

West Hardin CCISD

District of Innovation Plan



HB 1842 of the 84th Legislative Session,
allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation.
Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations
that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.

I. INTRODUCTION

The District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemption from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code.

As a District of Innovation, West Hardin CCISD will have (1) greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students; (2) increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and (3) power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

II. OUR PROCESS-TIMELINE

On January 15, 2018, after a public hearing for DOI discussion, the West Hardin County CISD Board of Trustees (Board) passed a resolution to adopt a District of Innovation (DOI) plan and appointed a DOI Advisory Committee. The Committee was comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents/community members, and administrators.

2017-2018 DOI Committee Members

Jim Armstrong--Superintendent	Jessica Payne--Parent
D'Wanna Rasnick--Director of C, I & A	David Pickett--Teacher
Amanda Atkinson--Counselor	Velisha Shoats--Teacher
Jim Crews--Teacher	Gina Strahan--Teacher
Teresa Hughes--Teacher	Michael Tucker--Teacher
Leisha Marshall--504 Coordinator	Sheri Weaver--Teacher
Tiffany Merriwether--ES Principal	Heather Williams--Teacher
Michael Smith--SS Principal	Charlene Zwahr--Librarian

Timeline

October 25, 2017 - Initial planning meeting (possibilities of DOI)

November 9, 2017 - DOI Plan development

January 15, 2018 – Public Hearing for discussion of resolution

– Board approves a Resolution to Adopt a DOI Plan

– Appoints DOI Committee

February 13, 2018 – DOI Committee meets to make any plan revisions

May 1, 2018 – DOI Plan posted on website

May 2018 – Notify Commissioner of Education of DOI Plan approval

May 31, 2018 – TEA requests some points of clarification

July 9 – 15, 2018 – Plan revised to address requested clarifications

July 16, 2018 – Board approves revisions

July 17, 2018 – Plan resubmitted to Commissioner of Education

– Plan reposted on website

III. TERM - IMPLEMENTATION

The term of the plan is for five years; January 15, 2018 – January 14, 2023 unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. WHCCISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

The specific implementation of the plan will be developed by the appropriate campuses and principals. Any needed adjustments to WHCCISD Board Policy will be researched, reviewed, and adopted by the Board. Any needed adjustments to district guidelines will be researched, reviewed, and amended by the administrator or team.

IV. INNOVATIONS

1. School start date (EB LEGAL); (TEC 25.0811)

Currently: Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

For many years this was the rule, however districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday.

The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed: To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the mandatory start date back one week which would better benefit our students.

- A) Students will begin no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August.
- B) Teachers will begin no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.
- C) Both semesters will be to more similar in length.
- D) Increase District attendance and student success through calendar flexibility.

2. Submitting waivers for Kindergarten – Grade 4 class size (EEB LEGAL); (TEC 25.111; 25.112; 25.113)

Currently: Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 to 1 student-teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio. The proposals below give WHCCISD flexibility without the unnecessary burden of submitting waivers.

Proposed: While we believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

- A) WHCCISD will attempt to keep all K-4th grade core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. In the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will make a report to the Board of Trustees. Decisions regarding appropriate student to teacher ratios will be made at the local level, taking into consideration the age and grade level of the students, the subject matter of the class, the needs of individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members.
- B) In the event a K-4th grade core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom.
- C) A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th grade core classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

3. Teacher certification (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL); (TEC 21.003; 21.053; 21.057)

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 waiver request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. The system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instruction challenges of a small rural district.

Proposed: The proposed flexibility in local certification indicated below will allow more flexibility in scheduling, more options in class offerings and more flexibility in teacher hiring in our rural setting.

The District will continue authentic attempts to hire appropriately certified staff. However, where that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable and/or equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question.

In all circumstances “A)” through “D)” below, the principal will specify in writing to the superintendent the reason for the request for local certification, including documentation of efforts to hire an appropriately certified person and what qualifications the individual possesses to teach in that assignment. The superintendent will consider the recommendation and approve it if s/he feels the individual could be an asset to students and staff. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual(s) beginning employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year.

- A) A certified teacher to teach a course(s) or grade level(s) for which they are not certified.
- B) A degreed person enrolled in an alternate certification program to teach in the core area or grade level(s) in which they are seeking certification.
- C) An individual with experience in the content of an elective course or CTE field to be eligible to teach an elective course(s) or vocational skills course(s) respectively.
- D) A degreed person who has completed a certification program except for passing the certification test to teach in the core area or grade level(s) in which they are seeking certification.
- E) Whenever possible in circumstances “A)” through “D)” above, instructional planning will be done in collaboration with appropriately certified teachers. Mentoring, additional professional development and other supports will be provided as needed.
- F) Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications or other paperwork will not be submitted to TEA.
- G) Special Education and Bilingual Teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

4. Contract Days – (DCB LEGAL/LOCAL); (TEC 21.401)

Currently: TEC 21.401 currently requires a minimum 10-month contract between districts and educators. Additionally, the 10-month contract requires a minimum of 187 days of service by the educator. This inhibits the local district's ability to build a calendar that provides the greatest flexibility to meet the district's staff development and instructional needs. The proposed plan enhances educator recruitment and will provide more opportunities to seek individualized staff development.

Proposed:

- A) Flexible Contract Days –WHCCISD 10-month educator contract days may range from, no less than 182 days, to no more than 187 days in any given year. This flexibility will allow for better alignment between instructional days and teacher service days based on student and district needs. This plan will not affect educator overall salaries, daily rates or contract addendums.