

# **Nursery Independent School District District of Innovation Plan**

## **Introduction**

HB 1842 was passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation maybe exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Great local control as the decision-makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowered to innovate.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

## **Process**

On January 24, 2017, the Nursery Independent School District Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a resolution to adopt a District of Innovation plan in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

On March 29, 2017, the Nursery Independent School District Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public discussion on whether the district should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District of Innovation. With there being no objections, the Board of Trustees directed the Superintendent to form a district of innovation committee to discuss and draft this local innovation plan. The District of Innovation plan committee met on April 20, 2017 to discuss and develop the plan. A follow-up meeting to finalize the plan was deemed unnecessary at the conclusion of the meeting.

The plan will be posted on the website for 30 days before being presented to the site-based decision-making committee on May 23, 2017 the plan must be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval at the June 2017 board meeting.

## **Term**

The district of Innovation Plan will become effective in the 2017-2018 school year and will remain in effect for five years through the 2021-2022 school year, unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District

Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the plan.

**Timeline / Activity**

Timeline	Activity / Task
January 24, 2017	Board of Trustees passed resolution to initiate District of Innovation Plan
March 29, 2017	Board of Trustees held public hearing and appointed committee to the draft the plan
April 20, 2017	Initial meeting of the District of Innovation committee to discuss and draft District of Innovation Plan
Unnecessary	Meeting to finalize District of Innovation plan
April 20, 2017	Post District of Innovation plan on Nursery Independent school district website
May 23, 2017	District site based committee meeting
May 30, Meeting	Board of Trustees vote on District of innovation plan
June 27, Meeting	Board Approved District of Innovation plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education

**District of Innovation Committee Members**

Name	Position
Chris Ulcak	Superintendent Nursery ISD
Neil Stevenson	Board Member (Secretary)
Monica Zimmermann	Parent
Matt Modrow	Parent
Cheryl Garza	Teacher
Nikki Weber	Teacher

**Innovations**

The district proposes flexibility in the following areas:

**Uniform School Start Date (TEC 25.0811)**

**Teacher Certification (TEC 21.003)**

**Submitting Waivers for Kindergarten-Grade 4 Class Size (TEC 25.112, 25.113)**

## **Uniform School Start Date (TEC 25.0811)**

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August.

### **Proposed**

This flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and community. This flexibility of the start date offers:

- The first and second semesters to be more equal in the number of days of instruction.
- An early start date permits students additional time prior to state assessments.

### **Local guidelines**

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

## **Teacher Certification (TEC 21.003)**

TEC 21.003(a) states a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, education diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B. TEC 21.057 requires district to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year. Texas Education Code Sections 21.003, 21.053, as well as 19 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 231, limits the ability to hire teachers in highly specialized or hard-to-fill areas.

### **Proposed**

In order to best serve Nursery ISD students, decisions on certifications will be handled at the district level. Due to a limited applicant pool and teacher shortage, this exemption will allow greater flexibility in staffing in specific areas of need.

### **Local Guidelines**

The Nursery ISD Superintendent/Principal may submit to the Board a request for a certified teacher to teach a grade or subject(s) out of their certification field. The superintendent/principal must provide the reason for the request and document the credentials the certified teacher possesses that qualify the individual to teach this subject. The superintendent/principal will submit a request to the Board for local certification and the superintendent/principal must specify the reason for the request and document the credentials the individual possesses that qualify the individual to

teach the subject area. Special education and bilingual teachers will continue to be SBEC certified. The Board will approve or deny requests for local certification.

### **Submitting Waivers for Kindergarten-Grade 4 Class Size (TEC 25.112, 25.113)**

Kindergarten-Grade 4 classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them that the waiver has been submitted.

#### **Proposed**

While Nursery ISD believes that a small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe that it has a negative effect when one or two students are added. It may not be the number of the students in the class but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influences the learning environment. Being exempt from the 22:1 ratio requirement will allow students to remain with the teacher and classmates that they began the year with, enabling continuity and stability that will support increased student achievement.

#### **Local Guidelines**

Nursery ISD will attempt to keep K-Grade 4 classrooms to the 22:1 ratio. In the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-Grade 4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Nursery ISD Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, so as to provide additional student opportunities. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.