

ANSON ISD DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

I. Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits each Texas public schools to become a District of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On January 16, 2017, the Anson Independent School District Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

On February 13, 2017, the Board appointed a 23 member District of Innovation Committee comprised primarily of members of the District's Site-Based Committee and is comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on February 22, 2017 and February 28, 2017 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation Plan. The final plan was approved by the Committee on April 25, 2017, was posted on the District website for 30 days, and was approved by the Board of Trustees on June 12, 2017.

II. Term

The term of the plan is for five years beginning on June 12, 2017 and ending May 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of the plan, other areas of operation are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will nominate a new 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. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

III. Timeline

- A. A resolution was adopted at the January 16, 2017 Board Meeting, which initiates the District of Innovation process.
- B. A public hearing took place at the February 13, 2017 Board Meeting on District of Innovation.
- C. At the February 13, 2017 Board Meeting, the school board approved the formation of a Local Innovation Plan Committee.
- D. The Local Innovation Plan Committee met on February 22, 2017 and February 28, 2017. These meetings were open to the public to attend and minutes are posted.
- E. The Local Innovation Plan was drafted, approved, and sent to the Board on April 25, 2017 and made available on the website for public review and comment on April 28, 2017.
- F. The Board of Trustees held a public forum on the proposed plan on June 12, 2017.
- G. The Board approved the District of Innovation Plan at the June 12, 2017 Board Meeting.

IV. District Committee Members

Priscilla Cook	Elementary Counselor
Phyllis Davis	High School Special Education Teacher
Virginia Esparza	Middle School Parent
Molly Favor	High School Teacher
Karri Feagan	High School CTE Teacher
Judith Gravley	Middle School Teacher
David Hagler	Middle School Principal
Janet Hagler	Elementary Teacher
Treylla Henrich	District Academic Coach
Troy Hinds	High School Principal
Bobbi Lytle	District Special Programs Coordinator
Amy McIntire	Elementary School Principal
Sherity Meek	High School Counselor
Justin Murphy	Elementary School Parent
Kaci Murphy	Middle School Counselor
Nikki Nash	Elementary, Middle, and High School Parent
Gina Overby	Elementary School Teacher
Linda Powell	Business/Community Member
Lisa Ramos	High School Teacher
Hadly Whitaker	High School Student
Sally White	High School Parent

V. **Teacher Certification**

A. Policy

1. TEC 21.003; TEC 21.057
2. DBA LEGAL/LOCAL; DK LEGAL/LOCAL

B. Currently

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided in Subchapter B. TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

C. Proposed

In order to best serve Anson ISD students, decision on certification will be handled locally. With the current shortage or quality teachers in the area this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow the district to consider part-time professionals to teach courses, allow industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology, assist in staffing high need STEM and dual credit course offerings, and allow teachers with years of successful teaching experience and education to fill needed vacancies. Teachers certified in other states could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. This would also allow experienced certified teachers to teach a course outside their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.

D. Local Guidelines

1. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subjects and/or grade levels out of their field, excluding Special Education and Bilingual. The principal must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.

2. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the Superintendent with all the individual's credentials.
3. The Superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification and will submit approved requests to the Board of Trustees for approval prior to the individual beginning employment.
4. Local teaching certificates will be issued for one year and the employee will be at-will.

VI. Minimum Minutes of Instruction

A. Policy

1. TEC §25.081
2. DL (Legal)

B. Currently

House Bill 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity.

C. Proposed

This exemption will provide Anson ISD the flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction and will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. It also has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of a school day, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time to accommodate additional professional development/collaboration opportunities of professional and support staff in our district. The District will continue to provide the minimum 75,600 minutes of instruction.

VII. Uniform School Start Date

A. Policy

1. TEC §25.0811
2. EB (Legal)

B. Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. However, for many years districts had the option of applying for a waiver to adopt an earlier start date. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday of August, 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.

C. Proposed

Anson ISD would like to make a local determination for the first day of school. This flexibility would allow the district to determine, on an annual basis, what start date best meets the needs of the students. The start date will not begin before the 2nd Monday in August. It also offers the following benefits:

1. It balances semesters for the students taking high school classes that last only one semester.
2. It allows more instruction prior to state assessments.
3. It allows school to finish before June. Anson ISD would like to keep summer school from running into July.
4. It allows Anson ISD students to match the calendars of our higher education partners.

VIII. 90 Percent Attendance Rule

A. Policy

1. TEC §25.092
2. FEC (Local)

B. Currently

State law currently requires students attend class 90% of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires students to be awarded credit based on “seat time” rather than based on content mastery.

C. Proposed

The exemption from the 90% attendance rule will allow the district to establish local criteria regarding student attendance requirements, AISD will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will also allow AISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at-risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum.

The requested exemption from TEC §25.092 does not in any way impact or change existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League rules. Moreover, opting out of TEC §25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with the TEC §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with TEC §28.0216.

IX. Teacher Professional Development, Teacher Mentors, and Planning Time

A. Policy

1. TEC §21.404
2. TEC §11.253
3. TEC §21.458

B. Currently

Many of the district's teachers have less than 5 years teaching experience in the classroom. With a diverse population mainly comprised of economically disadvantaged students, the district's educators must be well equipped to meet the needs of each student.

C. Proposed

1. The exemption from the required number of minutes in TEC §21.404 will allow for the district's teachers to participate in Professional Learning Communities on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during the work day without compromising instructional time, where they can share best practices, critically examine student data, and plan collaboratively.
2. The exemption from the staff development requirements under TEC §11.253 will allow more oversight by the campus and district level site-based committees. The local committees will be allowed to make staff development decisions based on local need and will provide flexibility and responsiveness to newly emerging data.
3. The exemption from TEC §21.458 lays out several requirements for teacher mentors. An exemption from these requirements would allow for teachers with more than two years of experience to be assigned a mentor that excels in areas that are targeted for improvement or innovation. In addition, mentors would be exempt from the qualifications described in Subsection (b), thus increasing the pool of teachers from which the district could draw for these targeted mentoring programs.

X. Probationary Contract Period

A. Policy

1. TEC §21.102
2. DCA (Legal)

B. Currently

The current law limits probationary contract periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years to one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

C. Proposed

Relief from TEC 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses newly hired in Anson ISD. This will allow our district to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.