



Tolar ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Renewal

HB 1842: The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842 allowing school districts to have greater local control while becoming a District of Innovation. This opportunity will allow for flexibility regarding certain state level rules and regulations in order to transform and make improvements to better serve students of the Tolar Independent School District.

When considering any plan for implementation, we will be mindful of the district's mission, vision, and goals to ensure that the needs of the Tolar ISD are met.

Tolar ISD Mission Statement: The mission of the Tolar Independent School District, in partnership with the community, is to provide knowledge and skills for our students so they will be positive thinkers, hard workers, and problem-solvers who contribute constructively to society.

Tolar ISD Vision Statements: Building tomorrow's leaders through education with pride in country, school, and self.

Tolar ISD Goals:

1. Create and maintain a culture of high expectations.
2. Recruit, retain, and support highly efficient educators.
3. Develop a culture of continuous professional learning and district improvement.
4. Develop continuity and communication throughout the district.
5. Plan, upgrade, and maintain facilities and learning environments with the future in mind.

District Advisory Committee Members:

- Candice Hull – Parent
- Anna Ballew – Parent
- Rhonda Knight – School Board Member
- Kelly Yerigan – Elementary Teacher
- Sandy Gannon – Junior High Teacher
- Lance LeFevre – High School Teacher
- Kristen Carey – Assistant Superintendent
- Travis Stilwell – Superintendent

Timeline:

- October 5, 2022 – The District of Innovation Committee met to review the current District of Innovation Plan and determined proposed revisions.
- October 10, 2022 – The Revised Draft District of Innovation Plan was presented to the Tolar ISD staff.
- October 10, 2022 – The Revised Draft District of Innovation Plan was posted to the Tolar ISD website and submission of notification of intent to renew to the commissioner.
- November 30, 2022 - The Tolar ISD School Board approved the District of Innovation Plan. It was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Tolar ISD Innovation Plan

Term:

This five-year District of Innovation Plan will become effective upon board approval in March 2023 and end in March 2028. This plan provides flexibility to incorporate innovation ideas to help us meet the goals set forth for the Tolar ISD. This plan allows for certain decisions to be made at the district level so Tolar ISD can best serve its students, teachers, and community.

Previously Adopted Exemptions:

- I. First Day of Instruction
- II. Teacher Contract Days
- III. Probationary Contracts
- IV. Certification Requirements for certain CTE courses

I. First Day of Instruction

(EB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Statute:

Students may not begin school before the fourth Monday of August. In the past, districts could apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier to meet the needs of the local community. This opportunity was met with resistance from the Texas tourism groups that lobbied to have the practice ended, because they believed it was detrimental to the Texas tourism business. Therefore, several years ago, the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that district's may not begin school until the fourth Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed exemption and flexibility:

Relief from Ed. Code 25.0811 will allow us flexibility for the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, teachers, and local community. Flexibility to start school earlier in August would help our district plan for more balanced semesters, increase teacher planning/staff development time throughout the school year, and localized decision making regarding holiday scheduling.

II. Teacher Contract Days

(Ed. Code 21.401)

Current Statute:

A contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months service. An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposed Flexibility:

The district will have the flexibility to decrease contract days from 187 to 185 days, and will maintain the flexibility to increase contract days back to 187 days prior to each school year dependent upon the school calendar and district needs. Any decrease in teacher contract days is not intended to have any effect of teacher annual compensation, though may result in an increase to a teacher's daily rate of pay.

III. Probationary Contracts

(DCA Legal) (Ed. Code

21.102) Current Statute:

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed Flexibility:

Relief from Ed. Code 21.102 will permit the district to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for certified educators. This will allow the Tolar ISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

IV. Certification Requirements for Certain CTE Courses

(Ed. Code 21.003, Ed. Code 21.053, Ed. Code 21.057)

Current Statute:

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless a person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event that a district can't locate a certified person, the district must request emergency certification from the TEA and the State Board of Educator Certification. TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present their certificate to the District before their

employment contract will be binding and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at that time. TEC 21.057 requires that the district provide written notice to parents if any inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive days.

Proposed Flexibility:

The Tolar ISD will continue to try and find certified individuals for all of its courses. However, in the event that a quality certified individual is not available for CTE courses, the Tolar ISD will have the flexibility to enter into at-will agreements with non-certified individuals that have field experience in a CTE field or a vocational skill that would provide more options for students and flexibility in scheduling.

New Exemption Requested:

I. Transfer Students

(FDA(LOCAL) and TEC 25036)

Current statute:

Currently under TEC 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. Tolar ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA(LOCAL) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer into the District shall file an application for transfer each school year with the Superintendent or designee. In approving transfers, the Superintendent or designee shall consider availability of space and instructional staff, the student's disciplinary history, and the student's academic achievement and attendance records.

Proposed Flexibility:

The Tolar ISD is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants and to all the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year.

Procedure:

Campus principals will refer requests to rescind transfer students to the superintendent who will make the final decision to retain or rescind a transfer student.