

Yoakum ISD Innovation Plan

School Board Approved on 5/8/2023

Introduction

House Bill 1842 was passed during the 84th Legislative Session in 2015 which created Texas Education Code Chapter 12 A about the District of Innovation concept. School districts would be able to access many flexibilities that have been available to open enrollment charter schools in Texas.

Term

The District of Innovation Plan was renewed by the Yoakum ISD Board on May 8th, 2023, and will become effective June 1, 2023, and will remain on effect for five years, through the 2027-2028 school year, unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance to the law. The District Site-Base Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

Innovations

1. First Day of Instruction

Current Limitation:

TEC 25.0811 states that the first day of instruction for students may not begin before the fourth Monday in August. The current process allows no flexibility in the design and balancing of instructional semesters to meet the needs of students or wishes of the local teachers, administrators and School Board who represent community interests in this matter.

Innovation Strategies:

- A. Yoakum ISD proposes to have the flexibility to begin instruction no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August for students. Teachers will report for duty no earlier than the 1st Monday of August. This change will create better flexibility in the creating of the district calendar, as well as, allowing more opportunities in scheduling meaningful and balanced staff development days.
- B. The start date will allow the district to provide more instructional minutes before state assessments.
- C. This will give Yoakum ISD flexibility to better align calendars and balance instructional minutes during the first and second semester of instruction. This will also allow the district to better align its starting date to accommodate the start and end date of colleges in which the district uses for dual credit courses. The flexibility will also allow the schools to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition of students entering kindergarten, junior high, and high school.

D. This strategy will provide for more concentrated professional development in key areas during instruction instead of planning before needs are realized

2. **Probationary Contract [TEC 21.102] [DCA (LEGAL)] Current Limitation:**

TEC 21.102 (b) states that a probationary contract may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five years of the eight years preceding employment with the district. This period of time is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data.

Innovation Strategy:

For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Yoakum ISD, that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming employed by Yoakum ISD shall be for a period of two full years with probationary contracts issued for each of the two years. Partial years will not count toward the full year requirement.

3. **Teacher Certification (TEC 21.003, 21.053, 21.044, 21.051, and 21.057)**

Current Limitation:

Due to learners having the opportunity to personalize their graduation plans and earn endorsements in areas of student such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) business and industry, public services, arts and humanities, there is a need for educators to have multiple certifications. It is particularly difficult to find educators who meet certification specifications in order to teach classes in the endorsements areas. Texas Education Code, sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.004, 21.051, and 21.057 limit the District's ability to hire educators to teach hard to fill positions. Flexibility in this areas will assist in finding quality candidates to teach certain course in order to avoid cancelling classes in the future.

Innovation Strategies:

This District is seeking flexibility in hiring professionals in certain vocations such as career and technical courses. The exemption from Texas Education Code 21.005 (d.1.) will enable the District to establish local criteria for such courses when hiring quality personnel. With the exemption, the District will not have to cancel classes that students are dependent upon in order to fulfill their certifications and graduation requirements.