



# TEXARKANA

Independent School District

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## DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

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*December 13, 2023 – December 13, 2028*

## INTRODUCTION

HB 1842 was passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in 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 August 23, 2023, the Texarkana Independent School District's Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

The District Quality Improvement Council (DQIC) was selected to review the Local Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, district administration and local business owners. The committee met initially on October 5, 2023, to discuss and develop the plan. A follow up meeting to finalize the plan was held on October 12, 2023.

The plan was posted on the District website for 30 days, effective October 12, 2023. The DQIC voted on the final District of Innovation Plan on November 14, 2023. Texarkana ISD notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final District of Innovation Plan that was submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on December 13, 2023.

## TERM

The District of Innovation Plan became effective on December 13, 2023, and remains in effect for five years, through December 13, 2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DQIC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

## AMENDED PLAN

On May 18, 2026, the Local Innovation Committee voted to approve an amendment to our existing District of Innovation. The plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval May 27, 2026. Texarkana ISD will notify the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final Amended District of Innovation Plan on May 28, 2026.

## TIMELINE

| Timeline     | Activity/Task                                                                       |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 18, 2026 | DQIC Holds Public Meeting to Vote on Amended District of Innovation Plan            |
| May 27, 2026 | Board of Trustees Vote on Amended District of Innovation Plan                       |
| May 28, 2026 | Approved Amended District of Innovation Plan Submitted to Commissioner of Education |

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

| First Name | Last Name  | Member Category                     |
|------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Vicki      | Vital      | PARENT                              |
| Angela     | Evans      | PARENT                              |
| Angela     | Olvera     | PARENT                              |
| Heather    | Bruce      | PARENT                              |
| Madison    | Doss       | TEACHER, Nash                       |
| Jennifer   | Hartman    | TEACHER, Dunbar                     |
| Susanna    | LeJeune    | TEACHER, Wake Village               |
| Gaby       | Valle      | TEACHER, Parks                      |
| Rebecca    | Duke       | TEACHER, Morriss                    |
| Morgan     | Riley      | TEACHER, Parks                      |
| Candice    | Keith      | TEACHER, Theron Jones               |
| Kristen    | Henderson  | TEACHER, Waggoner Creek             |
| Gloria     | Shimanek   | SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER, Westlawn |
| Jordan     | High       | TEACHER, Texas High                 |
| Joe        | Nolen      | TEACHER, Texas High                 |
| Joseph     | Peck       | TEACHER, Texas High                 |
| Christina  | Herrington | TEACHER, Texas Middle School        |
| Brianna    | Black      | TEACHER, Texas Middle School        |
| Christine  | Quarles    | TEACHER, Texas Middle School        |
| Randy      | Jennings   | TEACHER, Options                    |
| Melodie    | White      | PRINCIPAL                           |
| Ben        | Renner     | PRINCIPAL                           |
| Stephanie  | Parker     | ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL                 |
| JoDee      | Lott       | ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL                 |
| D'Neisha   | Bruce      | PARAPROFESSIONAL                    |
| Amanda     | Eisley     | DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR              |
| LaTonyia   | McGary     | SCHOOL COUNSELOR                    |
| LaKing     | Harris     | COMMUNITY MEMBER                    |
| Sharon     | Maynard    | COMMUNITY MEMBER                    |
| Ben        | King       | BUSINESS MEMBER                     |
| Dan        | Davenport  | BUSINESS MEMBER                     |
| Dani       | Hamblett   | BUSINESS MEMBER                     |
| Juan       | Bustamante | BUSINESS MEMBER                     |

# EXEMPTIONS

## **§21.002 Employment Contracts**

*Currently, experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that 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.*

### **Proposed**

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member's effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Texarkana ISD.

### **Local Guidelines**

At the time of contract recommendation consideration, newly hired teachers and counselors with the district, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the district, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

### **§21.003 Certification**

*TEC 21.003(a) states a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B. TEC21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.*

### **Proposed**

In order to best serve Texarkana ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 will allow the district to consider flexible hiring, such as part time professionals to teach courses, industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology and also assist in staffing high need areas, such as STEM and dual credit. Out of state certified teachers will be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. Often there are experienced certified teachers in our district who 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 hiring and scheduling to meet student needs.

### **Local Guidelines**

- a) An administrator may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject and/or grade level out of their field.
- b) An individual may hold a teaching certification in another state. The individual may be recommended for hire based on the out-of-state certification.
- c) An individual may possess a degree and/or experience or knowledge in a particular content area, including a Career and Technology field. An administrator may submit a request to the superintendent for local certification. The administrator must specify the reason for the request and document credentials/experience the individual possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.
- d) The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification.

## **§21.203, §21.352 Teacher Evaluations**

*The State of Texas issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (TTESS). Under T-TESS, all teachers on a teacher contract and paid on the teacher payscale are currently evaluated every year utilizing TTESS unless they are exempted under criteria in DNA (Local).*

### **Proposed**

Texarkana ISD will continue to utilize TTESS to evaluate identified teachers in the classroom setting. Teachers that are in varied positions not providing whole group instruction but more individualized and varied instruction as well as other duties, need a more defined appraisal tool relevant to their position. Teachers with specialized positions will be exempted from TTESS and a local specialized alternative appraisal tool will be developed to better align with their duties and position. This exemption will allow local flexibility to evaluate performance measures for the particular job duties and expectations.

### **Local Guidelines**

The specialized positions exempted and will utilize the local alternative appraisal tool are as follows:

- Interventionist
- Teacher, Dyslexia
- Teacher, ESL
- Instructional Coach
- RTI Specialist
- 504 Specialist
- Teacher, Visually Impaired
- Teacher, Deaf Education, Auditory Impaired
- Teacher, Homebound General and SPED
- Technology Specialist
- Reading/Technology Specialist
- Other Specialized Positions not providing whole group instruction

### **Annual Local Specialized Alternative Appraisal Exception**

Teachers who are eligible for less frequent evaluations in accordance with law [see DNA(LEGAL)] and the local criteria established in this policy shall be appraised in accordance with the provisions below.

### **Less Than Annual Eligibility**

To be eligible for less than annual evaluations under specialized alternative appraisals, a teacher shall:

1. Be employed on an educator term or continuing contract;
2. Hold SBEC certification;
3. Serve on a campus that has not been rated “improvement required” on the basis of state standards;
4. Have been employed by the District for at least one year;
5. Have served in the current content or program assignment for at least one year;
6. Have served at the current campus for at least one year;
7. Have received ratings of at least “proficient” in most dimensions, with no more than one dimension “developing” in each domain on the most recent full appraisal; and
8. Have not received a rating of “improvement needed” on any area in any of the dimensions on the most recent full appraisal.

## **Frequency**

Eligible teachers shall be appraised every three years. During any school year when a complete appraisal is not scheduled for an eligible teacher, either the teacher or the principal may require that an appraisal be conducted by providing written notice to the other party. A teacher's supervisor shall have the authority to return a teacher to the traditional appraisal cycle as a result of performance deficiencies documented in accordance with state rule.

## **Action Plan**

- Appraisal tools drafted and developed for specific job performance measures relevant to position
- Present and discuss with the DQIC committee
- The Superintendent will notify the Board of the evaluation tool for the specialized positions for board consideration
- Upon board approval, impacted teachers will be notified and provided a copy of the appraisal tool aligned with their position.
- Training will be provided to supervisors utilizing the new appraisal tool for specialized teacher positions.

## **§21.402 Retire/Rehire Minimum Salary (DEA Legal)**

*Currently, all districts, when hiring a retired educator, must pay them their salary based on the TEA minimum salary scale in addition to Teacher Retirement System (TRS) surcharge which creates a budgetary limitation to employ veteran educators and their talents. An exemption from TEC 21.402 would allow flexibility through which the district could hire retired educators, adding value to the district, at a mutually agreeable rate, while still paying their TRS surcharge as well.*

### **Proposed**

#### **REEMPLOYMENT OF RETIREES**

The District may reemploy individuals who have retired under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) in accordance with applicable law and District of Innovation provisions.

A retiree who is rehired in a position that exceeds one-half time, as defined by TRS, shall be responsible for payment of the pension surcharge and TRS-Care surcharge required by law.

The Superintendent or designee may designate positions as high-need areas based on District staffing needs. High-need areas may include, but are not limited to, Special Education, Bilingual/ESL, and other shortage areas identified by the District.

For a retiree rehired into a designated high-need area, the Superintendent or designee may authorize the District to pay the pension surcharge. The retiree shall remain responsible for payment of the TRS-Care surcharge.

#### **Grandfather Provision**

A retiree employed by the District on or before May 1, 2026, shall continue under the surcharge payment arrangement in effect at the time of employment for the duration of the retiree's current assignment, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the District and the employee.

#### **Notice and Documentation**

The payment responsibility for any pension surcharge and TRS-Care surcharge shall be clearly documented in the retiree's compensation arrangement and acknowledged in writing by the employee at the time of employment or reassignment.

### **Local Guidelines**

All determinations regarding employment status, high-need designation, and surcharge payment shall be made in accordance with law and at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

## **§25.0811 Uniform School Start Date**

*A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.*

### **Proposed**

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

- An improved balanced instructional calendar results from being able to begin school earlier in August each year. With this exemption, the 2018-19 calendar for TISD has 83 fall semester student days and 89 spring semester student days. Without this exemption, the semesters would likely have been 75/97, creating a significant instructional imbalance.
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments.
- 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.
- Creates Flexibility for District to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

### **Local Guidelines**

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

## **§25.036 Inter-district Transfers**

*Under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.*

### **Proposed**

Texarkana 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 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, Texarkana ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

### **Local Guidelines**

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer 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.

### **§25.112 Class Size and §25.113 Notice of Class Size**

*Texas Education Code 25.112 limits the number of students in grades Pre- Kindergarten through 4th grade to 22. While the maximum number of students in PK-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver, the waivers must be applied for annually. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, and inform them the waiver has been submitted.*

### **Proposed**

By seeking an exception from TEC 25.112, the District would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually. While the District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code as much as possible, the District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our PK-4 students, including more flexibility when teaching, creative ways of delivering instruction, and ability to manage increases in class sizes. Research shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning and not the absolute class size. Small class sizes may have a positive effect in the classroom, but must also be balanced with the timing of adding staff, the qualifications of staff available, the makeup and chemistry of the classroom and other classroom influences.

### **Local Guidelines**

In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades PK–4, the class sizes will be reviewed by appropriate district and campus administration. The Board of Trustees will be informed of PK–4 classes that exceed 22:1. TEA waivers for class sizes exceeding 22 will not be required. An exemption from TEC 25.113 is also requested.

## **§26A.001 and §26A.002 Grievance Procedures**

*Current law created timelines of up to 90 days for grievances and allowed for adding new information in as the grievance moved through the process. It also removed many requirements on timely filing and proper filing procedures.*

### **Proposed**

The Texas Education Code 26A.001, 26A.002, changed timelines, filing requirements and procedures around grievances that make the process take far more time and makes it harder for investigating incidents. Through this DOI exemption the District will continue to use the current policy requirements and procedures to handle all grievances.

This includes:

- 15 Days of becoming aware of the decision or action to file Level 1 grievance.
- 10 Days for administrators to schedule a conference to hear grievances.
- 10 Days to provide a written response.
- 10 Day time period after written response to file a grievance at the next level.
- Valid and grantable relief is required as is timely filing.
- Forms will be available at all administrative offices.

### **Local Guidelines**

- The District will continue to follow the timeline and requirements outlined in Board policy for all grievances.

Board Policy – FNG, DGBA, GF (Legal), FNG, DGBA, GF (Local)

### **§33.006 Counselor Work Time**

*Currently, under Texas Education Code 33.006, a school counselor must “spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor’s total work time on duties that components of a counseling program developed under Section 33.005.” Further, “time spent in administering assessment instruments or providing other assistance in connection with assessment instruments, except time spent in interpreting data from assessment instruments, is not considered time spent on counseling.”*

### **Proposed**

Due to staffing limitations, this plan exempts the District from the statutory provision above that requires school counselors to spend at least 80 percent of the counselor’s total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program. This exemption directly supports the District’s commitment to high academic achievement.

### **Local Guidelines**

- The District is committed to ensuring that the academic and emotional needs of all students are met. In order to accomplish this goal with limited staffing, the District must balance the roles of academic guidance, emotional support, and other administrative tasks in each counselor's workload.
- In addition to the role of providing student support through individual and crisis counseling, this exemption will allow the District to enhance the work of school personnel and parents through the counselor’s role of guiding student goal setting and planning by promoting understanding of standardized test results and other assessment data.
- Additionally, through annual auditing, the counselor will support the District to inform accountability, action plans, time management, and systemic change. In doing so, the counselor will be useful in providing parent and guardian consultation to foster each student’s educational, career, personal, and social development.

### **§45.205 and §45.206 Bank Depository Contract**

*Currently, the District must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.*

#### **Proposed**

The District is seeking an exemption from TEC 45.205 and 45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term, if the District determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the District's business.

#### **Local Guidelines**

The District will only go out for bid if it is determined that contract-pricing is not competitive and there is an operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. The District will continue with two year contracts for our banking depository.

## COMMENTS

If you have any comments or concerns regarding the TISD District of Innovation Plan, we want to hear from you. Please email us your thoughts to: [tisdpr@txkisd.net](mailto:tisdpr@txkisd.net)

Thank you.