

# **DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**

## **Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, provides public school districts the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A. Districts are not exempt from statutes, including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

## **Term**

The term of the Plan is five years, beginning March 23, 2022, and concluding on March 22, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DEIC (Innovation Committee) will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board and suggest modifications to the Plan.

## **Timeline**

January 26, 2022-Board passes resolution to begin DOI Plan Development

January 26, 2022-Board holds a public hearing on DOI

January 26, 2022-Board ratifies the DEIC Committee a the DOI Committee

February 3, 2022-DOI Plan Voted on by DEIC

February 3, 2022-Public Hearing on Proposed DOI Plan

February 3, 2022-DEIC Votes on Proposed Plan

February 4, 2022– Draft plan is placed on the District website

March 23, 2022– Board of Trustees votes to adopt final plan

March 24, 2022- If approved, Board notifies Commissioner of approved plan

March 24, 2022-If approved, update policy changes with TASB

## **Committee Members**

Mandi Henkes - Teacher

Sarah Chapman - Teacher

Mandy Bates - Teacher

Kim Garcia - Teacher

Tuyen Gonzalez - Community

Sally Kurtz - Community

Jessica Huyen Tran - Business

Marcy Duran - Business

Angie Castanon - Parent

Raylynn Samora - Parent

Becky Aguilera - Government Rep

Liza Puente - District

Buddy Kelley - Principal

Stephanie Garcia - Principal

Brian Williams - District

Jared Duncum - Superintendent

Amy Marroquin - District

Lorraine Garcia - District

Julia McMains - District

Dana Buckley - District

Kinsley Marroquin - Student

# School start date (TEC §25.0811a) (EB LEGAL)

Currently, TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. This was the rule for many years; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago, the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees, who represent community interests in this matter.

## Proposed

To best meet the needs of the students, school, and community, the District will have the flexibility to determine the school start date. The date can be prior to the 4th Monday of August, as determined locally and on an annual basis.

## **Teacher certification (TEC §21.003a) (DK LEGAL)**

### Currently

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. 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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

### Proposed

The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for positions designated by the District as a critical need, including but not limited to: Career and Technology Education, Math (all levels), Science (all levels), and Computer Sciences (grades 6-12). A Bachelor's degree is preferred for core subjects. An industry certification and experience is preferred for Career and Technology Education. The campus principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials the applicant possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted. The superintendent will report these actions to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. This provision does not exempt the district from the requirement for special education teachers and bilingual/ESL teachers to be SBEC certified.

## **Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.102) (DCA LEGAL)**

### Currently

For 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. This time period 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 state assessment results.

### Proposed

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to three years from the last date of district employment.

# **Transfer Students (TEC §25.036) (FDA LOCAL)**

## Currently

TEC §25.036 states that 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. FDA LOCAL states that a transfer student shall be notified in the written transfer agreement that he or she must follow all rules and regulations of the District. Violation of the terms of the agreement may result in a transfer request not being approved the following year.

## Proposed

This proposal will allow the District to revoke a transfer at any time of the year when the Superintendent determines that the student has violated the terms of the transfer agreement, is not meeting disciplinary expectations by being assigned discipline consequences, has excessive absence issues, whose behavior repeatedly interferes with the school district's ability to educate the student body, or the availability of space and staff is impacted by the enrollment of new resident students. The decision to revoke a transfer student's enrollment can be made at any time during the instructional calendar. Students can reapply for transfer readmission after one full school year following the revocation of their transfer.

# **Class Size: Prekindergarten - Grade 4 (PISD Policy EEB Legal and TEC 25.112)**

## Currently

Texas Education Code requires that districts maintain class sizes of 22 students or less in Prekindergarten through fourth grade, and a waiver must be completed if a class exceeds that number.

## Proposed

With the exemption, PISD would continue to achieve the required student-to-teacher ratio but would be given flexibility if the ratio was exceeded during the school year, negating the need to apply for a state waiver

# **Grievance Policies (DGBA(LEGAL) FNG(LEGAL) GF(LEGAL) TEC §§ 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003**

## Currently

According to the amended and newly created Texas Education Code Sections 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, and 26A.003, the Texas Education Code requires the Board of Trustees of each school district to adopt a grievance procedure that complies with Chapter 26A under which the board shall address each grievance that the Board receives concerning a violation of a right guaranteed by this chapter, of a Board of Trustees policy, or of a provision of this title.

## Proposed

Palacios ISD has and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines as outlined in its local Board's policies DGBA, FNG, and GF. Such policies ensure thorough documentation of each step in the grievance process and provide adequate time for complaints to be filed and for complaints to be heard. All records related to grievances, including submitted forms, communications, investigations, findings, resolutions, and any corrective actions, are systematically maintained at the district level to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal and policy standards. The District is committed to monitoring the legality and appropriateness of every decision and action taken. The District is further committed to hearing, reviewing, and attempting to resolve all complaints, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. Palacios ISD's long-standing grievance policy will ensure that all such complaints are carefully reviewed and that district responses are in alignment with state and federal regulations, as well as all other local board policies. Palacios ISD follows long-established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy for hearing complaints. The district believes that a requirement for complaints to be submitted within 15 district business days from the date the grievant either knows, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action that is the subject of the grievance ensures prompt attention and resolution of concerns. In cases where the grievant does not receive the requested relief at the prior grievance level, or if the response deadline has passed without a reply, the grievant may proceed by requesting a conference with the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee to appeal the previous decision. This appeal must be submitted in writing, using the district-provided form, within ten (10) district business days of receiving the written response from Level One or Level Two. If no written response is provided, the appeal must be submitted within ten (10) days following the deadline for the response at the applicable level. The District's current grievance policies also provide for a Level Three grievance to the Board of Trustees. The accuracy of information and access to individuals who are

needed to provide necessary information surrounding an issue could be compromised after 60 to 90 days or more. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response. Palacios ISD, therefore, requests relief from the timelines, processes, and procedures imposed by 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003, and will maintain its current grievance forms, processes, and procedures for all grievants, including employees, students and parents, and the public.

Palacios ISD, therefore, requests relief from the timelines, processes, and procedures imposed by 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003, and will maintain its current grievance forms, processes, and procedures for all grievants, including employees, students and parents, and the public.