

Ira ISD District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842) 2021-2022

Ira ISD is utilizing HB 1842 of the 84th Legislative Session to create more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows a public school to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools are allowed. This District of Innovation designation will provide an opportunity for our local district to develop plans based on the unique needs of our students and community.

This plan will be in effect for the 2021-2022 school year through the 2025-2026 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the committee with approval of the Board of Trustees.

District Innovation Team

1. Brian Patterson - Superintendent
2. Dale Jones -Principal
3. Bobbie Hale - Counselor
4. Meagan Rosson - Secondary Teacher
5. Leo Sellers – Secondary Teacher
6. Pat Sterling - Elementary Teacher
7. Candice Poole - Elementary Teacher
8. Lacey Cox – Special Director
9. Dirk Dunn – President Ira School Board
10. Russell Wall – Vice President Ira School Board
11. Dave Hanes - Technology Director
12. Keeli Hines - CFO
13. JJ Caswell Secretary - Ira School Board
14. Parent – Brittney Lomax
15. Parent – Mandi Campbell

Board of Trustee

Dirk Dunn, President

Justin Donelson Member

Russell Wall, Vice President

JJ Caswell, Secretary

Justin Taylor, Member

Jerry Jamison, Member

Tanner Poole, Secretary

District Innovation Timeline

February 15, 2021 – Meeting with faculty and Site Base Committee to develop the DOI to present to the Ira ISD Board of Trustees.

February 23, 2021 – Regular Meeting Board of Trustees. District of Innovation Plan presented to the Board of Trustees.

TEXAS EDUCATION CODE EXEMPTIONS

District staff in conjunction with the Local Innovation Committee reviewed the subchapters of the Texas Education Code to determine which permissible exemptions currently inhibit the district from maximizing the educational opportunities of the students who attend Ira ISD.

I. Uniform Start Date (TEC 25.0811, TEC 25.0812)

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

Rationale for Exemption

The flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, the school, and the community. In addition, this flexibility allows the district to better align its starting date to accommodate the start date of colleges in which the district uses for dual credit courses. Another benefit of exempting this restriction is it allows the school to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. Additionally, the ability to change the school start date can also help to better balance the number of days in each semester.

II. Length of School Day (TEC 25.081)

State law currently requires that all school days must be at least 420 minutes long in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

Rationale for Exemption

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Ira ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.

Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to

allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Ira ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year.

III. Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratios (TEC 25.111, 25.112, 25.113, and 25.114)

State law requires districts to maintain an average student-teacher ratio at most of 20 to 1 for average daily attendance. For physical education, the student-teacher ratio cannot be greater than 45 to 1. In Kindergarten through fourth grade, the student-teacher ratio must not exceed 22 to 1.

Rationale for Exemption

Ira ISD believes small class sizes play a positive role in the classroom; however, it must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff, and the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. While it is often cited that smaller class sizes improve academic performance, the decision for what size is the appropriate size should be a local decision. Many times it is not the number of students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which most influences the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size.

IV. Teacher Certification (TEC 21.003, 21.053 and 21.057)

State law states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. 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 request emergency certification from Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District’s ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, as well as career and technical courses. Ira ISD is located in a rural area which limits course offerings. The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

In order to best serve Ira ISD students, decisions on certifications will be handled locally. The Principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject(s) out of his/her certification field. The Principal will be required to provide valid reasoning for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.

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 may submit to the Superintendent a request including all the individual's credentials. The Superintendent will approve or deny the request and report the action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning employment. The local certificate will require an employee agreement rather than a contract.

In the case the District is not able to hire a sufficient certified teacher, the Principal may submit a request to the Superintendent to hire a non-certified teacher. The Principal and Superintendent will establish a plan of action which includes sufficient professional development hours and some type of mentorship to help the teacher become certified in a reasonable time period. The Superintendent will present the plan to the Board of Trustees prior to the employment of the individual.

V. **Student's Instructional Needs Exemption From (TEC 25.036)**

State law states district transfers are for an entire school year.

Rationale for Exemption

Ira ISD would follow FDA Local policy requiring nonresident students to file a transfer application each school year.

In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records will be evaluated.

Transfer students are required to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the district.

Transfer status may be revoked by the superintendent or designee at any time during the school year if the student is assigned disciplinary consequences such as suspension (in school or out of school), placement at the DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the student's transfer status.

This will allow Ira ISD the flexibility to revoke transfer students, who on rare occasions, violate the transfer policy. It will also allow Ira ISD to better utilize school resources for the benefit of the district.

VI. **Additional Health Benefits for Employees (TEC 22.004)**

Rationale for Exemption

TEC 22.004 is not included in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to TEC 12A.004 or the list of Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in the Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309. This exemption to the health insurance requirements in TEC 22.004(i)

will allow the District the option to offer additional benefit option to employees and to increase local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs.