a waiver must be submitted to TEA. DCISD has rarely had to submit class size waivers, but because of funding concerns, this may change. Any waiver submitted to TEA from DISD concerning class size has never been denied. To allow DISD to eliminate the requirement of submitting a waiver would save time for personnel and avoid the red tape required by TEA. Local control must be given to the campus and district in consideration of class size for Kindergarten – 4th grade.

Additionally, a letter must be sent home to the parents of each student in the class informing them that a waiver has been filed. Historically the class size waivers submitted by DISD for an overage of the 22:1 is a result of sometimes 1 or 2 students coming into the district. Student numbers fluctuate throughout the school year, and if an extra teacher has to be added in the middle of a semester it can become an issue with placing students.

Proposal

DISD is aware of the importance of having smaller classes and the positive impact it has on students.

- *DISD can duplicate this positivity by monitoring and managing classroom size without the added effort of having to submit a waiver that leads to more paperwork for the district and the state.*
- *DISD will continue to seek a classroom ratio 22:1 or lower.*
- *If campus administration observes classes becoming over 22:1 without fluctuation, hiring a qualified teacher will be considered.*
- *Notification to parents/guardians of waivers or exceptions to class size would be eliminated.*