

Zephyr ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

Process

On October 12, 2022 the committee met to review, and revise if needed, the current District of Innovation plan for Zephyr ISD. The revised plan was taken to the Board of Trustees on October 17th, 2022.

Once it was approved by the Board of Trustees, the DOI committee met to review it one more time on October 19th, 2022 and it was posted to the website.

On December 2, 2022 it was posted on the district website about a public meeting to discuss the approved District of Innovation plan. There were no changes made and it was officially sent to the Board on December 19th, 2022. On January 19th, 2023 the Board officially approved it.

Term

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in June 1, 2023 and will remain in effect for five years, through June 1, 2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. Any amendment to the Innovation Plan must follow the same process as the plan development. The District of Innovation Committee would consider any proposed amendment/s. Any amendment/s would require majority approval of the District of Innovation Committee, a majority approval of the District Site-Based Committee, and posting on the district website for 30 days. A 2/3 vote by the Board of Trustees would be required for final approval of any amendment/s.

Zephyr I.S.D. Timeline

Timeline	Activity/Task
October 12 th , 2022	<i>Initial Meeting to review and revise the current DOI plan</i>
October 17 th , 2022	<i>Board of Trustees approves the renewal and revisions for the plan as presented</i>

October 19 th , 2022	<i>Post the DOI to the website</i>
October 20 th , 2022	<i>No revisions were made and the plan was posted to the website for 30 days</i>
December 2 nd , 2022	<i>DOI committee held a Public Meeting and Approval of DOI</i>
December 20 th , 2022	<i>Board of Trustees approves the renewal and revisions for the plan as presented</i>
December 27 th , 2022	<i>Notification was sent to TEA</i>
January 19 th , 2023	<i>Board of Trustees approved the final plan of the DOI as presented</i>

District of Innovation Planning Committee

Member Name	District/Community Role
Stanton Marwitz	<i>Superintendent</i>
Kelsa Blair	<i>Principal</i>
Shana King	<i>Business Manager</i>
Wade Lowery	<i>Technology Director</i>
Holly Lowery	<i>Elementary Teacher</i>
Jennifer Cozart	<i>High School Teacher</i>
Sutton Spieckerman	<i>Special Education Teacher</i>
Maria Caballero	<i>Auxiliary Staff</i>
Krystal Butler	<i>Parent</i>
Rhonda King	<i>Cafeteria Manager</i>
Stephanie Goerdel	<i>Parent</i>
Brenda Tunnell	<i>Counselor</i>
John Rockafellow	<i>School Board President</i>
Jana Primrose	<i>School Board Secretary</i>

Proposed Exemptions

The following are the provisions of the Texas Education code that inhibit the goals of the district and from which the district seeks to exempt itself through adoption of the District of Innovation Plan.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

(EB LEGAL) (Texas Education Code 25.0811)

Current Law

25.0811 – (a) A school district may not begin instruction before the 4th Monday in August, unless the school operates year-round, or is the district has more than 190,000 students: the days are financed by local funds, or the campus is under comprehensive reform, or the majority of the students at the campus(es) are educationally disadvantaged.

Proposed

This flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. This flexibility of the start date also offers the following opportunities:

- a) This will allow the first and second semesters to be somewhat equal in the number of days of instruction.
- b) Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- c) An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments in December.
- d) Students will be afforded opportunities to enroll in summer college sessions with finalized official transcripts and staff will be able to attend summer school classes as well.
- e) This would allow an option to start school with a shorter week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school.

ZISD Local Guidelines

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

(DK LEGAL, LOCAL) (Texas Education Code 21.003)

Current Law

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. In certain circumstances, a district can use a local one-year permit. Contracted staff is required to work 187 school days.

Proposed

In order to best serve Zephyr ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow the district to consider part-time professionals to teach courses, allow industry expert professionals to transition into the teaching profession in Career and Technology and also assist in staffing high need STEM and dual credit course offerings. Out-of-state certified teachers could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. Often there are experienced certified teachers in our district that could teach a course outside of their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs. This proposal will provide more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings as well as providing condensed professional development for individual teacher learning.

Local Guidelines

- a) The campus principal shall submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject and/or grade level out of their field. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.
- b) An individual with experience in a Career and Technology field may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course. An individual may hold a teaching certification in another state for core areas or Career and Technology. An individual may have background, experience, skills or work related/ industry experience to work full time or part-time in a designated area. The principal shall submit a request to the superintendent for local certification. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the individual possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.
- c) The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification.

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS

(FDA LOCAL) (Texas Education Code 25.036)

Current Law

Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Proposed

Zephyr ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Zephyr ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

Local Guidelines

Nonresident students who have been accepted as a district transfer student may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

Texas Education Code 21.102

Current Law

TEC 21.102 (b). PROBATIONARY CONTRACT. 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.

Proposed

Zephyr ISD is seeking a two-year probationary period for all experienced teachers new to the district in order to better evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom, and/or provide an opportunity for professional growth as needed.

Local Guidelines

Teachers that are in the first year at ZISD will receive a probationary contract for the 2nd school year if they are renewed regardless of their prior teaching experience.

PRECLUSION FROM PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE UNIFORM GROUP COVERAGE PROGRAM (NEW IN 2020)

Texas Education Code 22.004

Current Law

TEC 22.004. A school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004 (b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Zephyr ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and a lower cost.

Proposed

Zephyr ISD values our staff and the quality of the total employment compensation package we can offer. One major benefit of any potential employment opportunity is quality medical insurance at the best possible cost. This exemption allows Zephyr ISD the opportunity to sample the market for group medical insurance and creates the possibility for flexibility in plan design and focus. The availability of an alternative to the current TRS options will also create a database of medical claims information from our own district employees that can be utilized to drive a targeted wellness program and increase the overall health of our employees and community.

Local Guidelines

Zephyr ISD will sample the market for group medical insurance plans through an official procurement process, evaluate the components of those plans, and then present to our employees an additional group medical insurance option (or options) alongside the TRS offerings during open enrollment. Employees would then have an additional choice in the options for group medical insurance, along with the associated benefits which come in a competitive insurance marketplace.

SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Texas Education Code 28.004

Current Law

TEC 28.004. States that a school district shall establish a local school health advisory council (SHAC) to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. While the District has established a SHAC, it will claim an exemption to section 28.004.

Local Guidelines

Zephyr ISD would allow local control by the Board of Trustees, district administration, and the SHAC committee members to make determinations regarding the SHAC, such as required number of days for meetings, the notices and retention of meetings minutes, the appointment and make-up of the SHAC members and officers, the recording of minutes, and the adoption of curriculum material for the District's human sexuality instruction.