



Local Innovation Plan

Pasadena Independent School District

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to be designated as Districts of Innovation. This distinction gives local school districts increased flexibility and local control to support initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes for students. To claim this designation, a school district must adopt an innovation plan as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Process

In 2017, the initial District of Innovation local plan was approved by the Board of Trustees for a term not to exceed five years. On August 24, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved the membership of a District of Innovation Steering Committee to renew the plan. A public meeting was held on January 27, 2022 and the District Education Committee voted to approve the plan.

Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning February 22, 2022 and ending February 22, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with law. District personnel will continually monitor the effectiveness of the plan and make recommendations to the Board for suggested modifications to the plan. While the term of the plan is for five years, the district will establish local implementation criteria and timelines for each exemption based on needs that are aligned to the district's strategic priorities and goals.

Mission

Pasadena ISD provides unlimited opportunities to engage students in positive relationships, rigorous curriculum, and innovative meaning experiences.

Vision

Pasadena ISD empowers students to become accomplished, self-directed, collaborative, lifelong learners who boldly contribute to an increasingly complex and evolving world.

Local Plan

The Pasadena Independent School District's Innovation Plan includes a comprehensive educational program that is guided by and aligned with the district's Strategic Plan. The Committee hereby proposes this Plan which empowers the District to best meet the needs of all students.

The Plan claims exemption from the following Texas Education Code statutes:

- §25.112 Class Size
- §25.113 Notice of Class Size
- §25.0811 First Day of Instruction and School Start Date
- §25.092 Minimum Attendance for Credit or Final Grade
- §21.003 Certification Required
- §21.102 Probationary Contract
- §21.352 Local Role Appraisal Process
- §21.105 Resignations Under Probationary Contracts
- §21.210 Resignations Under Term Contracts
- §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator
- §37.105 Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

STRATEGIC PLAN Goal 1 – CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION
We will provide rigorous and meaningful curriculum by creating integrated learning experiences to meet individual student needs ensuring students are future ready.



CLASS SIZE and NOTICE OF CLASS SIZE

STATUTES: §TEC 25.112 and §TEC 25.113

Currently:

Statute §25.112 limits students in grades Pre-K through 4th grade to no more than 22 students per classroom. The intent of this statute maintains that a small teacher/student ratio helps students benefit from more individualized teacher attention. While a State waiver may address the maximum number of students in grades Pre-K through 4th grade, these waivers have never been rejected by TEA; therefore, it represents an unnecessary bureaucratic step. Additionally, a letter is required to inform parents of the waiver. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller teacher/student ratio before the waiver is even approved which eventually negates the need for this correspondence. Moreover, hiring staff mid-year disrupts teacher/student rapport and relationships, makes it difficult to find highly qualified teachers, and changes the dynamics of the students. The statute does not take into consideration the impact of transferring students to new classrooms in the middle of the school year.

Proposed:

It is the philosophy of Pasadena ISD that lower class sizes have a positive impact on Pre-K through 4th grade students; therefore, the district will stay true to the intent of the 22:1 ratio. We believe, however, that appropriate class sizes can be monitored and maintained at the local level without the necessity of waivers from the Texas Education Agency.

- Staffing decisions and teacher needs will be based on a projected 22:1 ratio in Pre-K through 4th grade. Pasadena ISD will continue to begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a homeroom student-to-teacher ratio of 22:1 per Pre-K through 4th grade class.
- In the event two or more core classrooms in Pre-K through 4th grade reach 24:1 on an individual campus during the first grading period of the year, the District will actively seek an additional teacher.

By seeking an exemption from §25.112, the District will have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation designation and will not be required to seek waivers annually.

FIRST DAY of INSTRUCTION/SCHOOL START DATE

STATUTE: §TEC 25.0811

Currently:

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

Proposed:

Implementation of this statute will result in the loss of 5 days of instruction in the first semester. Starting one week earlier in August allows for more instructional time prior to semester exams and more instructional time overall prior to state exams. With the approval of this District of Innovation process, we request approval to start sooner than the fourth Monday in August.

MINIMUM ATTENDANCE for CREDIT or FINAL GRADE (90% RULE) STATUTE: §TEC 25.092

Pasadena ISD believes that students demonstrate their learning by mastering content objectives. To the extent possible, individual paths to mastery are provided. While good attendance correlates with academic success, the focus in Pasadena ISD is on mastery of content over seat time. After losing credit for poor attendance, it makes little sense to require students to serve additional seat time once they make up missed assignments, demonstrate mastery of course content, and earn a passing grade. Time and resources spent by staff members and students fulfilling seat time requirements are better used in intervention and enrichment efforts.

Currently:

Per TEC 25.092, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

- A student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completed a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class.
- The Board of Trustees of each school district shall appoint one or more attendance committees to hear petitions by students who do not complete the plan showing the student met the instructional requirements of the class. Classroom teachers shall comprise a majority of the membership of the committee. A committee may give class credit or a final grade to a student because of extenuating circumstances. The Board of Trustees shall establish guidelines to determine what constitutes extenuating circumstances and shall adopt policies establishing alternative ways for students to make up work or regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences.

Presently, the Pasadena ISD plan for a student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent, but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered, is for him/her to (1) do sufficient work to earn a passing grade, and (2) serve make up time assigned based on the number of absences. Students who earn a passing grade but who do not complete their assigned make up time may submit a petition explaining specific extenuating circumstances and ask that class credit be restored. Campus administrative teams assign, track, and monitor make up time throughout each semester. Campus attendance committees meet each semester to review attendance and make up time data to determine which credits are to be restored based on petitions.

Proposed:

Students who complete assigned course work and demonstrate mastery of course content will earn credit or a passing final grade for a class in accordance with local policy and regulations that are

designed to encourage scholarly behaviors and good attendance. This will eliminate the need to calculate, impose, track, and monitor additional amounts of seat time. This proposal allows campus staff to refocus efforts on student learning and intervene with students who are truly at risk of failing due to lack of attendance.

Relief from this rule does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Additionally, opting out of this rule does not limit or modify a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with TEC 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with TEC 28.0216.

STRATEGIC PLAN Goal 3 – HUMAN RESOURCES
We will actively recruit, develop, and retain a highly qualified staff to promote a successful learning environment for all.



CERTIFICATION REQUIRED
STATUTE: §TEC 21.003

Currently:

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. The Texas Education Agency then approves or denies this request.

Proposed:

The District will continue to make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification. The District may locally grant exceptions to certification requirements to best meet the needs of PISD students. For example, but not limited to, an individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach an industry recognized skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal/district administrator will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual’s credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if she feels the individual could be an asset to students.

PROBATIONARY CONTRACT
STATUTE: §TEC 21.102

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 in Texas for at least five of the previous eight years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate an employee’s effectiveness.

Proposed:

All contract employees new to PISD that have been employed in public education in Texas for at least five of the eight previous years, may be issued a probationary contract for up to two full school years from the date of their employment with the district. This will allow the District more time to evaluate a staff member’s effectiveness prior to offering a term contract.

LOCAL ROLE (Appraisal Process)

STATUTE: §TEC 21.352

Currently:

Each school district shall use the appraisal process developed by the commissioner of education (T-TESS) or an appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the district and approved by the commissioner.

Proposed:

The performance of certain certified positions is difficult to fairly evaluate using the current evaluation system (T-TESS). Therefore, a District committee of teachers and administrators will develop alternate appraisals for teachers/certified personnel in Pasadena ISD where the adopted teacher evaluation instrument might not appropriately gauge the effectiveness of the employee.

The appraisal instrument used for evaluation of certified personnel will not include a growth measure.

**RESIGNATIONS UNDER PROBATIONARY
or TERM CONTRACTS**

STATUTE: §TEC 21.105 and 21.210

Currently:

Teachers employed under the probationary or term contracts may relinquish the teaching position and leave the employment of the district at the end of a school year without penalty by filing a written resignation with the board of trustees or the board’s designee not later than the 45th day before the first day of instruction of the following school year.

Proposed:

The proposed exemption is to change the penalty-free resignation deadline from 45 days prior to the first day of instruction to 60 days prior to the first day of instruction of the following school year. This exemption provides flexibility so that the district has an extended opportunity to recruit and hire highly effective, qualified staff.

STRATEGIC PLAN Goal 5 – SAFETY

We will establish safe schools while meeting the social, emotional, and physical needs of all students and staff in a culturally responsive environment.



DESIGNATION OF CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

STATUTE: §TEC 37.0012

Currently:

This statute requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. The person designated 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 and the implementation of this subchapter.

Proposed:

PISD seeks exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated campus behavior coordinator. The relationships that are established between a campus administrator, students, and parents are the foundation for promoting and maintaining positive behavior. Utilizing a local process allows the administrator who has a relationship with the parent and student to make parental contact. The administrator notifies the parent of discipline or behavioral concerns, rather than having contact made by a designated behavior coordinator, who may or may not be personally familiar with the student, providing a more individual and personalized approach.

UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

STATUTE: §TEC 37.105

Currently:

In accordance with Texas Education Code 37.105, a District official may refuse to allow a person to enter on or eject a person from property under the district's control if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and (1) the person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person or (2) behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and the designated official issues a verbal warning that the behavior is inappropriate and may result in refusal of entry or ejection, and the person persists in that behavior. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from school district property, the district shall provide to the person written information explaining the appeal process.

Proposed:

Any guest whose behavior is deemed inappropriate for the school setting or poses a reasonable risk of harm to any person may be removed from, or refused entry to, a District property and/or a school-sponsored event without verbal or written notice or warning, by a District official who determines the removal or refusal of entry is necessary to maintain safety and/or an appropriate educational environment. Should a District official determine it is necessary to issue a trespass warning following a removal or refusal of entry, the warning will include written information explaining the appeal process.