

TORNILLO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Educating Children Today to be the Leaders of Tomorrow.



2023 - 2028

District of Innovation Plan

District of Innovation Overview

The District of Innovation concept, passed by 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts like Tornillo Independent School District most of the flexibilities available to Texas open-enrollment charter schools.

Some of the benefits of becoming a District of Innovation:

- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Customization:** Districts can create an innovation plan for a level of school (e.g., only high schools), grade level, or a single campus.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.
- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from mandates such as:
 - School start date
 - 90% attendance rule
 - Class-size ratios
 - Site-based decision-making processes
 - Certain student discipline provisions
 - Use of planning and preparation periods
 - Teacher appraisal requirements

The renewal of the District of Innovation would validate it starting on school year 2023-2024 and finishing on school year 2027-2028. The renewal plan was presented to the district of Innovation Committee in a District Advisory Meeting on February 15, 2023. The Board of Trustees were informed about the renewal plan on May 12, 2023. The plan was posted on Internet for at least 30 days before taken it to the Board of Trustees for final approval on June 21, 2023. If approved, the renewed Tornillo ISD local innovation plan will be in effect for five years, beginning the 2023-2024 school year and ending the 2027-2028 school year. The local innovation plan may be terminated or amended by the TISD Board of Trustees at any time in accordance with the law. The District Innovation Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the local innovation plan and provide updates and/or necessary modifications to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.

District of Innovation Committee Members

Nora Ruiz	TES Teacher
Claudia del Valle	TIS Teacher
Elvia Hernandez	THS Teacher
Maria Contreras	TJH Teacher
Loretta Aguilar	TJH Assistant Principal, G/T District Coordinator
Raymond Bonilla	CTE Coordinator
Alice Alvarado	Intermediate School Counselor
Alejandro Olvera	HS Principal
Jacqueline Gonzales	Health Care Professional, LVN
Lizeth Carroll	HR/Compliance Director
Carmen Bonilla	Community Member
Rosie Hernandez	Community Member
Cinthya Aviles	Parent

Areas of Innovation

1. First day of Instruction

Exemption from TEC §25.0811

Current: TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August.

Proposal: These laws restrict flexibility in the design of academic calendars to fit the instructional needs of the school district to enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in Tornillo ISD. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters and more instructional days prior to mandatory state testing.

Local Guidelines: The school start should be determined locally by the District, and on an annual basis, by considering what is best for the community.

2. Teacher Certification

Exemption From: TEC §21.003(a) TEC §21.053, TEC §21.057

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 a 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 §21.053 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 teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

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.

Proposal: Tornillo ISD will continue to seek traditionally certified candidates for all teaching positions. A waiver would allow a certified teacher to teach one subject outside his/her certified field. This would require the submission of credentials and superintendent approval. However, for Dual Credit, Elementary Core Subjects, Secondary Content Subjects, and/or CTE courses for which a traditionally certified candidate is not identified, the District will recruit instructors with an appropriate Master's degree (dual credit) reasonable pedagogical experience and content area knowledge (elementary and secondary content subjects), or industry certifications/experience in the field of need (CTE). Tornillo ISD can extend the employee a one-year local certificate approved by the superintendent. The District will develop minimum required qualifications for persons hired for such positions and will also identify required professional development in the areas of student management, instructional strategies, curriculum and more. After thoroughly vetting candidates for hire, Tornillo ISD will consider the instructors hired for these positions to be appropriately qualified and will provide notification to board of trustees and parents of students in their classes that the instructor does not hold a traditional teaching certificate.

This innovation will allow Tornillo ISD to consider broader applicant pools and to broaden the district's course offerings or fill hard-to-staff positions while maintaining a high quality of instruction.

Local Guidelines: TISD will continue to comply with TEC §21.003(a), TEC §21.053, TEC §21.057 by allowing non-certified instructors to provide instruction for Dual Credit, Elementary Core Subjects, Secondary Content Subjects, and/or CTE courses.

3. Student/Teacher Ratios and Class Size

Exemption from TEC §25.111, §25.112 and §25.113, Class Size and Notice of Class Size

Proposal: While we acknowledge that the student-teacher ratio influences the classroom and student achievement, the mobility rate and financial standing of Tornillo ISD must be considered, along with the challenge of hiring quality staff in a timely manner to be in compliance. Also, the addition of one or two students beyond the recommended ratio may not hinder the learning environment; however, moving students can be detrimental to the continuity and stability of their academic and emotional growth.

Local Guidelines: TISD strives to adhere to the current Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.112 of the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4. In the event a classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio in grades K-4, campus and district administration in collaboration with the teacher would request an exemption from the Superintendent of Schools.

The District requests flexibility to make the best possible decisions regarding the academic and emotional needs of our students. The classroom size would not exceed 23 students per section. The Superintendent will then report to the Board of Trustees the number of exemptions granted.

4. Student Discipline Provisions

Exemption from TEC Sec. §37.0012

Current: Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposal: TISD will be exempt from TEC Sec. §37.0012 related to the designation of a (singular) campus behavior coordinator for each campus. Most campuses in TISD have only one campus administrator; therefore, TISD might designate other campus personnel/team as the behavior coordinator(s). TISD is asking for an exemption from the TEC guidelines that require one person to sign all discipline paperwork on a campus.

Local Guidelines: TISD will continue to follow Texas Education Code Chapter 37 for student discipline procedures including a teacher's right to remove a student from class (TEC Sec. 37.002). Allowing administrators to be part of a discipline team, and the responsibility for paperwork would depend on the administrator's assigned grade level and their relationship with the student and family.

5. Depository Contract

Exemption from TEC §45.205 Term of Contract (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified.

Current: TEC §45.205(b) states that a school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for three additional two-year terms. The contract may be modified for each two-year extension if both parties mutually agree to the terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206.(c) The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Proposal: Exemption of TEC §45.205 and TEC §45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term. In a small district and a small town, the District's choices for its depository bank are limited. Historically, no other financial institutions have ever successfully bid for the District's business as the District's depository. This exemption is to allow the District's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 6-year allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive, and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the District's business. This will further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to change direct deposit instructions each time a new depository occurs and allows the district flexibility with respect to banking relationships. The time saved by the superintendent and the board of trustees by not having to deal with this ministerial duty every two years will allow the superintendent and the board more time for studying and planning for student progress, instructional strategies, and innovative options for the district educational goals.

Local Guidelines: The District will only send depository services out to bid if the district determines contract pricing becomes uncompetitive or there is some operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. With this exemption in place, none of the additional requirements related to the bid or request for proposal detailed in Sec 45.206 through 45.209 would be applicable.

6. Unauthorized Persons; Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification (TEC §37.105), GKA(LEGAL), GKA(LOCAL)

Current: TEC Sec. §37.105 states that a school administrator, school resource officer, or school district peace officer of a school district may refuse to allow a person to enter on or may eject a person from property under the district's control if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and: (1) the person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person; or (2) the person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and: (A) the administrator, resource officer, or peace officer issues a verbal warning to the person that the person's behavior is inappropriate and may result in the person's refusal of entry or ejection; and (B) the person persists in that behavior. (b) Identification may be required of any person on the property. (c) Each school district shall maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under Subsection (a)(2)(A), including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. (d) At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property

under this section, the district shall provide to the person written information explaining the appeal process established under Subsection (h).

Proposal: Tornillo ISD believes that to better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in district, it is not required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities, nor be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to district property/facilities or removed from district property/facilities. The District shall continue to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities in situations where the administrator on site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so. District and Campus administrators, as well as local law enforcement officers if applicable, may refuse to allow a person to enter or may eject a person from property under the District's control in accordance with law. An appeal notice must be filed with the Superintendent, in writing, and submitted to the Administration Office for review.

Local Guidelines: District officials can remove or refuse entrance to persons that may jeopardize the safety and security of students, staff, and community without having to maintain a record of each verbal warning or providing written information explaining the appealing process.