

Windthorst ISD District of Innovation Plan

Background:

During the 84th Legislative Session, HB 1842 passed that allows Texas public schools to become Districts of Innovation which would allow them to obtain flexibilities with certain provisions of the Texas Education code, most of which are available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools. Windthorst ISD is exercising this opportunity of becoming a District of Innovation to obtain more flexibility in order to better meet the unique needs of our district, students and community.

Term

Windthorst ISD's Innovation Plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year unless the plan is terminated or amended by the Windthorst ISD Board in accordance with HB1842. If at any time within this 5 year plan, other areas of exemptions are to be considered, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider new exemptions. Any future amendments will adhere to the same term of the original plan.

Innovations:

1. Teacher Contract Days (TEC 21.401)(DCB Legal) (DCB Local)

Current

Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed

This proposal reduces teacher contract days from 187 to 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This somewhat makes an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students. This will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers and also should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts which will significantly improve teacher morale. Finally the proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

2. School Start Date (TEC 25.0811a) (EB Legal)

Current Law

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

Proposed

Windthorst ISD will start class no earlier than the second Monday in August, and will plan to end earlier in the Spring semester in order to better balance the days in the fall and spring semesters, to provide more educational days prior to scheduled state assessments, and to better align with dual-credit college courses in the Fall, Spring and Summer semesters. The primary goals of this change to create greater flexibility in the District Calendar are to improve the overall district attendance rate, to improve student success on state and local assessments, and to allow for greater opportunity for meaningful staff development throughout the school year.

3. Length of School Day (TEC §25.082a)(SAAH 3.8.1)

Current Law

The current rules allows no flexibility in the design of district and campus schedules 4 Innovation Strategies

Proposed

The opportunity to exempt from the 420 minute school day requirement will provide the district the opportunity to provide each campus the flexibility of creating a daily schedule that will better serve the students and teachers on each campus. This flexibility will give local control to the district in meeting the yearly requirement of 75,600 minutes in relation to the district calendar for each specific school year. 2. This exemption will provide greater flexibility than the current 6 day waiver maximum that relates to the length of the school day. 3. The opportunity to be exempt from the 7 hour day requirement will allow the district to create more flexibility within the daily schedule for students and staff. This flexibility will be used to create a unique bell schedule instead of the static schedule required of schools by this mandate. 4. The district will provide teachers and administrators the opportunity for weekly and monthly staff development opportunities through the creation of these unique schedules.