

# Neches ISD

## District of Innovation Plan

### Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations, in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. As a District of Innovation, Neches ISD wishes to implement an Innovation Plan with increased flexibility and freedom necessary to personalize learning experiences that focus on meeting the needs of our students, employees, and community.

### Term

Neches 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 Neches ISD Board in accordance with HB1842. To ensure success of Neches ISD students, the committee is committed to constantly monitoring and making necessary amendments to be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

### District Innovation Team

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|---------------------|--|
| 1. Randy Snider     | Superintendent                         |
| 2. Kimberlyn Snider | Elementary/Junior High Principal       |
| 3. Alicia Tennison  | Elementary/Junior High Asst. Principal |
| 4. Trent Cook       | High School Principal                  |
| 5. Sha-Ree Hudson   | District Counselor                     |
| 6. Sonya Brown      | Elementary Teacher                     |
| 7. Ashley Radford   | Elementary Sp. Ed. Teacher             |
| 8. Becky Dickson    | Junior High Teacher                    |
| 9. Cheryl Lackey    | Junior High Teacher                    |
| 10. James Adamson   | High School Teacher                    |
| 11. Keri Rhone      | High School Teacher                    |
| 12. Brady Brownlow  | Parent                                 |
| 13. Dana Morgan     | Parent/Business Owner                  |
| 14. Kevin Kanetzky  | Parent/Community Member                |

### District of Innovation Timeline

Monday, February 20<sup>th</sup> - 6:30pm, Board Meeting

- Board of Trustees approves resolution to consider District of Innovation

Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> – 3:40pm, Faculty Meeting

- Meeting with staff to discuss thoughts, questions, and possible members of the District of Innovation Committee.

Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> – 5:30pm, Special Board Meeting

- District of Innovation Public Hearing
- Board of Trustees approves District of Innovation Committee Members

Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> – 3:45pm, District of Innovation Committee Meeting

- Develop the District of Innovation Plan

Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> – 3:45pm, District of Innovation Committee Meeting

- Meet to pass the District of Innovation Plan
- Post proposed Neches ISD District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days.

Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup> – 6:30pm, Board Meeting

- Board will vote to notify Commissioner of Education of intent to vote on the adoption of the proposed District of Innovation Plan.

Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3:45pm, District of Innovation Committee Meeting

- Meet to review TEA proposed changes.
- Committee votes unanimously to adopt a revised District of Innovation Plan based on TEA recommendations

## 1. School Calendar

(TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL)

### *Currently*

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

### *Proposed*

To allow for a calendar that meets the local needs of our students, staff, and community, we would like to consider mandating a start date of no earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of August. The end date will be

- Allow for the elimination of imbalanced grading periods and semester schedules.
- The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

## 2. Class Size Ratio

(TEC 25.112) (TEC 25.113) (EEB LEGAL)

### *Currently*

Kindergarten thru 4th Grade 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. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

### *Proposed*

- While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, this 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.
- We do not believe it has a negative effect when a district adds only one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.
- Most importantly, research clearly shows that it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. In the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten thru 4th grade classes, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- Parents will be notified when a 25:1 ratio is met.
- This exemption only allows Neches ISD the local control over class size ratios, not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements.

- This plan also emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passions and needs. This grants flexibility in class size at all times- regrouping for success, small groups, large groups, etc.

### 3. Teacher Certification

(TEC 21.003) (DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)

#### *Currently*

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process.

#### *Proposed*

In order to best serve Neches ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason 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 will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.
- This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

### 4. Contract Days

(TEC 21.401) (DCB LEGAL) (DCB LOCAL)

#### *Currently*

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 180 with no effect on teacher salaries. The reduction in contract days at our current salary schedule would make us more competitive.
  - This proposal will increase the daily rate of pay for teachers.
  - This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts.
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- This proposal will hopefully improve teacher morale.
  - This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

5. 90 Percent Attendance Rule  
(TEC 25.092) (FEC LOCAL)

*Currently*

State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.

*Proposed*

- Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates.
- Abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances based on administration approval.
- This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities.