

## Introduction

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842, allowing Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and thus permitting exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. In an effort to better serve and accommodate the diverse needs of all students, staff, and community, Patton Springs ISD seeks to become a District of Innovation.

Districts of Innovation provides opportunities for:

- Greater local control;
- Increased flexibility governing education programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

## Timeline

On Dec. 12, 2016 the Patton Springs ISD Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate this process.

On December 22, 2016 the Patton Springs ISD Board of Trustees held a Public Hearing concerning becoming a District of Innovation. After the hearing the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to write the plan.

On April 8, 2017 the committee completed the plan.

On April 8, 2017 the plan was posted on the District's website.

On May 15, 2017 the committee approved the plan.

The Patton Springs ISD Board of Trustees approved the plan on May 15, 2017.

## Term

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning May 31, 2017 and concluding on May, 30, 2022. The committee will continually monitor the plan to gauge its effectiveness and suggest any modifications to the Board if needed.

## Committee Members

Bryan White	Administration
Sandra Ramirez	Administration
Tommy Gleghorn	Teacher
Becky Hodges	Business Manager
Cathy Davis	Teacher
Debbie White	Teacher

Amended 9/21/2018

Added Inter-District transfer innovation

Removed committee members Darryn Perryman and Lana Burson. Added Tommy Gleghorn Cathy Davis.

Exemptions requested in the Texas Education Code in the following areas:

**A. Uniform School Calendar** (§25.0811) (§25.0812) (EB Legal) (EB Local)

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday on August. Texas Education Code Section 25.0812 states that a district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

1. Innovation Strategies

- a. Patton Springs ISD requests the freedom to develop a calendar that better fits the needs of the community should the committee choose to. Having greater flexibility in this area would allow the District Committee to better balance the first and second semesters and provide more instructional days prior to state testing.
- b. Will allow more opportunities to schedule timely and meaningful staff development throughout the calendar year.
- c. Will allow the District to incorporate flex days in the spring prior to state assessments.
- d. To achieve the goal of improved student attendance rate and student success.

**B. Teacher Employment Contracts** (§21.102)

Currently, experienced teachers new to a district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

1. Innovation Strategies

- a. Experienced teachers new to the PSISD staff that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the last date of district employment. This will allow the District more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.

**C. Teacher Certification** (§21.003) (DK Legal) (DK Local) (DK Exhibit)

- a. Current Statute: State law 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.
- b. Proposed flexibility: The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand, as well as career and technical courses. In order to serve the students of Patton Springs, decisions on certification will be handled on a local basis. This would provide flexibility in our schedule and more class options for our students.

## Innovation Strategy

1. The district principal may submit a request to the superintendent to allow a certified teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certified area. The request must state the reason and document the current certifications that the teacher holds that would qualify them to teach the subject. The superintendent will approve or deny requests, basing decisions on whether this person can be an asset for students. Upon approval, the superintendent would present this to the Board of Trustees for final approval.
2. Individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The campus principal would submit the request to the superintendent with all the document that the person holds that would qualify them to teach the course. The superintendent would present this to the Board of Trustees for approval. Local teaching certificate would be for one year.

### D. **Minimum Minutes of Instruction** (§25.081) (EC Legal) (EB Legal)

Currently HB 2610 requires districts to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction per school year and 420 minutes per day. Patton Springs ISD will not serve less than the 75,600 minutes per school year.

#### 1. Innovation Strategy

- a. Exempting from the 420 minute day requirement would allow PSISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the 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 of 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 school district to fall out of compliance with the annual minute requirements. The District would not schedule early release days under this exemption that were shorter than 240 minutes (4 Hours).
- b. The District will provide teachers and administrators the opportunity for weekly or monthly staff development opportunities through the creation of these unique schedules.

### E. **Teacher Contract Days** (§21.401) (DCB Legal) (DCB Local)

Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.

#### 1. Innovation Strategy

- a. PSISD would like to have the freedom to consider the reduction in contract days. Due to low property values, it is difficult for PSISD to compete with area schools in the area of teacher salary. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule would make our salaries more competitive.
- b. This plan would increase the daily rate the district pays its teachers.
- c. This plan would enhance teacher recruitment.
- d. This plan will significantly improve teacher morale.

**F. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator (§37.0012) (FO Legal) (FO Local)**

Currently a person is required to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC) who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37 and allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the CBC.

1. Innovation Plan

- a. PSISD will restore control and management of maintaining student discipline to the oversight of the campus principal.
- b. The specific duties of the CBC will be given to the campus principal who may divide and/or delegate duties to an assistant principal as needed.

**G. INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFER STUDENTS (FDA (Local) & TEC 25.036)**

Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year. Patton Springs 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 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.

1. Innovation Strategies

- a. The district is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants and allow the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year after a review of the circumstances.