



DUNCANVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT LOCAL INNOVATION PLAN
2022-2027
(Renewal)

Texas Education Code, Chapter 12A

Passed during the 84th Legislative Session, Texas Education Code, Chapter 12A allows Texas school districts to pursue the designation of 'District of Innovation', a provision that enables traditional independent school districts to access many of the flexibilities that are currently available to open-enrollment charter schools. Through the development and approval of a 'Local Innovation Plan', a district may obtain certain exemptions from the Texas Education Code.

District of Innovation Renewal

Duncanville Independent School District became a District of Innovation on May 8, 2017, when the District's Board of Trustees unanimously approved the Local Innovation Plan. The term of the Local Innovation Plan continued for five years and was reviewed by the District Educational Improvement Committee (DEIC) on February 28, 2022. In accordance with the law, it was amended and renewed. The DEIC will review the plan annually to ensure that it continues to support the needs of the District. If the Committee recommends changes, the Plan would be amended in the manner required by law.

The term of the Local Innovation Plan will begin April 12, 2022 and will end on April 11, 2027, unless terminated, amended, and/or renewed in accordance with the law.

Innovations

The District proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

1. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (90% Rule)

Current law: Texas Education Code §25.092:

FEC (Legal)

A student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

Exemption from this code would provide flexibility for students where one or more of the following apply:

- Are unable to attend class in the traditional brick and mortar building because of illness or family concerns.
- Would benefit from a different time structure to the school day.
- Would benefit from virtual and online classes in addition to or in place of the traditional classroom setting.
- Have excused absences and have completed all makeup work.

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(A) innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement

Exemption from this requirement will provide the district with the flexibility it needs to consider instruction and gaining credits in ways that make sense for students, especially our students who have unique needs. This exemption can be used to craft programs for nontraditional students, students with special needs, and even our youngest students to best meet their needs. Instruction does not always have to take place in a classroom seat, and this exemption will allow the district to explore more learning opportunities for various groups of students.

2. Length of Instructional Day

Current law: Texas Education Code §25.081:

EC (Legal)

For each school year, a school district must operate so that the district provides at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses. (A full school day is considered to be 420 minutes and a half school day is considered 210 minutes.)

Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:

- Individual campus flexibility, independence and creativity
- Additional opportunities for teacher professional development and collaboration
- Reduced number of minutes for pre-kindergarten students without the need for a TEA waiver
- Individualized, flexible opportunities for Alternative High School students

While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:

- There should be guidelines to establish minimum/maximum school day lengths
- Any potential cost to the district, especially relating to pre-kindergarten
- Flexible scheduling could be a challenge, especially for working parents
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Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(B) Modifications to the school day or year

Exemption from this requirement will provide the district with the ability to make creative decisions regarding professional development and teacher collaboration time. Flexibility in this area will also give the district the ability to consider options for individualized plans for students who have life circumstances that prevent them from attending traditional high schools (e.g. full time work, pregnancy/parenting, etc.) and for early childhood learning opportunities.

3. Uniform School Start Date: First Day of Instruction

Current law: Texas Education Code §25.0811 and 25.0812:

EB (Legal)

A school district may not begin instruction before the 4th Monday in August.

Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:

- First semester complete before Winter Break; instructional pacing is more beneficial
- More instructional days before State Assessments; flexibility for different types of learners and learning needs
- More professional development opportunities during the school year for teachers
- Full days for professional development opportunities as opposed to half days
- The calendar could be more aligned with college schedules, providing our students with additional opportunities

While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:

- Cost of starting early (e.g. cooling cost in August) should be considered
- All administrative regulations and policies would be followed in relation to extreme heat during recess
- Adjustments to professional development calendar will need to be addressed
- Start date should be no earlier than August 15th, the second week in August, and preferably no later than the third week of August

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(B) Modifications to the school day or year

The current law that prohibits the district from starting school before the third Monday of August forces the district into a calendar that has minimal opportunity for teacher professional development, requires the semester to possibly end after the winter break, and provides negligible time for summerschool before state-mandated assessment re-takes in the summer. Starting school even one week earlier can help minimize the negative impacts the district sees in this area. Starting early will allow for creative scheduling that allows for more intentional teacher professional development throughout the school year and also allows students to have a schedule that is more conducive to their learning.

4. Campus Behavior Coordinator

Current law: Texas Education Code §37.0012:

FO(Legal)

A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator.

Rationale:

- The campus behavior coordinator (CBC) is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Education Code Chapter 37
- On large campuses (Duncanville High School - 4,300 students) one individual is designated as CBC to manage discipline
- It is necessary to have additional administrators provide notice to parents about disciplinary incidents
- Exception to law sought to no longer require a single administrator, but to allow multiple administrators.
- The recommendation is to change wording in Campus Behavior Coordinator, Duties, and Notice to Parents section, and to change the number/who are CBCs on each campus

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees

Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses the opportunity to allow campus administrators to fully understand and get to know the students in their caseload rather than sourcing all discipline matters to one employee designated as a campus behavior coordinator. While it is imperative that all employees work together and be informed as to the discipline that is occurring on a campus, it is just as crucial for students to depend on an administrator they know and trust in all facets of their education, including their discipline. Each campus should have the freedom to designate more than one campus behavior coordinator to best meet the needs of their students and teachers.

5. State Certification Requirements for Teachers and Other Educators

Current law: Texas Education Code §21.003, §21.053:

DBA (Legal)

A person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

Rationale: By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- will have the flexibility to hire university and college instructors to provide more dual credit courses in the district
- will have the flexibility to hire those with industry expertise to provide more CTE courses (e.g. HB 5 and CTE courses)
- will have the flexibility to hire teachers on a part-time basis for secondary courses

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees

Exemption from this requirement will provide much needed flexibility to hire the most qualified candidate for teaching positions. With an increasing number of innovative courses created after implementation of HB5, finding exceptionally qualified applicants in specific fields for CTE courses who are also certified teachers is increasingly difficult and in some cases impossible. This flexibility will allow the District to provide more dual credit and CTE courses, as well as hire teachers on a part-time basis to support secondary courses. The district will continue to seek traditionally certified candidates for all teaching positions, however this exemption will allow the district to offer more courses and opportunities for our students.

**6. Probationary Contracts for Teachers Under 5 of 8 Rule:
(specifically, second probationary year for teachers hired under 5 of 8 rule)**

Current law: Texas Education Code §21.102(b)

DCA (Legal)

Probationary Contracts for first year teachers cannot exceed a maximum of three years, and for teachers new to district that have been in public education for at least 5 of last 8 years cannot exceed a maximum of one year.

By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- will have the flexibility of hiring a probationary teacher for a second year to provide for more growth and coaching when the teacher is hired under the 5 of 8 rule

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees

Exemption from this requirement will provide campus administrators and hiring officials with the additional time to fully assess and support a teacher before making decisions regarding moving the employee from a probationary contract when that employee has only been with the district for one year. It is the goal of the District to offer a term contract after the first year to teachers under the 5 of 8 Rule, but this exemption will provide more flexibility to continue to work with first year teachers under the 5 of 8 Rule that may otherwise not receive a Chapter 21 term contract for the second year in the District.

7. Transfer of Student

Current law: Texas Education Code §25.036

FDA(Local)

Any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- will be able to better ensure a safe and secure learning environment, high expectations and accountability, by establishing a process that out of district students request enrollment by completing an agreement annually.
- May revoke the transfer of a student during the school 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.

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees

Duncanville 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, Duncanville ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.