

District of Innovation

Summary of October 19, 2016, meeting

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m. with an overview of where we are in the process by Superintendent Dr. Randy Reid. The process for drafting, reviewing, and adopting policies relating to the District of Innovation areas was briefly discussed by Amanda Bigbee. Leah Beard then explained the process for the evening. Each subcommittee will present a summary of the work it undertook over the last couple months, including a description of the laws the subcommittee believes the District should be exempt from. The group will then be allowed to ask clarifying questions and make comments. If there is a consensus that individuals have enough information to vote, ballots for the law area are distributed. Ballots were anonymous but did request identification of stakeholder group (teacher, parent, administrator, community member, college/university representative) and then simply asked for a “yes” or “no” on exemption.

During the course of the two hour meeting the committee was able to hear from two of the four subcommittees and voted on the laws in their areas. A summary of each recommendation as well as the vote results is as follows:

“Ninety Percent Rule” for class attendance	
Texas Education Code §25.092	FEC (Legal)
Rationale: This would provide flexibility for students who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• are unable to attend class in the traditional brick and mortar building because of illness or family concerns• would benefit from a different time structure to the school day• would benefit from virtual and online classes in addition to or in place of the traditional classroom setting• are pursuing an accelerated program (i.e. music, swimming) and will be traveling extensively	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(A) innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement	
Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students by promoting engaged learning through innovative methods, locations, and times for instruction, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. To ensure that students are placed appropriately in the new options and receiving the optimal experience, we will implement a process through which counselors and administrators are able to evaluate a student’s potential success in these new program options. Students taking traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the 90% attendance requirement as it currently exists.	

Vote: 52 yes, 0 no.

Length of school day	
Texas Education Code §25.082	EC (Legal)
<p>Rationale: Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual campus flexibility, independence and creativity • Additional opportunities for teacher professional development and collaboration. • Reduced number of minutes for Early Learning Center students without the need for a TEA waiver. • Individualized, flexible opportunities for Alternative High School students <p>While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the number of shortened school days to no more than two per year. • There should be guidelines to establish minimum/maximum school day lengths 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(B) Modifications to the school day or year</p> <p>Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the ability to make creative decisions regarding professional development and teacher collaboration time. Flexibility in this area will also give the district the ability to consider options for individualized plans for students who have life circumstances that prevent them from attending traditional high schools (e.g. full time work, pregnancy/parenting, etc.).</p>	

Vote: 52 yes, 0 no.

Earliest possible school start date	
Texas Education Code §25.0811 and 25.0812	EB (Legal)
<p>Rationale: Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First semester complete before Winter Break; instructional pacing is more beneficial • More instructional days before State Assessments; flexibility for different types of learners and learning needs • More professional development opportunities during the school year for teachers • Full days for professional development opportunities as opposed to half days • Flexibility the first week of school – Students would not have a full week • The calendar could be more aligned with college schedules, providing our students with additional opportunities <p>While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of starting early (e.g. cooling cost in August) should be considered • All Administrative Regulations and policies would be followed in relation to extreme heat during recess. • Adjustments to professional development calendar will need to be addressed. • Start date should be no earlier than August 15th and preferably no earlier than the third week of August. • Prefer that students not have a full week the first week of school 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(B) Modifications to the school day or year</p> <p>The current law that prohibits the district from starting school before the third Monday of August forces the district into a calendar that has minimal opportunity for teacher professional development, requires the semester to end after the winter break, and provides negligible time for summer school before state mandated assessment re-takes in the summer. Starting school even one week earlier can help minimize the negative impacts the district sees in these area. Starting early will allow for creative scheduling that allows for more intentional teacher professional development throughout the school year and also allows students to have a schedule that is more conducive to their learning.</p>	

Vote: 51 yes, 1 no (the 1 no was a teacher)

Minimum days of attendance	
Texas Education Code §25.081	EB (Legal)
<p>Rationale: Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate credit denial, 90% rule, and Saturday school • Additional credit options for Alternative Campus • Additional credit options for working students and students who are parents • Flexibility for different learners – ADHD, GT, etc. • Elimination of TEA waivers • Potential options for half day kinder <p>While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible scheduling could be a challenge, especially for working parents • Any potential cost to the district, especially relating to pre-K. 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(A) innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement</p> <p>Exemption from this requirement will provide the district with the flexibility it needs to consider instructions and gaining credits in ways that make sense for students, especially our students who have unique needs. This exemption can be used to craft programs for nontraditional students, students with special needs, and even our youngest students to best meet their needs. Instruction does not always have to take place in a classroom seat, and this exemption will allow the district to explore more online options, project based learning outside the classroom, and the structure of programming for various groups of students.</p>	

Vote: 51 yes, 1 no (the 1 no was a teacher)

22 to 1 Elementary Class-size caps	
Texas Education Code §25.112	EEB (Legal)
<p>Rationale: Relief from this statute could potentially allow the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district does not seek to unilaterally create higher class sizes. Appropriate class sizes can be monitored and maintained at the local level. • More campus and local control to make decisions based on the unique needs of each individual classroom and campus. • Flexibility to move a child that would benefit from a new classroom environment without forcing another student to move, requiring classrooms to be split, and/or submitting a TEA waiver. • Assist campuses that may not have the room to add a classrooms reducing and/or eliminating the need for portables and forcing transfers. <p>While the District seeks freedom from this law, the following should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff prior to the beginning of the year at 22:1 for K-4 classrooms. Consider a larger ratio of students based on a campus collaborative process. • Include a “never to exceed” number, possibly 24:1 • Notify parents when classes exceed 22:1 • If another teacher will not be hired, consider adding paraprofessional support. 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees</p> <p>Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses the freedom to make decisions that are best for their students in changing circumstances. This exemption will give campuses the ability to decide when it is best to allow students to remain with a teacher they’ve grown to know and work with and when it is best to split a classroom to make two smaller classes. This exemption allows campus administrators to think about staffing in new ways, as some classes may need more support per student than others.</p>	

Vote: 45 yes, 7 no (there were 6 teacher no votes and 1 parent no vote)

The District will be moving forward with exemptions in the areas of Ninety Percent Rules, Length of School Day, Earliest Possible School Start Date, and Minimum Days of Attendance. Because half of the teachers present voted against exemption in the area of 22 to 1 Elementary Class Size Cap the committee tabled that recommendation until the next meeting so further discussion can take place. If further support is not demonstrated in another vote this specific area will not be brought forward to the Board for consideration.

The committee will meet again on Thursday, November 3, 2016 at the Education Center at 6:00 p.m. The meeting, like all previous meetings, is open to the public, and we welcome all to attend. At the November 3 meeting we will undertake the conversation on the 22 to 1 area again and also discuss the following areas:

Requirement to have in school disciplinary placements for students including minimum academic requirements for disciplinary placements	
Texas Education Code §37.008, 37.0082, 37.027, 12.131	FOCA(Legal)
Rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide greater opportunities for academics (Extra-Curricular, Dual Credit, and Advance Placement Courses on Campus) • Provide relief from location – Students have ability return to campus for above courses 	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees	
Exemption from this requirement will provide campus staff freedom in terms of choosing discipline techniques that best suit the situation and the student. It is the district’s desire to allow students to maintain rigorous coursework while in a disciplinary placement and this exemption will allow the district to think about academics in a disciplinary placement in new ways.	

Three day limitation on suspensions	
Texas Education Code §37.005	FOB(Legal)
Rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional opportunity to campuses for discipline options • Reduce need for discretionary DAEP by providing additional on campus suspension options 	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees	
Because of the law’s three day limit for suspensions, campus staff is limited in the choices of discipline that can be applied to students for moderately serious offenses. Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the option of keeping students on campus and closer to their regular teachers during a disciplinary placement rather than always opting to send students to the disciplinary alternative educational placement. Providing a range of options for the campus is a new and innovative way of thinking about discipline and more fully meeting a student’s needs while they are being disciplined.	

Campus Behavior Coordinator	
Texas Education Code §37.0012	FO (Legal)
Rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide relief for large campuses to have more than one Campus Behavior Coordinator 	
Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees	
Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses the opportunity to allow campus administrators to fully understand and get to know the students in their caseload rather than sourcing all discipline matters to one employee designated as a campus behavior coordinator. While it is imperative that all employees work together and be informed as to the discipline that is occurring on a campus, it is just as crucial for students to depend on an administrator they know and trust in all facets of their education, including their discipline. Each	

campus should have the freedom to designate more than one campus behavior coordinator to best meet the needs of their students and teachers.

Planning and preparation periods	
Texas Education Code §21.404	DL (Legal)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>By exempting the District from this law, the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will have flexibility for special days on campus (state testing, field trips, etc.). • will have flexibility of time for more collaboration during the school day. • will allow for administrative flexibility based on student needs by campus. 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(A) innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement</p>	
<p>Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the local control needed to determine how best to use staff time, especially as it pertains to collaborative planning and best meeting the needs of the students.</p>	

Duty-free lunch	
Texas Education Code §21.405	DL (Legal)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>By exempting the District from this law, the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will have flexibility for special days on campus (state testing, field trips, etc.) • will have the opportunity to build relationships with students and offer tutorials, club meetings, etc. during lunch. 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(A) innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement</p>	
<p>Exemption from this requirement will provide each campus with the local control needed to manage specially scheduled days and provide unique opportunities for building student-teacher relationships that will increase student engagement and performance.</p>	

State certification requirements for teachers and other educators	
Texas Education Code §21.003, §21.053	DBA (Legal)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>By exempting the District from this law, the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will have the flexibility to hire experts in their field even if they don't yet have a teaching certificate. • will have the flexibility in hiring "hard to fill" positions. • will have the flexibility to hire those with industry expertise (e.g. HB 5 courses). 	
<p>Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees</p>	
<p>Exemption from this requirement will provide much needed flexibility to hire the most qualified candidate for teaching positions. With an increasing number of innovative courses created after implementation of HB5, finding exceptionally qualified applicants in specific fields who are also certified teachers is increasingly difficult if not impossible. This flexibility will allow the District to hire individuals who best meet the needs of the students and provide the content knowledge our students need to enter an increasingly innovative world.</p>	

Certified employee contract rights (specifically second probationary year for teachers hired under 5 of 8 rule and suspensions without pay)	
Texas Education Code §21.102(b), §21.211(b)	DCA (Legal)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>By exempting the District from this law, the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will have the flexibility of hiring a probationary teacher for a second year to provide for more growth and coaching when the teacher is hired under the 5 of 8 rule. 	

• will have the flexibility to suspend without pay when under allegation that is covered in Educator Code of Conduct. Any decisions made regarding suspension without pay would be open to appeal through the grievance process.

Innovation: TEC Ch. 12A.003(b)(1)(E) any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees

Exemption from this requirement will provide campus administrators and hiring officials with the time needed to fully assess and support a teacher before making decisions regarding moving the employee from a probationary contract when that employee has only been with the district one year. This exemption will also allow the district to make employment and financial decisions that are in the best interest of the district when an employee is alleged to have violated serious provisions of the Educator Code of Ethics or law, including crimes against children. This flexibility from some of the provisions of Chapter 21 of the Education Code will allow the District to approach some employment issues in ways that best meet the needs of the district and take quick action to protect students when necessary.

Once all areas have been fully discussed and votes have been taken, the committee-approved version of the Innovation Plan will be posted online for at least 30 days for community review. The Innovation Plan will then go to the Board for consideration.