

Kerrville Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Approved February 26, 2018



Introduction

District of Innovation is a provision passed during the 84th Legislative session in House Bill 1842 which allows traditional public school systems most of the same flexibilities afforded to Public Charter Schools. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan as set forth in Texas Education Code, chapter 12A. To be eligible for designation as a district of innovation, a school district's most recent academic performance rating must be at least acceptable.

Once formally approved, an innovation plan is effective for five years. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed in the same way it was developed and approved at any time. Essentially, innovation plans are about local control. Each school district pursues designation as a District of Innovation for different reasons. Kerrville ISD's innovation plan has a strong focus on ensuring students are provided the very best instruction from the very best teachers in a safe and orderly environment.

Process

October 16, 2017 – Meeting of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees heard a presentation on District of Innovation.

KISD Administration presented and Trustees approved a resolution initiating the process to become a District of Innovation.

October 30, 2017 – Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees held a public hearing to consider whether the district should develop a local innovation plan. At this meeting the Board appointed a District-level Advisory Committee (DAC) to develop an innovation plan.

November 15, 2017 through January 17, 2018

The DAC worked to develop the plan which specified innovations and identified the Texas Education Code provisions from which the district should be exempted.

Meeting Dates were:

Wednesday, November 15, 2107

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

Wednesday December 20, 2017

Wednesday January 10, 2018

Wednesday January 17, 2018

January 19, 2018 – Posting of the Innovation Plan

The District Advisory Committee posted the proposed plan on the district web-site for 30 days.

The proposed plan was sent to the Texas Commissioner of Education with notification that the Board of Trustees intends to vote to approve an innovation plan.

February 21, 2018 – Meeting of the District Advisory Committee

The District Advisory Committee held a public meeting at which it unanimously voted to approve the plan.

February 26, 2018 – Meeting of the Board of Trustees

The innovation plan was presented to the Kerrville ISD Board of Trustees and was unanimously approved.

District Advisory Team Members

School Representatives

Tivy High School:

Shelby Balsler – Principal

Aaron “AJ” Johnson – Teacher

Hal Peterson Middle School:

Tamela Crawford – Principal

Pamela Nentwich - Teacher

B. T. Wilson:

Amy Waiser – Counselor

Daniels Elementary:

Monica Freeman – Teacher

Nimitz Elementary:

Carla Wedekind - Teacher

Starkey Elementary:

Amy Ahrens - Principal

Gena Robertson - Teacher

Tally Elementary:

Susan Witt - Teacher

Early Childhood:

Crystal Duffield - Teacher

Special Education:

Michele Gist-Barrow - Director

Gayla Fair - Supervisor

HCHS/Alternative Education:

Aaron Cook – Teacher

Community/Parent Representatives

Kim Clarkson

Rhonda Davison

Cayce McCormick

Greg Peschel

Lisa Thompson

Central Office Representatives

Mark J. Foust, Ed.D. – Superintendent

Heather Engstrom – Assistant Superintendent

Wade Ivy – Assistant Superintendent

Sylvia Flannery – Director of C&I

Charli Stehling – Director of Personnel

Lesle Stevens – Director of Special Programs

*Tana Althaus, Assistant Principal at Nimitz Elementary School, was a non-voting participant who served as a community liaison.

Requested Exemptions

Teacher and Principal Evaluations

Texas Education Code (TEC) 21.352 and Texas Education Code (TEC) 21.3541

Kerrville ISD elected to use the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (TTESS) and Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (TPESS) models for the annual appraisal of teachers and principals. Participants value the process and content of these models because they provide multiple opportunities for appraisers and appraisees to discuss goals for teaching and learning, offer a specific rubric which clearly outlines effective practices, and allow for specific goal setting and statements of action designed to improve instruction which are documented and monitored.

TEC 21.352 requires student growth be a component of the appraisal ratings of teachers. TEC 21.3541 requires that student growth be a component of the appraisal ratings of principals. Kerrville ISD believes assessing student growth within the context of specific goals for student learning and a specifically defined action plan is a highly valuable process that will increase teacher and principal effectiveness.

Kerrville ISD seeks to foster a culture of instructional innovation in an environment in which it is safe to implement new strategies and techniques and in which it is safe to learn from successes and failures. Assigning a specific rating for student growth has the potential to stifle that spirit.

Kerrville ISD will be exempt from the portions of TEC 21.352 and TEC 21.3541 that require student growth measures to be a component of the appraisal rating and will instead utilize student growth measure as a part of the yearly goal setting process that takes place with all teachers and administrators and will not assign a separate rating for student growth.

- *Student Growth will be considered by the TTESS appraiser as one piece of evidence among several when scoring **Dimension 4.2, Goal Setting: The teacher reflects on his/her practice.***
- *Student Growth will be considered by the TPESS appraisers when scoring **Standard 1 (D): The principal ensures that effective instruction maximizes growth of individual students and student groups, supports equity, and eliminates the achievement gap.***

Revocation of Inter-District Transfer During a School Year

Texas Education Code (TEC) 25.036

Kerrville ISD accepts inter-district transfer students as a way to increase diversity among students and uses the money generated by these students to offer programs that enhance the educational experiences of all students.

TEC 25.036 states any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state. The phrase, "transfer annually" was interpreted by the Commissioner of Education to require a student transfer to be for a period of one school year, thus restricting a district's ability to revoke a transfer approval mid-year.

Kerrville ISD seeks to increase the number of transfer students annually but acknowledges the inherent risk of inadvertently accepting a transfer student whose behavior and/or attendance are not in keeping with district expectations.

Kerrville ISD will be exempt from TEC 25.036 and will exercise its right to revoke a student transfer at any time during the school year as explained below:

Kerrville ISD may revoke the transfer of a student under the following guidelines:

- 1. The principal will recommend a revocation with supporting evidence to the superintendent or superintendent's designee who will make a final determination on the student's transfer status.*
- 2. A transfer may be revoked if the student has been absent without an excuse acceptable to the campus principal for 10% or more of the number of days of school.*
- 3. A transfer may be revoked if the student engaged in behavior or conduct, on or off campus, that:*
 - a. Resulted in the placement of the transfer student in the district disciplinary alternative school;*
 - b. Resulted in being charged with, convicted of, or deferred adjudication for a felony offense;*
 - c. Resulted in being charged with, convicted of, or deferred adjudication for a misdemeanor offense that contains any element of assault or is drug or gang related; or*
 - d. Disrupted the learning environment, placed others in harm, and/or negatively impacted the orderly operations or climate of the school.*

School Start Date

Texas Education Code (TEC) 25.0811

Each year a sub-committee of the Kerrville ISD Faculty Community Advisory Committee (FCAC) develops a district instructional calendar that is recommended to the Board of Trustees for approval. Locally developed parameters guide committee members in their creation of a calendar that is responsive to the needs of students, teachers, families and the community, including area summer camps.

However, TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction for students before the fourth Monday in August. Beginning the school year on the 4th Monday in August makes the calendar creation process highly restrictive and does not allow for meaningful discretion. This is compounded even further in years in which the 4th Monday in August falls late in the month.

Important elements of the calendar include, but are not limited to, balanced numbers of days in the fall and spring semesters, balanced numbers of days in a grading period, timely student holidays, strategically selected teacher in-service dates, and the ability of high school students co-enrolled at local colleges and universities to start the school year at the same time their college courses begin.

To allow greater flexibility and responsiveness to student, teacher, family and community needs in the calendar development process, Kerrville ISD will be exempt from TEC 25.0811 and instead will have the flexibility to begin school no earlier than the third Monday in August in years in which a start date on the fourth Monday in August would result in five or fewer days of instruction in the month of August.

Probationary Contracts

Texas Education Code (TEC) 21.102

Each year Kerrville ISD welcomes new teachers into our school community. Support, feedback, and professional learning opportunities are provided to ensure a smooth transition into the district. All newly hired teachers are given a probationary contract in their first year of service.

New teachers to Kerrville ISD must meet a number of expectations including, but not limited to, the ability to:

1. Provide a positive learning environment through strong relational skills and effective classroom management;
2. Ensure authentic student engagement by establishing clear learning expectations, preparing high interest lessons at the appropriate level of rigor, differentiating instruction to meet the various learning needs of students, and integrating technology;
3. Implement intentional and ongoing assessment for learning;
4. Be self-reflective, accept feedback, and implement a professional learning plan;
5. Work positively and professionally with co-workers and supervisors;
6. Communicate positively and effectively with parents; and
7. Represent themselves, their campus, and the school district in a positive and professional manner.

Principals carefully monitor the effectiveness of new teachers. Before the end of a new teacher's first year of service, his or her principal must determine the type of contract that will be offered for the next school year. The principal has the choice of recommending a term contract, a probationary contract, or non-renewal of the new teacher's contract.

However, TEC 21.102 states a probationary period for a classroom teacher new to the district may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district. This law can be detrimental to teachers who meet its criteria. Principals have only two choices with these teachers: recommend a term contract or recommend non-renewal.

Contract decisions are critical. Students deserve to have the best teacher in the classroom, and new teachers who have invested in Kerrville ISD as their employer deserve to have adequate time to prove themselves in the classroom.

Kerrville ISD will be exempt from TEC 21.102 which will provide flexibility to the principal to offer a second year probationary contract to a covered employee who might otherwise be recommended for non-renewal because they have not had adequate opportunity to meet all campus and district expectations.

- *This exception does not affect the ability of a principal to recommend non-renewal of an employee.*
- *This exception does not imply that all newly hired employees who meet the criteria of TEC 21.102 will be given a probationary contract in their second year of employment.*

Teacher Certification

Texas Education Code (TEC) 21.003

Kerrville ISD is committed to providing learning opportunities to all students that prepare them for college and the world of work. In conjunction with a strong core curriculum, it is imperative that the district offers a wide variety of courses that enrich and expand students' interests, actively engage and motivate students, teach specific job skills, and are responsive to the economic development efforts of the community.

TEC 21.003 states a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit. Kerrville ISD is consistently able to recruit and hire certified teachers for core academic courses. However, there are certain Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM); Career and Technical Education (CTE); and other innovative courses for which certified applicants are not readily available.

The ability of the district to offer courses in these areas is greatly inhibited under current certification rules. Therefore, Kerrville ISD will be exempt from TEC 21.003 within the following parameters:

- 1. Kerrville ISD will require teachers who teach core academic foundational education courses, Special Education, Bilingual, and English as a Second Language courses to be certified under TEC 21.003;*
- 2. Training on designing instruction and assessment to promote student learning, creating a positive and productive classroom environment, providing proper and effective responsive instruction and assessment, and fulfilling professional roles and responsibilities will be required of uncertified teachers who have not previously received training in these areas.*

Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code (TEC) 37.0012

The fair and equitable application of student discipline in schools is of utmost importance. Students enter the school environment with a myriad of issues that can affect their ability to appropriately interact with peers, teachers, family and within the community.

TEC 37.0012 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and shall promptly notify a student's parent or guardian if the student is placed into in-school or out-of-school suspension or is placed in a disciplinary alternative education program.

Kerrville ISD will be exempt from TEC 37.0012. In many instances student discipline issues are too complex for one person to be responsible. The application of discipline requires a team of professionals including, but not limited to, principals, assistant principals, counselors, diagnosticians, and teachers who work collaboratively to develop campus plans that ensure a safe and orderly school climate and are responsive to individual student needs.

Additionally, the requirement that the campus behavior coordinator be the only person who can notify parents of disciplinary placements creates an unnecessary legal burden on campus administrative teams that have multiple team members who make disciplinary decisions.