

**Tarkington ISD
District of Innovation
Local Plan**

Introduction

The purpose of the District of Innovation designation is to return local control to School Districts across the State of Texas. The plan allows traditional school districts the opportunity to utilize flexible operational strategies developed and approved locally.

This control provides exemption from certain laws and policies that inhibit the district from making decisions based on local goals and student needs. In order to qualify, the district must be in satisfactory Academic and Financial standing, as assessed by the State of Texas Educational Accountability Systems.

H.B. 1842 (84th Session of the Texas Legislature in 2014) in part amended Chapter 12 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to create Districts of Innovation. Districts are eligible for designation if certain performance requirements are met and the district follows certain procedures for adoption as outlined in Statute. The designation provides the district will be exempt from certain sections of the TEC that inhibit the goals of the district as outlined in the locally adopted Innovation Plan. The term of the designation as a district of innovation may not exceed 5 years. (Source: Texas Education Agency, General Information, Districts of Innovation)

The District of Innovation designation does not provide immunity from all established laws and procedures, as established by the Texas Education Code and Texas Administrative Code, but does provide relief from restrictions in many areas.

This plan, if approved, will be in effect from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2022.

Tarkington ISD Mission Statement

In the belief that all children should be educated to the fullest extent of their abilities, the Tarkington Independent School District's mission is to provide the essential academic skills and the necessary knowledge base for the student's lifelong learning. All students will be taught a core curriculum of English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, health, physical education and technology literacy. All students will acquire knowledge of citizenship and their economic responsibility, based on appreciation of our American heritage and an understanding of the importance of its multicultural richness.

Alignment with Tarkington ISD District Goals

The TISD District of Innovation proposed plan aligns with Goals 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the 2016-17 Board Goals that were adopted on May 16, 2016 by the TISD Board of Trustees.

Goal 1:

Emphasis will be placed on continued development and implementation of HB-5 components, business partnerships, CTE and dual credit offerings....and preparing our students for the global world of work.....

Goal 2:

TISD is committed to providing emerging technology resources to support professional development activities and technology integration efforts that help prepare each and every student to be post-secondary career path ready.

Goal 3:

Tarkington ISD believes that the school is the heart of the community. TISD is a district where parents and the community are informed, welcome, and vital to the success of our students. The school and the community are partners in the education process and the overall development of our children. Parents and community members are provided multiple opportunities to be involved.

Communication and input involving parents, community members, teachers, business and administrative staff via a consistent technology application is vital for efficiency and effectiveness.

Goal 4:

TISD is committed to the highest standards of financial management including operating with a high degree of transparency.

Innovations

I. Class Size: Student-Teacher Ratio (EEB LEGAL)

Statutory Citation:

TEC §25.111 Student / Teacher ratio.

TEC §25.112 Class size ratio of 22:1 for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes.

TEC §25.113 Parent notification of waivers or exceptions to class size limits.

Benefit of Exemption

- Tarkington ISD will remain within the current education code requirements regarding class size and will implement the cap and transfer process without the requirement of a waiver application to TEA, or will apply the flexibility granted by the District of Innovation in limited circumstances depending on the needs of the students at each campus.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

- The district seeks to maintain student / teacher ratios without requirement of a waiver submission.
- As student populations increase, campus principals will evaluate factors such as enrollment totals, number of teachers, individual student needs, and time of year to determine if adding another teacher is in the best interest of the students.
- A TEA waiver will not be filed when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio. Cap and transfer could remain an option if in the best interest of the students.
- Parents would still be notified when the capacity of 22:1 ratio is exceeded.

While Tarkington ISD fully intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the district seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students.

II. Uniform Start Date (EB LEGAL)

Statutory Citation:

TEC §25.0811 requires that a district not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August and last day of school (TEC § 25.0812).

Benefit of Exemption

Tarkington ISD is seeking local control of the instructional calendar to afford the following advantages:

- Provide flexibility to customize the school calendar and change the first and last day of the school year if preferred.
- Balancing the number of instructional semester days while still finishing the first semester before the holiday break in December.
- Ensures that school will finish before Memorial Day which assists in keeping a consistent graduation date and prevents the school year from going into June.
- Partial or full days available for professional learning.
- Capability to honor classroom preparation time for high quality instruction.
- Built in additional time for inclement weather days.
- Better opportunities for summer school, internships, professional certification experiences and better aligns with college semesters and industrial certification opportunities.
- The local control and flexibility to develop a variety of programs and innovative scheduling for a wide range of students.

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

- To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, based on collaborative input from parents, staff members and administrators that consider the option of moving the mandatory start date which would better benefit our students. In order to accommodate the need for balanced instructional time during the fall and spring semesters, Tarkington ISD will begin school prior to the 4th Monday in August.
- The Tarkington ISD calendar committee with representatives from each campus and auxiliary department will present two or more calendar options to the TISD Board of Trustees for their review and consideration for approval.

III. Minimum Minutes of Instruction (EB LEGAL)

Statutory Citation:

TEC §25.081 Operation of School, 75,600 Minutes of Instruction

TEC § 25.083 School day interruptions

TEC § 25.082 Length of the Instructional day

Tarkington ISD will meet or exceed the required 75,600 minutes of instruction to include intermissions and recess as required by TEC § 25.081.

Tarkington ISD will be exempt from the requirement that an instructional day must be 420 minutes of instruction each day and seven hours in length in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes.

Benefit of Exemption

Exempting from a 420 minute day schedule would allow Tarkington ISD the flexibility needed to:

- Alter the school day schedule to meet the needs of students enrolled in alternative education or dropout recovery programs as long as the 75,600 required minutes are met.
- Half days will count as long as the 75,600 minutes are met for the year.
- Provide additional days or more early release days throughout the year for teachers to have extra planning time focused on student needs and refining their practice, as well as time for professional learning related to student growth and outcomes.
- Teachers will continue to have their conference periods (TEC § 21.04) and duty free lunches (TEC §21.405).

Proposed Innovative Strategies:

- Schedule non-instructional days into the calendar to allow teachers to engage in additional targeted, relevant professional development and cross campus vertical alignment.
- The flexibility to design creative student schedules where Tarkington ISD can offer alternative programming with fewer minutes that focuses on quality programs and cost savings, designed to fit the needs of students without having to apply for an annual waiver.

IV. **Certification Required (DBA LEGAL)**

Statutory Citation: (TEC §21.003)

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.

Benefit of Exemption

- Tarkington ISD believes that the board of trustees, and district administrative staff should decide what is best for its students when determining a qualified candidate to teach career and technical education (CTE) courses; science, technology, engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses; dual credit coursework; etc.
- The exemption would allow TISD to recruit individuals from certain trades, industries, and vocations with industry specific knowledge and real world experience.
- The qualifications will be reviewed by the board of trustees and district leadership in lieu of making an appeal to the Commissioner of Education as stated in TEC §21.055.
- The district would establish local criteria for training and locally certifying individuals rather than strictly adhering to mandates as outlined in TEC §21.053.
- It would no longer be necessary to notify parents of “uncertified teachers” as outlined in TEC §21.057 if these instructors are locally certified.
- Tarkington ISD believes this to be a local decision opposed to a state mandate concerning instructors for (CTE) courses regardless if any changes or adjustments are made to certification laws.
- Exempts the requirements of TEC §21.0031 that the candidate must hold appropriate certification or permit.

Proposed Innovative Strategies

- Allows TISD the flexibility of exploring options and adding CTE courses that will benefit students that are planning to attend career and technical schools after graduation from high school for industrial training.
- The courses offered would be developed according to student interests.
- Instructors would be employed and locally certified to teach these CTE courses in order for students to attain certifications and real world experience.

V. Probationary Contracts (Subchapter C)

Statutory Citation: (TEC §21.102)

Requires that experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Exception: Tarkington ISD will, when deemed necessary, extend probationary contracts to two years instead of one.

Benefit of Exemption

- In some cases, the one year probationary period contract is not sufficient to fully evaluate teacher's effectiveness.
- Presently, a probationary contract must convert to either a term contract or a termination prior to the availability of results from state assessments.
- Allows the district flexibility to extend the probationary contract by one year.

Guidelines for Local Implementation

- The district will continue with the current practice of utilizing one year probationary contracts, moving employees to a term contract or to non-renewal, within the given time parameters whenever applicable.
- This practice will only apply to experienced teachers that are new to Tarkington ISD who have been employed as a teacher at least five of the last eight years.
- Teachers new to TISD that satisfy the 5 of 8 rule could be kept on a probationary contract up to two years.
- It will not affect any present teacher contracts that are employed by TISD.
- Employees new to the teaching profession will remain on a probationary contract for 3 years.

District of Innovation Summary

It should be clearly understood that exemptions are not locked in for the full five years. The exemptions can be evaluated yearly with potential changes and or deletions made with the recommendation of the appropriate committee and board approval.