

Darrouzett ISD

District of Innovation Plan

2017-2022

April 20, 2017

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, provides the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to allow more flexibility and local control for innovative programming.

On February 16, 2017, the Darrouzett Independent School District passed a Resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students in the community. The School Board appointed a District Action Committee comprised of community members appointed by the School Board Officers, parents, teacher leaders, and campus and district level administrators to prepare a Local Innovation Plan to address the needs of the District. On March 23, 2017, the Darrouzett ISD School Board held a Public Hearing to allow the public to learn more about the designation and provide feedback.

This District Action Committee met to develop an initial draft of the Local Innovation Plan. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback on April 20, 2017, and remained online until May 23, 2017. The plan was presented to the Darrouzett ISD Site Based Decision Members (SBDM) and it was recommended by the committee that the plan be presented to the School Board for consideration. The District Action Committee presented the plan to the School Board, and the Board adopted the plan on May 23, 2017.

PURPOSE OF INNOVATION

Darrouzett ISD seeks to become a District of Innovation in order to have more flexibility in creating a school system invested in college and career preparation. The Plan's comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the board's Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan for the District.

TERM

The term of the Local Innovation Plan will begin July 1, 2017 and end at the end of the 2021-2022 School Year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The committee will revisit the plan annually to ensure that the recommendations are still in line with the needs of the district. Any changes recommended would be on the website for 30 days and require approval of the Innovation Committee, the Site Based Decision Members and the School Board.

District Action Committee

Troy Humphrey--Superintendent
Donavan Ferguson—Co-Principal
Scott Miller- Co-Principal
Joyce Coppock—Counselor
Tracy Meier—Teacher
Debra Cockrell—Teacher
Tammie Ammons—Teacher
Janell Hurst—Teacher
Jo Boland—Parent
Liz Miller—Community

Proposed Meeting Schedule

- 2/16/17- Initial Board Meeting- District of Innovation concept on Board Agenda, Board Resolution, District Action Committee selected**
- 2/20/17- DAC- Admin met with committee to present DOI, answer questions, solicit feedback**
- 3/9/17- 6:30 community input public hearing;**
- 4/6/17- DAC- Open meeting to discuss and approve final plan**
- 4/20/17- Plan sent to TEA, posted on website**
- 5/23/17- Board of Trustees votes to adopt final plan**

Uniform start and end date: TEC §25.0811 & 25.0812

Darrouzett ISD wishes to no longer be required to start school on or after the fourth Monday of August or not be permitted to conclude the school year prior to May 15. These requirements placed upon schools are greatly based on the lobbying conducted on behalf of the business and tourism industries. These statute requirements do not take into considerations of local education agencies and even more importantly, the needs of students. As such, DISD seeks relief from Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 dictating that schools must not start prior to the 4th Monday in August. Additionally, DISD also seeks relief from Texas Education Code 25.0812 stipulating that the last day of instructions must not be set prior to May 15.

Innovative Practice:

DISD seeks local control over the start and end dates of a school year. The DISD anticipates starting school during the month of August and concluding the school year in May. The primary goals of this change will be to better balance the days of instruction in each semester, afford greater flexibility in calendar options, and better align the district's calendar with the junior college in order to accommodate dual-credit courses. This will also allow time to provide student orientation time prior to the start of the college semester, eliminate inefficient time after the conclusion of the college semester, and allow break time prior to the start of summer school for all students.

Site-based decision making: TEC § 11.251 and TEC § 28.004

The DISD seeks exemption from the site-based decision making process and the convening of the school health advisory committee and the many accompanying requirements falling under the governance of those two bodies. The statutory requirements as set forth for by the Texas Education Code in Chapter 11 and 28 are burdensome, time consuming, and ultimately cause a misdirection of resources from the primary focus of schools: the education of students. Stakeholders will continue to be involved in the process, but one that meets the needs of this district, school, and community which will be better fit than the one size fits all approach as detailed in the TEC § 11.251 and TEC § 28.004. This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this community.

Innovative practice:

In place of the SBDM and the SHAC, a Darrouzett Advisory Council (DAC) will be established, meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the district's success and most importantly, student's success. This council will convene at least two times per year and generate the general direction of committees will yield greater opportunity for one council to address a multitude of needs as opposed to having one meeting after another throughout the year.

Length of school day: TEC § 25.082(a) and TEC § 25.081(e)

The TEC § 25.082(a) and TEC § 25.081(e) address the length of the instructional day by limiting it to “420 minutes of instruction” or “seven hours each day including intermissions and recesses.” While the intent of the Legislature was to standardized across all districts the amount of time students spent learning in a classroom, DISD wishes to meet the goal of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year, but seeks an exemption from these statutes so that it may reach the 75,600 minutes’ total in a more creative manner without being limited to either 420 minutes or seven hours of instruction every day. The length of the instructional day cannot be changed absent the District becoming a District of Innovation.

Innovative Practice:

The superintendent may alter the length of an instructional day on a limited basis when it is locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. Darrouzett ISD does not have any intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis or without specific purpose (i.e. bad weather, professional development, early dismissal for events of community interest, etc). To the greatest extent possible, shortened days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media.

Darrouzett ISD believes that having a flexible school day benefits teachers and campus leaders who participate in Professional Learning Communities, perfecting their craft, deepening their content knowledge, and analyzing student data.

Number of College Days Attendance Rule: TEC § 25.087

State law allows for a school district to excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student’s junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student’s interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that: (1) the district may not excuse for this purpose more than two days during the student’s junior year and two days during the student’s senior year; and (2) the district adopts: (A) a policy to determine when an absence will be excused for this purpose; and (B) a procedure to verify the student’s visit at the institution of higher education.

Innovative Practice:

Darrouzett ISD has a very isolated location in relation to a number of schools that DISD students express interest in. Limiting students to only 2 days does not allow for students to travel round trip as well as visit a campus. DISD will waive the 2-day limit per year and adopt a policy allowing seniors to miss 4 days per year, juniors to miss 4 days per year, sophomores to miss 2 days per year and freshmen to miss 2 days per year. Darrouzett ISD will expand its college and career program by allowing students 9-12 to be excused to visit colleges that they are interested in. This will allow students to gain a greater

understanding of the steps needed to achieve their college/career goals at an earlier age, before it is too late.

Contract Service Days: TEC § 21.401 and TAC Chapter 231

With the passage of §25.081 which changed the required days of instruction to minutes, the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision, given the district does not reduce the annually pay of the employee's contract.

Innovative Practice:

To allow flexibility in the contractual days for certified personnel, Darrouzett ISD will maintain the current salary schedule for all certified employees. Darrouzett ISD will not reduce the annual salary of certified staff, except in accordance with TEC §21.4021 (Furloughs) which the district is not seeking exemption.

Darrouzett ISD may reduce the required service days for a 10-month teacher contract from 187 days to 182 days with no decrease in pay. This will in effect raise the daily pay rate for teachers without any additional cost to the district. The Board will consider the certified salary schedules as part of the regular budgeting process.

Transfer Students: TEC §25.036 and FDA Local

Texas Education Code states that a district may choose to accept, as transfer, 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. Darrouzett ISD has a local transfer policy FDA (LOCAL) requiring non-resident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the superintendent or designee considers available space and instructional staff. Also considered is the student's disciplinary history and attendance records.

Innovative Practice:

The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment on the part of the district in acceptance of transfer applications for the following reasons:

- Student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.
- Student attendance falls below the TEA truancy standard.
- Student must attend required interventions (if needed) to retain approved transfer status.

Teacher Certification: TEC § 21.003 and TEC § 21.056

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. In certain circumstances, a district can use a local one-year permit.

Innovative Practice:

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

The principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possess in which would 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.

Individuals with a DISD local teaching certificate will receive mandatory professional development in best practices, classroom management, curriculum and instruction, pedagogy and professional responsibilities. This professional development will be taught by District leaders or the Regional Educational Service Center.

Darrouzett ISD will notify parents if their child is being taught by a teacher outside of their teaching certificate or on a local certification. If parents have an objection to the teacher, then the student will be provided the opportunity to be enrolled in an online class.