

A DISTRICT PLAN FOR
INNOVATION
AND
LOCAL CONTROL
2022 – 2027

Approved by the
TISD Board of Trustees

September 9, 2024

TISD Plan for Local Control

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from state statutes to:

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the spring of 2015, providing public school districts the opportunity to become Districts of Innovation. To qualify, an eligible school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan according to the Texas Education Code.

- Take greater local control in decision-making about the educational and instructional model for students;
- Have increased autonomy from state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Be empowered to innovate and plan differently to think and dream outside the box

Why is Tatum ISD seeking the state's official designation as a District of Innovation?

The Tatum ISD Board of Trustees resolved in April 2017 to seek designation as a District of Innovation.

- This plan supports exemplary practices and local decision-making processes to improve student learning.
- The board approved a District of Innovation Committee to represent teachers, parents and campus administrators.

This plan will:

- Determine a flexible start date

Timeline

February 10, 2022	DOI Committee Meeting
February 10, 2022	DOI Committee held a public meeting to consider the plan
February 10, 2022	DOI Committee approved the plan by a majority vote

May 16, 2022	Board of Trustees unanimously approved final DOI Plan
September 5, 2024	DIT Committee approved the amendments by a majority vote
September 9, 2024	All Board of Trustees present voted to approve the DOI Amendments

District of Innovation Plan

1. Start Date of School Year

(TEC 25.0811)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Tatum ISD emphasizes the importance of an innovative learning environment, college and career readiness, along with leadership and social and emotional development. TEC 25.0811 inhibits these goals by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the District to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in the semesters, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, by having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.

Proposed Plan

Tatum ISD will use this flexibility to begin the school year with students arriving no sooner than the second Monday in August. This will allow local flexibility in scheduling a calendar that meets the needs of the community and the students we serve.

2. ALLOW ALTERNATIVES TO EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION

(TEC §21.003a)

(TEC §21.057a-e)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Codes state a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certification 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 her or his certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the 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, especially for innovative classes where certification may not exist or educators with those credentials may not be readily available.

Local Innovation Strategies:

- A. In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator cannot be found for a class, 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, a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not credentialed by the state, or allow an educator to teach who is certified in a state other than Texas.
- 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. Whenever possible, lesson plans or curriculum guides to support an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional will be developed or provided by the district.
- D. In the event an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional is assigned to a course, the superintendent will inform the board of trustees and will notify parents of students who benefit from this decision.

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

3. Teacher Probationary Contracts

(TEC 21.102(b))

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code currently states that a probationary contract period 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 by the district.

Under the current statute, when a teacher or administrator is new to the district who qualifies under the 5 of 8 rule, after the first year, the district must either offer them a term contract or terminate their contract. Tatum ISD feels that this one year period is not long enough to adequately assess if the teacher or administrator is a good fit in their position and in the district.

Local Innovation Strategy:

Tatum ISD would like to have the flexibility to renew the probationary contract of a teacher or administrator employed under the 5 of 8 rule for one additional year period, for a maximum of two school years for teachers and administrators who are new to the District.

This will give the principal and/or district more time to effectively evaluate and assess the teaching, interpersonal, and/or management skills of the incoming teacher or administrator to make sure they are a good fit for the District.

4. Inter-District Transfers

(Texas Education Code 25.036)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, 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. Tatum 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, the student's disciplinary history records and attendance records are also evaluated by the Superintendent or designee. Transfer students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of 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 occasions, Tatum ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

Category of innovation

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees.

Innovation strategies

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.

5. Removal of Unwanted Visitors

(Texas Education Code 37.105)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code §37.105, applies to rejecting unruly visitors from campuses and school events. In 2017, the Texas Legislature changed the law on how school administrators can eject unruly guests from school events. This applies to parents and community members, not students. Under the law, the guest must be given a warning before he or she is ejected. Upon ejection, the guest must also be given notice of how he can appeal the ejection.

Category of innovation

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees.

Innovation strategies

The flexibility would allow designated staff members the authority to remove guests whose behavior is deemed inappropriate without warning or written notice.

6. TIME ALLOCATED TO COUNSELING DUTIES

(Texas Education Code § 33.006)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Senate Bill 179 places restrictions on duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, requires policy adoption and annual review by the school board, and limits contracting options with counselors in the district

Proposed Plan

The amendment to the Tatum ISD District of Innovation Plan allows the district to claim exemption from Texas Education Code § 33.006 (d) – (h) regarding the restrictions on duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors including a policy adoption with annual review. Tatum ISD wishes to maintain flexibility in its school counseling and guidance program by waiving compliance with TEC § 33.006 (d) that a counselor spends 80 percent of total work time identified by statute, as well as removing burdens imposed by subsections (e) – (h) related to policy adoption, annual review, and counselor employment contracts. The requirements of TEC § 33.006 (d) – (h) impede the district's ability to meet the ever-changing needs of its students and school operations by restricting the ability of TISD counselors to fulfill other important roles throughout the district, including but not limited to, special education and 504 monitoring, scheduling, student assessment, etc. While it is still the intent and goal of TISD that its certified counselors focus on the school counseling program, temporal restrictions, and time logging/tracking requirements, which would be necessary to confirm strict adherence to an 80/20 duty allocation, are an ineffective use of employee time and impedes the district's ability to use its counseling staff in a variety of roles to best serve the needs of TISD students and the community. TISD will exercise local discretion in determining the additional duties fulfilled by certified counselors in the district, by taking into account each individual counselor's professional education, certifications, experience, and knowledge, and will also consider the specific needs of the students and staff on each campus.

7. SUSPENSION LIMITATION FOR STUDENTS BELOW 3rd GRADE
(Texas Education Code § 37.005)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Under the law, a student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension unless the conduct contains the elements related to specific Penal Code violations outlined within the Tatum Independent School District Code of Conduct.

Proposed Plan

To best serve the students of TISD and provide a high-quality educational environment for all students, faculty, and staff, the District proposes that school administrators be able to exercise professional judgment and place students of any grade level in out-of-school suspension for a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and when they deem it necessary for safety and to maintain an orderly learning environment for all stakeholders.

The Tatum Independent School District will continue to monitor the suspension of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure that District Policy and the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the District. Exemption from this requirement will provide elementary campuses placement options in the event a student's behavior reaches a level of such disruption that immediate action should be taken to maintain the effectiveness and safety of the educational environment for all students and staff.

8. Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education Instruction
(Texas Education Code §28.004)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

(a)The board of trustees of each school district shall establish a local school health advisory council to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. (b) A school district must consider the recommendations of the local school health advisory council before changing the district's health education curriculum or instruction.

Proposed Plan

Tatum ISD is committed to ensuring community values are reflected in all areas of the district's instructional program including health education. Due to our size, many of the requirements regarding the makeup of the committees result in an overlap of membership between them, and a redundancy of effort occurs. By placing this requirement with the current established DOI committee, we believe we can more efficiently implement this process.

Local Innovation Strategy

The SHAC shall meet one time per year and may be in conjunction with the District Improvement Committee as needed.

- As a small district, committee members are intimately aware of the needs of the District's students, as well as the values that are to be promoted within the community.
- With the limited number of stakeholders and the likelihood that community members who are actively involved serve the school in many ways and often serve on more than one committee or group, it is recommended that the committees meet at the same time, location, or date to complete duties and business of the committee.

9. CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

(Texas Education Code §37.0012)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Having a single person at each campus responsible for student discipline is not feasible due to the size of our schools and the necessity for the person administering discipline to have knowledge and understanding of each student's unique circumstances. Having only one person at each campus designated as a "campus behavior coordinator" is not feasible nor in the best interest of the District's students, their families, staff, or campus safety.

Proposed Plan

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

The recommendation is to change the wording in the Campus Behavior Coordinator, Duties, and Notice to Parents section and the quantity/designee.

The student discipline structure in the District's schools utilizes assistant principals, typically assigned by grade level or alphabet, to be responsible for the discipline of students assigned to them. This allows administrators to build relationships with students and their families in case there is a discipline issue, as well as ensuring the administrator will have a better understanding of the student and his or her situation. The District also employs school psychologists who assist students with behavior or discipline issues. Decisions regarding student behavior and discipline are collaborative to ensure student needs are met and District schools are safe. Campus administrators, primarily assistant principals, will be responsible for implementing Chapter 37 and the District's Student Code of Conduct. The District will assign one administrator as the lead contact for student discipline and whose job duties will include reviewing discipline data, analyzing discipline trends, and collaborating with staff to address student behavior issues.