

**ERA ISD
DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN
2016-2021**

The Era Independent School District (EISD) is exercising authority created by passage of House Bill 1842 of the 84th Legislative Session, as set forth in Texas Education Code, Chapter 12A. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to exercise greater local control, and utilize the exemptions in Education Law that charter schools currently are entitled to. We feel this is a great opportunity for our local district to create a plan based on the needs of our students and community.

Beginning with the start of the 2016-2017 school year, EISD will exercise this authority to exempt itself from the following state requirements for a five year period running through the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, including: **Uniform school start date, required length of school day.**

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- **February 15, 2016** Board Meeting
The Era ISD Board of Trustees unanimously adopted a resolution for the District to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation.
- **March 21, 2016** Board Meeting
Board of Trustees appointed District Improvement Team as the District of Innovation Committee to develop a comprehensive educational innovation plan.
- **Monday, May 16, 2016** District of Innovation Committee Meeting
Consider proposed District of Innovation Plan for Era ISD
- **Monday, May 16, 2016** Board Meeting
Districts of Innovation plan discussed and available for public comment.
- **May 17, 2016**
Era ISD District of Innovation Plan posted on Era ISD Website for 30-day period.
- **Friday, May 27, 2016** District of Innovation Committee Meeting
District of Innovation Committee held public meeting to consider and vote on the DOI Plan.
- **Monday, June 27, 2016** Board Meeting
Board of Trustees voted to adopt the 2016-21 District of Innovation Plan for Era ISD.
- **July 11, 2016**
Era ISD District of Innovation plan filed with the Commissioner of Education.
- **April 17, 2017** DIT/DOI Meeting
Proposed Amendments to District of Innovation Plan.
- **Wednesday, May 10, 2017** DIT/DOI Meeting
District of Innovation Committee held public meeting to consider and vote on the Amended DOI Plan.
- **May 10, 2017**
Era ISD District of Innovation Plan (Amended) posted on Era ISD Website.
- **May 30, 2017**
Board of Trustees to consider adoption of Amended 2016-21 District of Innovation Plan for Era ISD.
- **Thursday, February 14, 2019** DIT/DOI Meeting
District of Innovation Committee held public meeting to consider and vote on the Amended DOI Plan.
- **Friday, February 15, 2019**
Era ISD District of Innovation Plan (Amended) posted on Era ISD Website.
- **March 18, 2019**
Board of Trustees to consider adoption of Amended 2016-21 District of Innovation Plan for Era ISD.

INNOVATION PLAN

1. SCHOOL START DATE

EISD Board Policy: EB(LEGAL)

EXEMPTION FROM:

- TEC §25.0811 FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION

CURRENT LAW

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

PROPOSED INNOVATION

To best serve the students of Era ISD, we propose to create a school calendar which serves the needs of our local community. We propose moving the mandatory start date earlier than the fourth Monday. Waiting to start classes until the fourth Monday in August forces semesters to be significantly unequal in length, with second semester being approximately four weeks longer than the first semester. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable our district to better balance instruction time in each semester as well as making an effort to end our first semester prior to Winter Break. 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.

2. LENGTH OF SCHOOL DAY **Delete this provision – now allowed in statute**

EISD Board Policy: EC(LEGAL)

EXEMPTION FROM:

- ~~TEC §25.082 SCHOOL DAY~~

CURRENT LAW

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

PROPOSED INNOVATION

~~Exempting from the 420-minute day requirement would allow EISD 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 already 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.~~

~~EISD does not intend 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/distributed to district stakeholders in advance of the school year. The district would not schedule early release days under this exemption that were shorter than 240 minutes (4 hours).~~

3. NUMBER OF CONTRACT DAYS FOR TEACHERS

EISD Board Policy: DCB (Legal), DCB (Local)

EXEMPTION FROM:

- TEC §21.401 MINIMUM SERVICE REQUIRED

CURRENT LAW

Current education law in Chapter 21 requires a teacher who is on a 10-month contract to work an equivalent of 187 days.

PROPOSED INNOVATION

In an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students, the district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries. Teacher contract days will be reflected on the board approved District Calendar. This proposal has potential to increase the daily rate the district pays teachers and should enhance teacher recruitment, retention and morale.

4. ~~MINIMUM SALARY SCHEDULE – PROFESSIONAL STAFF~~

Delete – Not necessary

EXEMPTION FROM:

- ~~TEC §21.002 TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS~~
- ~~TEC §21.402 MINIMUM SALARY SCHEDULE FOR CERTAIN PROFESSIONAL STAFF~~
- ~~TEC §21.415 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS~~

CURRENT LAW

~~Currently, all districts, when hiring a retired educator must pay them their salary based upon the TEA minimum salary pay scale; in addition, the districts are required to pay a TRS surcharge.~~

PROPOSED INNOVATION

~~Era ISD would like the opportunity to hire an eligible retired educator and pay them below the TEA minimum pay scale while also paying the required TRS surcharge. We believe that by hiring an eligible retired educator, our students, campuses and district will reap the rewards of having a veteran educator who is still involved and passionate in the education process. In addition, the district will be able to have an experienced educator at a significantly less cost than had we paid them based upon the TEA minimum pay scale plus the TRS surcharge. Thus, by hiring an eligible retire educator, Era ISD will be adding value in the school and will be making sound fiscal decisions for our district's stakeholders.~~

5. PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

EISD Board Policy: DCA (Legal)

EXEMPTION FROM:

- TEC §21.102 TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

CURRENT LAW

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

PROPOSED INNOVATION

Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to three years **maximum** for experienced teachers, counselors, **librarians** or nurses newly hired in Era ISD. This will allow the district more time to thoroughly assess an employee's effectiveness.

6. CERTIFICATION

EISD Board Policy: DBA (LEGAL),DBA (LOCAL),DK (LEGAL), DK (LOCAL), DK (EXHIBIT)

EXEMPTION FROM:

- TEC §21.003 CERTIFICATION REQUIRED
- TEC §21.044 EDUCATOR PREPARATION
- TEC §21.053 PRESENTATION AND RECORDING OF CERTIFICATES
- TEC §21.055 SCHOOL DISTRICT TEACHING PERMIT
- TEC §21.057 PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

CURRENT LAW

TEC §21.003(a) 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 subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.044 requires the board to propose rules establishing the training requirements a person must accomplish to obtain a certificate, enter an internship, or enter an induction-year program. The board shall specify the minimum academic qualifications required for a certificate.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC §21.055 requires notification to the commissioner of an employee who does not hold a valid certification to teach. Identifying the the person, the person's qualifications as a teacher, and the subject or class the person will teach. The person may teach the subject or class pending action by the commissioner. The person may not teach if the commissioner finds the person is not qualified.

TEC §21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

PROPOSED INNOVATION

By claiming exemption from Sec. 21.044 the district shall have the right to recruit individuals from certain trades, industries, and vocations with industry knowledge and real world experience and consider qualifications based on experience, industry certification, etc. District leadership including principals, CTE administrators, human resource department members, etc. shall determine whether it is in the best interest of its students to certify individuals based on these factors rather than appeal to the Commissioner of Education as stated in Sec. 21.055. Further, the district shall establish local criteria for training and locally certifying individuals rather than adhere strictly to mandates outlined in Sec. 21.053. In doing so, parental notification of "inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers" under Sec. 21.057 would no longer be necessary. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made to the certification laws, Era ISD believes this issue to be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.

The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. Era ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to CTE and languages other than English. Special Education and Bilingual teachers will continue to be required to hold a standard teaching certificate. Once hired, where applicable, the district will encourage teachers to obtain their appropriate certification. This flexibility will allow the District to hire individuals who best meet the needs of the students and provide the content knowledge our students need to enter an increasingly innovative world.

7. TRANSFER STUDENT RESTRICTIONS

EISD Board Policy: FDA (Local)

EXEMPTION FROM:

- TEC §25.001 ADMISSION
- TEC §25.036 TRANSFER OF STUDENT

CURRENT LAW

A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

PROPOSED INNOVATION

Era ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer 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 are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. The District has interpreted this code as establishing the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Era ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment. Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

~~8. THREE DAY LIMITATION ON SUSPENSIONS~~

Delete – Not necessary

~~EISD Board Policy: FOB(Legal)~~

EXEMPTION FROM:

- ~~TEC §37.005 SUSPENSION~~

CURRENT LAW

~~The principal or other appropriate administrator may suspend a student who engages in conduct identified in the student code of conduct adopted under Section 37.001 as conduct for which a student may be suspended. (b) A suspension under this section may not exceed three school days.~~

PROPOSED INNOVATION

This exemption is desired to be change the maximum number of days of suspension allowed. The law has been interpreted to apply to both in and out of school suspensions. This limitation minimizes the options a campus has for discipline without sending a student to DAEP. Because of the law's three day limit for suspensions, campus staff is limited in the choices of discipline that can be applied to students for moderately serious offenses. Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the option of keeping students on campus and closer to their regular teachers during a disciplinary placement rather than always opting to send students to the disciplinary alternative educational placement. Providing a range of options for the campus is a new and innovative way of thinking about discipline and more fully meeting a student's needs while they are being disciplined.