



DECATUR
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRONG ROOTS, POWERFUL WINGS

Local Innovation Plan

Posted: January 19, 2017

Decatur ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Texas 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. On January 17, 2017, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation.

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, graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

Timeline of Events

October 4, 2016	Discuss process for becoming a District of Innovation at Administrative meeting
December 14, 2016	Initial meeting with Local Innovation Team
December 20, 2016	Local Innovation Team working meeting
January 12, 2017	Local Innovation Team meeting discuss draft for Board submission
January 17, 2017	Board of Trustees notifies Commissioner of Education of intent to approve plan
January 18, 2017	Potential Local Innovation Team meeting if needed

January 19, 2017	Day 1 of timeline for posting of finalized plan
February 18, 2017	Day 30 of timeline for posting of finalized plan
February 27, 2017	District of Innovation Plan presented to Board of Trustees for approval
February 28, 2017	Board-approved plan submitted to Commissioner

The Innovation Plan

1. District Calendar

Exemption from TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposal: To best serve the students of Decatur ISD, we propose to create a school calendar which serves the needs of our local community. We propose moving the mandatory start date earlier than the fourth Monday. Waiting to start classes until the fourth Monday in August forces semesters to be significantly unequal in length, with second semester being approximately four weeks longer than the first semester. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable our district to better balance instruction time in each semester as well as making an effort to end our first semester prior to Winter Break.

2. Teacher Certification and Probationary Contracts

Probationary Contracts-

Exemption from TEC 21.102 (b)-

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 of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

Proposal: This period of time may not be 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. Upon exemption from TEC 21.102 (b), all new contract employees will

be eligible to the probationary period of up to three years, allowing more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

Teacher Certification-

Exemption from: TEC §21.003(a) TEC §21.053, TEC §21.057

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 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.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC §21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Proposal: The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. 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 in question. Decatur ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to CTE and languages other than English. Special Education and Bilingual teachers will continue to be required to hold a standard teaching certificate. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

3. Class Size

TEC 25.112 limits the class size for K-4 grades to a maximum of 22:1. The district has the option to apply for a waiver in the event one of our classes exceeds this ratio.

Proposal: An exemption from class size would eliminate the time and paperwork required to file the waiver with TEA. The district does not intend to consistently exceed the 22:1 ratio. If the student/teacher ratio for all sections of a grade level reach 23:1 per campus, the district will start the process to add a teacher.

4. Discipline Options

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

TEC 37.0012 - Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator on each campus. This person is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A

Proposal: To best serve the needs of students and staff in Decatur ISD, we propose the District abstain from designating only one person as the Campus Behavior Coordinator.

Decatur ISD's elementary campuses currently have at least two administrators: one principal and one assistant principal, who by job description, serve in this capacity already. Our secondary schools each have one principal and multiple assistant principals who all work together to ensure compliance with Chapter 37, Subchapter A. Our District believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the Decatur ISD's Student Code of Conduct.

5. Flexibility in Scheduling

TEC 25.082 requires that a school day shall be at least seven hours (420 minutes) each day including intermissions and recesses. While there is already a waiver process in place to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6 day maximum for a school year.

Proposal: Exempting completely from the 420 minute requirement would give the district significant amount of local control over scheduling. The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction will assist with providing teachers with a professional learning community and/or collaboration opportunities.

6. Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates

To best serve our local Decatur ISD community, staff, and students, Decatur ISD includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any

future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a two-thirds majority vote of the Decatur ISD Board of Trustees.

Term

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is five years; therefore, the plan shall commence with the 2017-2018 academic year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Local Innovation Team will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications as needed to address innovative disruptions.

Local Innovation Plan Committee Members

Name	Relationship to DISD
Rod Townsend	Superintendent
Cindy Tatum	Deputy Superintendent, CFO
Judi Bell	Asst. Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction
Meradith Culpepper	Director, Human Resources
Troy Bagwell	Director, Technology
Holly Fuller	Director, Communications
April Whisenant	Director, Special Education
Jeff Russell	Decatur HS-Principal
Debbie Boatright	Decatur HS-Assistant Principal
Donna Russell	Decatur HS-Teacher
Sara Hurst	Decatur HS-Parent
Mike Fuller	Athletic Director
Eric McNeil	Decatur HS-Band Director
David Park	Decatur HS-Cross County/CTE
Claire Gay	Decatur HS-Volleyball/CTE

Dewayne Tamplen	McCarroll MS-Principal
Rachel Rangel	McCarroll MS-Teacher
Lisa Parr	McCarroll MS-Parent
LeeAnn Farris	Carson Elementary-Principal
Jami Petty	Carson Elementary-Teacher
Mary Dorsey	Carson Elementary-Parent
Melonie Christian	Rann Elementary-Principal
Jami Leonard	Rann Elementary-Teacher
Amber Grider	Rann Elementary-Parent
Matt Joiner	Rann Elementary-Parent and Board of Trustees
Stephanie Quarles	Young Elementary-Principal
Andria Williams	Young Elementary-Teacher
Robyn Lewis	Young Elementary-Parent