

District of Innovation

Friona ISD Local Innovation Plan

1. Introduction

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On July 14, 2016 the Friona Independent School's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

On July 14, 2016, the Board of Trustees nominated a District of Innovation Advisory Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on July 21, 2016 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation Plan.

2. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning August 16, 2016 and ending August 15, 2021, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, 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.

3. Innovations

A. Certification Required (TEC 21.003) (DBA Legal) (DBA Local)

TEC 21.003 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 hold an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B." The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) courses. In order to provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such course in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws relating to teacher contracts or teacher

benefits. Flexibility to establish its own teacher certification requirements affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and /or trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- Greater number of CTE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching, as well as streamlining hiring process for out-of-state teachers.
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.

B. Uniform School Calendar (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB Legal) (EB Local)

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 affords the District the following advantages:

- Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.
- Alignment of calendar with dual credit classes, Advanced Placement Exams, and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- Ensure hour/seat time requirements are met for certification courses.
- Creates flexibility for FISD to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

4. Implementation

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses and departments. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.