

TENAHA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN (HB 1842)

HB 1842 of the 84th Legislative Session, allows public schools to have more flexibility. This provides districts with the opportunity to meet the needs of our students and community.

Districts of Innovation provide opportunities for:

- Greater Local Control
- Increased Flexibility Governing Educational Programming
- Empowerment to Innovate and Think Differently

This plan would go into effect for the 2022-2023 school year through the 2026-2027 school year. The plan could be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees. We feel this is a great opportunity for our local district to tailor plans based on the needs of our students and community. We are seeking permission to start the process of renewing our District of Innovation Plan. We have identified areas that we believe will help us meet our goals. The areas identified are:

1. School Start Date
2. Class Size Waivers
3. Transfer Students
4. Absences for College Visits
5. Campus Behavior Coordinator
6. School Health Advisory Council
7. District Level and Site Based Decision Making
8. School Depository Contract
9. Student Attendance and Course Credit
10. Teacher Certification
11. Probationary Contracts
12. Allow Waivers for Administration Certification
13. Allow Flexibility for School Counselors
14. Teacher Contracts

District of Innovation Committee Members

Jerrod Campbell	Superintendent
Terry Bowlin	Curriculum, Instruction & Grants Management
Terry Ward	Principal, 7-12
Amy Collins	CDC Director/Teacher
Brian Sours	Teacher
Katha Wyatt	Teacher
Ashley Cooper	Teacher
Jose Leos	Teacher
Jade Cloudy	Teacher
Monica Garcia	Teacher
Jamie Bickham	Teacher
Shannon Rios	Teacher
Dee Lewis	Athletic Coordinator
Regina Tovar	Paraprofessional
Amanda Treat Brock	Business/Community Representative
Delfina Rico	Parent/Business Representative



TERM

Tenaha ISD’s Innovation Plan will begin on July 1, 2022, the 2022-2023 school year and conclude On June 30, 2027, the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless the plan is terminated or amended by the Tenaha ISD School Board of Trustees in accordance with HB 1842. To ensure success of Tenaha ISD students, the committee is committed to constantly monitoring and make necessary amendments to be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval, as necessary

INNOVATIONS

1. School Start Date

Exemption from (EB Legal), (TEC 25.0811)

Currently, student may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

Innovation Strategy

Flexibility of the start date allows our district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and our local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would support semester course curriculum. By moving the start date up earlier it would allow the district to better balance the two semesters. Balanced semester would align with college semesters and Texas Virtual School Network course offerings. There would be increased opportunities for summer school, internships, and industrial certification opportunities for our students.

2. Class Size Waivers

Exemption from (EEB Legal & BF Legal) (TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.113)

Currently, PK-4 classes must be kept at a 22 to 1 teacher ratio. When class sizes exceed this limit, districts must submit a waiver to TEA. If approved, the district must notify parents by specifying the class for which an exemption from the limit imposed was granted and state the number of children in the class for which the exception was granted.

Innovation Strategy

A class size exemption will allow the district the flexibility based on financial and staffing needs to adjust class size accordingly. In doing this, Tenaha ISD will not maintain the 22:1 teacher/student ratio in classes where the class size is not of a sufficient number to warrant the addition of another teacher. Our goal will remain to have small class sizes. However, in the event that it is necessary to exceed this ratio, the Superintendent will report directly to the Tenaha ISD Board of Trustees. Parental notices would only be sent at the direction of the Tenaha ISD Board of Trustees.

3. Transfer Students

Exemption from (FDA Legal and Local) (TEC 25.036)

A district may choose to accept, as transfers, student who are not entitled to enroll in the district. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Tenaha 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.

Innovation Strategy

Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. When a student's attendance, grades, or discipline fall below the

expectations, the student's transfer can be revoked at the discretion of the campus principal. In these situations, Tenaha ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

4. Absences for College Visits

Exemption from (FEC Legal and Local) (TEC 25.087b-2)

Currently, a school district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher learning accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that: (1) The district may not excuse for this purpose for more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year; and (2) The district adopts: (a) a policy to determine when an absence will be excused for this purpose; and (b) a procedure to verify the student's visit at the institution of higher education.

Innovation Strategy

In many instances, students are visiting colleges out of state, students need more than two days that are currently allowed to safely visit a college they are interested in attending or doing comparative visits to multiple campuses. Even visiting colleges across Texas many times requires for than two days due to travel distances. Tenaha ISD is seeking flexibility for an exemption from the two-day excused absence limit for students visiting institutions of higher education. Students would be allowed more than the current two-day excused absence limit. Each request and situation would be evaluated by the high school counselor on a case by case basis.

5. Campus Behavior Coordinator

Exemption from (FO Legal and Local, FOA Legal, FOC Legal, GRA, Student Code of Conduct) (TEC 37.0012)

Currently, a person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal. The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline.

Innovation Strategy

Tenaha ISD is seeking flexibility and an exemption to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. Tenaha ISD's approach to discipline is more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. An exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline.

6. School Health Advisory Council

Exemption from (BDF Legal) (TEC 28.004)

Currently, the School Health Advisory Council Committee of the school district is required to meet at least four times each year.

Innovation Strategy

Tenaha ISD will be exempt from the requirement to hold a minimum of four meetings per year. Tenaha ISD SHAC committee shall meet at least once per year. The district's size and the stability of the membership of the SHAC committee ensures that committee members are aware of the needs of the district's student and staff and are often able to review, advise, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings. The Tenaha ISD Board of Trustees and the Tenaha ISD SHAC committee will determine how often the committee should meet.

7. District-Level and Site-Based Decision Making

Exemption from (BQ Legal, BQA Legal, BQB Legal) (TEC 11.251) (TEC 11.252) (TEC 11.253) (TEC 11.255)

Currently, a long list of compliance measures has removed meaning and relevance from the district decision-making process. The requirements in content and format of the district improvement plans have shifted an otherwise important planning process into a bureaucratic process that detracts from the importance of thoughtful planning and implementation.

Innovation Strategy

Tenaha ISD district level strategic planning committee will be established as outline in TEC 11.251 to review, learn, study, and analyze multiple data sources regarding success of all aspects of district operations, most importantly students' success. The committee will meet at least two times each year and generate a strategic plan for district resources and efforts. Under the DOI, the prescriptive list of requirements in the District and Campus Improvement Plans will be replaced with a Strategic Planning process. Compliant items listed in the TEC 11.252 & TEC 11.253 will be replaced by relevant strategic plan components that will directly address the unique needs, talents, and interests of Tenaha ISD community and staff with a targeted focus on the culture, vision, and mission of our school district.

8. School District Depository Contract

Exemption from (BDAE, BBFD, CDA Legal and CDA Local) (TEC 45.205)

Currently TEC 45.205 requires that depository bank contracts not exceed a two-year term. This section provides school districts the authority to extend a depository contract for two additional years.

Innovation Strategy

In our small rural community of Tenaha has limited bank availability, the current statute requiring a Request for Proposal (RFP) promotes disruption to district operations and increases the administrative burden. Tenaha ISD will only send depository services out to bid if the district determines contract pricing becomes uncompetitive or there is some operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. There is only one local bank in the Tenaha ISD school district. Relief from this regulation will ensure that its resources are concentrated on student achievement and well being and that campus operations are not disrupted. Texas Education Agency forms will be altered to meet the needs of Tenaha ISD.

9. Student Attendance and Course Credit

Exemption from (FEC Legal and Local) (TEC 25.092)

Currently, the state of Texas mandates a student may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90% of the days the class is offered. In addition, if a student is in attendance greater than 75% and less than 90% they may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved the campus administrator and meets the instructional requirements for the class.

Innovation Strategy

The 90% rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on attendance rather than mastery of content. This exemption will allow the students to not be penalized for missing class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. The principal may approve awarding course credit if it is determined that the student sufficiently meets the instructional requirements of the course of study.

This exemption does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or UIL rules. All students will still be held accountable to all compulsory attendance requirements. Further, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

10. Teacher Certification

Exemption from (DK Legal, Local, & Exhibit, DBA Legal) (TEC 21.003) (TEC 21.0031) (TEC 21.053) (21.057)

Currently a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a school district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of his or her certification, the district must request emergency certification from TEA or SBEC. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district, especially for innovative classes where certification may not exist or educators with those credentials may not be readily available. It is also required that a teacher present his or her 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 certification at that time. As well as providing written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive days during the school year.

Innovation Strategy

Tenaha ISD proposes to handle certification decisions locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. Often there are experienced certified teachers in our district that could teach outside of their certification due to their education,

background, and/or experience. Local decisions outside of the state certification requirement would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.

A. In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator is not found, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a non-certified, yet highly qualified, professional to teach OR a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not credentialed by the state.

B. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what qualifications the individual possesses to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.

C. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. This innovation strategy will not apply to special education and bilingual teachers who must continue to be SBEC certified.

D. Whenever possible, lesson plans or curriculum guides to support the uncertified yet highly qualified educator will be developed or provided in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.

E. The superintendent will submit this action to the Board of Trustees for Board approval prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year and the employee will be at will. Teachers employed by local certification will only be offered a probationary contract.

F. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

G. The ultimate goal of Tenaha ISD is to hire fully certified and qualified individuals for all professional positions. This innovation will be utilized only, when that goal becomes unattainable.

11. Probationary Contracts

Exemption from (TEC Section 21.102)

Currently, education law governs probationary teacher contract period. Under that statute, probationary contracts 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.

Innovation Strategy

Relief from Texas Education Code (TEC) 21.102 will permit Tenaha ISD:

- A) Recommend a second probationary contract to teachers who are new to the district and who have not been employed by the district for two consecutive school years that were employed as teachers in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

- B) Employ teachers on probationary contracts for more than the three-year maximum, for a period not to exceed five (5) school years.

12. Administrator Certifications

Exemption from (TEC Section 21.003) (DK Legal)

The Texas Education Code states a person may not be employed as an administrator by a school district unless the individual holds the appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. Tenaha ISD would like to make decisions regarding certifications locally and based on the needs of the campus and students. In the event the district cannot locate a certified administrator, Tenaha ISD would like the flexibility to consider hiring non-certified individuals for the positions.

Innovation Strategy

- A. Tenaha ISD will maintain its current expectations for administrator certification and will attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the administrator position in question.
- B. Tenaha ISD will have the authority to place certified teachers in administrator positions upon request by the superintendent.
- C. The Superintendent will have final authority under this exemption to assign individuals lacking administrator certifications to administrator positions.

13. Flexibility for School Counselors

Exemption from (TEC Section 33.006) (DP Legal)

The Texas Education Code states that a school counselor must spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor's total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program developed under Section 33.005. Further, time spent in administering assessment instruments or provided assistance in connection with assessment instruments, except time spent in interpreting data from assessment instruments, is not considered time spent on counseling.

The requirements set by the Texas Education Code eliminates Tenaha ISD's counselor the ability to fulfill other important roles throughout the District that counselors have historically performed with little to no impact on their counseling duties. While Tenaha ISD still has the primary goal of counselors focusing on the school counseling program, the District would like the ability to use its counseling staff more flexibly in order to best serve the needs of Tenaha ISD students and community.

Innovation Strategy

Tenaha ISD will determine the additional duties fulfilled by school counselors in the District by considering professional education, certifications, experience and knowledge as well as the specific needs of the students and staff on the District's campus. Tenaha ISD will determine how school counselors allocate their work time to perform all duties to enable the District to meet student needs and address local challenges as the arise.

14. Teacher Contracts

Exemption from (TEC Section 21.401)(DC Legal)

TEC Section 21.401 requires a contract between a school district and an educator to be for a minimum of 10 months with a minimum of 187 days.

Innovation Strategy

With the change in requirements for student instructional time, the calendar for educators became difficult. Tenaha ISD believes local control of increased flexibility in educator contracts will allow the district to better align the number of teacher days to the student time requirements while still providing professional development.

Exempting from TEC Section 21.401 will have the following benefits:

- Teachers and staff will have all days scheduled with purpose and intention. This proposal would better align the number of teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- The educator contracts will remain Chapter 21 contracts with all other provisions and protections.
- The contracts will be based on 10 months and the number of minimum days will be established by the Superintendent each year.
- Non-contract employee's days may or may not be adjusted by the same number of days the contracted employees based on assignment and need as determined by the Superintendent.
- Contract and non-contract employees may have days adjusted without an impact on salary.
- Ten month contract days will not be above 187 days.
- New teachers to the district will be required to work up to 3 more days than teachers already in the district without additional compensation.
- Determination of the daily rate for employees will be determined each year based on the salary scales and the school calendar approved by the board. In the event of an absence deduction, employees will be charged their daily rate of pay based on the actual number of days they are required to work.

Amended March 25, 2025 by a unanimous vote of the Tenaha ISD School Board of Trustees.