



Learners Today Leaders Tomorrow

North Zulch ISD
District of Innovation Plan
2018-2019 – 2022-2023

District of Innovation Committee

Alan Andrus – Superintendent

Kori Batten – Counselor

Becky Wilson – Community Member

David Kirk – Parent

Kendra Gilbert – Instructional Aide

Dana Diserens – Elementary Teacher

Laura Kirschner – Elementary Teacher

Janie Pope – Elementary Principal

Tami Suits – Elementary Teacher

Joan Osth – Secondary Teacher

Lea Ann Andrus – Curriculum Director

Ashley Crocker – Instructional Aide

Holly Ashley – Secondary Teacher

Johan Osth – Secondary Principal

Kristy Rhodes - Parent

Rinza Stewart – Community/Business Member

District of Innovation

The 84th 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 transform systemic improvement to better serve and accommodate the diverse needs of all 21st century stakeholders, including students, staff, parents and community members, North Zulch ISD seeks to become a District of Innovation. This distinction allows the District increased local control over District operations to improve the quality of services benefiting all stakeholders.

The District of Innovation Plan is for five years, yet may be terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees at any time in accordance with the law. The District of Innovation Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the DOI plan and provide updates and/or necessary modifications to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.

District of Innovation Timeline

November 12, 2018

- NZISD Board of Trustees received information concerning District of Innovation Designation in a board meeting.
- NZISD Board of Trustees adopted resolution to pursue becoming a District of Innovation.

December 13, 2018

- NZISD Public Hearing Regarding District of Innovation.
- NZISD Board of Trustees gave the go ahead for the Superintendent to establish a district committee to develop an innovation plan.

January 16, 2019

- NZISD conducted a Needs Assessment to discuss possible areas of innovation.

January 30, 2019

- District of Innovation Committee considered a list of statutes to consider in the local plan.
- District of Innovation Committee approved a draft of the District of Innovation Plan

February 1, 2019

- District of Innovation Plan posted to the district website for the required 30 day review period.

March 8, 2019

- NZISD notified the Commissioner of Education of the intent of the school district to adopt a plan to become a District of Innovation.

March 28, 2019

- Public hearing for final review of the plan.
- NZISD Board of Trustees approved the final plan.

May 4, 2021

- District of Innovation Committee considered two amendments to the local plan.
- District of Innovation approved the amendments by unanimous vote and posted to the district website for the required 30-day review period.

June 7, 2021

- NZISD Board of Trustees approved the amended plan by unanimous vote.

June 9, 2021

- NZISD notified the Commissioner of Education of the amendments.

North Zulch ISD District of Innovation Plan

Areas of Innovation

1. School Calendar

(TEC 25.0811)

Currently, students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. The proposal would look at options for allowing an earlier start date and a calendar that best fits the needs of the North Zulch ISD community.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- District Calendar Committee will have the flexibility to start school earlier.
- Starting school earlier would allow the district to balance the two semesters.
- The balanced semesters will align with college semesters as well, allowing more opportunities for summer school, internships, and industrial certification opportunities.

2. Teacher Certification

(TEC 21.003, TEC 21.057)

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 TEA. TEA then approves or denies this request. This proposal would look at the following options:

- allow certified educators to teach in a related field for which they were not certified by the state
- allow individuals with industry experience in a CTE field to be eligible to teach vocational courses
- relieve the district from the requirement to notify parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- State certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry/academic experience to teach a variety of courses such as CTE, STEMS, and electives.
- Local Qualifications will allow the district to recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experience.
- Allow certified teachers to teach above or below the grade level span of their current certification.

3. Teacher Contract Days

(TEC 21.401)

Current education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days. With the requirement for student attendance changing from days to minutes, the number of teacher days may need to be adjusted to better align with the student day (minutes). The proposal would reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries. This would be an attempt to better align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- North Zulch ISD will determine the number of contract days that are required to fulfill the contract of our 10-month employees.
- This will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- Teacher recruitment and morale will be enhanced.

4. Probationary Contracts

(TEC 21.102)

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 time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in NZISD. This will allow the district time to evaluate performance.

5. Class Size Ratio/Reporting Requirement

(TEC 25.112, TEC 25.113)

Under TEC 25.112, districts are required to maintain a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency.

Under TEC 25.113, districts are required to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved negating the need for this notice.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- Flexibility in this area would allow the district to determine the enrollment in classes, bearing in mind class structure, content, and the age of learners.
- NZISD will strive to keep student to teacher ratios as low as possible, but the district would have the ability to make decisions at the local level without applying to the Commissioner for an exception.
- Flexibility in this area would allow the district to determine the appropriateness of parent notification as innovative class structures are explored and potentially put into place.

6. School Health Advisory Council

(TEC 28.004)

Current education law requires the local school health advisory council to meet at least four times each year. The requirement becomes burdensome and time consuming for a district our size.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- Relief from this requirement will allow all stakeholders to continue to be involved in the process, but in a manner that meets the needs of this district and community.
- North Zulch ISD will hold a minimum of two meetings per year.

7. Inter-District Transfers

(TEC 25.036), Relevant Board Policies: FDA (LOCAL)

Currently, under TEC 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. 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.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- North Zulch ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants.
- Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students 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. Absences for College/University Visits

(TEC 25.087/b-2 1 & 2), TAC 129.21 j)

Under the current code, a school district may 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.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- In some cases, where students are visiting colleges out of state, students need more than the two days that are currently allowed to safely visit a college they are interested in attending.
- Each situation would be evaluated by the counselor or principal on a case by case basis.

Amendments:

1. Expanded Insurance Options for Employees

(TEC: 22.004(i))

The current code precludes a school district from providing an alternative uniform group coverage program once the school district implements coverage under Chapter 1579. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all NZISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverage for its employees at a lower cost.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- Increased local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee needs.
- Allows NZISD flexibility to offer additional insurance benefits to all district employees.
- Allows NZISD to remain competitive with surrounding districts.

2. School Depositories Contract

(TEC 45.205)

Under the current code, the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and can be extended for three additional two-year terms. This places a burden on the district once it has reached the limit of extensions by requiring the district to seek bids or a request for proposal.

Benefits of Exemption for NZISD

- Lessens the administrative burden related to preparing/reviewing a Request for Proposal when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the district's business.
- 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.
- Allows the district the flexibility to send depository services out for bid if the district determines contract pricing has become uncompetitive or there is some operational or financial reason.
- Reduce cost of purchasing new checks and deposit slips.

Figure: 19 TAC §102.1307(d)

Innovation District

Please submit, on district letterhead, a letter to the commissioner of education stating the date that the board of trustees adopted a resolution to develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the district as an Innovation District.

A local innovation plan must be developed for a school district before the district may be designated as an Innovation District. A local plan must provide for a comprehensive educational program for the district, which may include:

- 1) Innovative Curriculum
- 2) Instructional Methods
- 3) Community Participation
- 4) Governance of Campuses
- 5) Parental Involvement
- 6) Modifications to the school day or year
- 7) Provisions regarding the district budget and sustainable program funding
- 8) Accountability and assessment measures that exceed the requirements of state and federal law; and
- 9) Any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees.

A local innovation plan must identify requirements imposed by the Education Code that inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. The local innovation plan should specify the manner in which a particular statute inhibits one or more goals of the plan. Please use the form below to check the statutes specifically identified in your district's local innovation plan as inhibiting a goal of the plan. Checking a specific statute does not necessarily indicate eligibility for an exemption from all subsections of the statute. The local innovation plan controls with regard to the specific exemptions adopted by a district. The form below provides a reporting mechanism to fulfill the reporting requirements of the statute. Entire sections of code may not be eligible for exemption and each district should consult its legal counsel in developing its innovation plan.

Exemptions claimed for an Innovation District apply only to the specific provision of the Texas Education Code (TEC) cited, which may or may not be governed by a separate legal requirement. The exemption does not relieve the district of any requirement imposed by other state or federal law or a duty imposed under federal regulation, grant compliance, agency rule applicable to a charter school or a local legal requirement. Each district should consult its legal counsel to ensure adoption of necessary local policies to ensure compliance with all applicable legal requirements.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of exemptions.

Term of Plan: 2018-2019 to 2022-2023

Plan applies to: Entire District
 Campus (list) _____
 Other (please describe) _____

Chapter 11 – School Districts

Subchapter D. Powers and Duties of Board of Trustees of Independent School Districts

- §11.1511 (b)(5), (14) Specific Powers and Duties of Board
- §11.162 School Uniforms

Subchapter F. District-Level and Site Based Decision-Making

- §11.251 Planning and Decision-Making Process
- §11.252 District-Level Planning and Decision-Making
- §11.253 Campus Planning and Site-Based Decision-Making
- §11.255 Dropout Prevention Review

Chapter 21 – Educators

Subchapter A – General Provisions

- §21.002 Teacher Employment Contracts
- §21.003 Certification Required
- §21.0031 Failure to Obtain Certification; Contract Void

Subchapter B – Certification of Educators

- §21.051 Rules Regarding Field-Based Experience and Options for Field Experience and Internships.
- §21.053 Presentation and Recording of Certificates
- §21.057 Parental Notification

Subchapter C – Probationary Contracts

Subchapter D – Continuing Contracts

Subchapter E – Term Contracts

Subchapter H – Appraisals and Incentives

- §21.352 Local Role
- §21.353 Appraisal on Basis of Classroom Teaching Performance
- §21.354 Appraisal of Certain Administrators
- §21.3541 Appraisal and Professional Development System for Principals

Subchapter I – Duties and Benefits

- §21.401 Minimum Service Required
- §21.402 Minimum Salary Schedule for Certain Professional Staff
- §21.4021 Furloughs

- §21.4022 Required Process for Development of Furlough Program or Other Salary Reduction Proposal
 - §21.403 Placement on Minimum Salary Schedule
 - §21.4031 Professional Staff Service Records
 - §21.4032 Reductions in Salaries of Classroom Teachers and Administrators
 - §21.404 Planning and Preparation Time
 - §21.405 Duty-Free Lunch
 - §21.406 Denial of Compensation Based On Absence for Religious Observance Prohibited
 - §21.407 Requiring or Coercing Teachers to Join Groups, Clubs, Committees, or Organizations: Political Affairs
 - §21.408 Right To Join or Not To Join Professional Association
 - §21.409 Leave Of Absence for Temporary Disability
 - §21.415 Employment Contracts
- Subchapter J – Staff Development**
- §21.451 Staff Development Requirements
 - §21.452 Developmental Leaves of Absence
 - §21.458 Mentors

Chapter 22 – School District Employees and Volunteers

Subchapter A – Rights, Duties, and Benefits

- §22.001 Salary Deductions for Professional Dues
- §22.002 Assignment, Transfer, or Pledge of Compensation
- §22.003 Minimum Personal Leave Program
- §22.006 Discrimination Based on Jury Service Prohibited
- §22.007 Incentives for Early Retirement
- §22.011 Requiring or Coercing Employees to Make Charitable Contributions

Chapter 25 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance

Subchapter C – Operation of Schools and School Attendance

- §25.0811 First Day of Instruction
- §25.0812 Last Day of School
- §25.083 School Day Interruptions
- §25.092 Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

Subchapter D – Student/Teacher Ratios; Class Size

- §25.111 Student/Teacher Ratios
- §25.112 Class Size
- §25.113 Notice of Class Size
- §25.114 Student/Teacher Ratios in Physical Education Classes; Class Size

Chapter 37 – Discipline; Law and Order

Subchapter A – Alternative Setting for Behavior Management

- §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator
- §37.002 Removal by Teacher

Chapter 44 –Fiscal Management

Subchapter B – Purchases; Contracts

- §44.031 Purchasing Contracts
- §44.0331 Management Fees Under Certain Cooperative Purchasing Contracts
- §44.0352 Competitive Sealed Proposals
- §44.042 Preference to Texas and United States Products
- §44.043 Right To Work
- §44.047 Purchase or Lease of Automated External Defibrillator

Subchapter Z – Miscellaneous Provisions

- §44.901 Energy Savings Performance Contracts
- §44.902 Long-Range Energy Plan to Reduce Consumption of Electric Energy
- §44.903 Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs in Instructional Facilities
- §44.908 Expenditure of Local Funds

Chapter 45 – School District Funds

Subchapter G – School District Depositories

- §45.205 Term of Contract
- §45.206 Bid Or Request for Proposal Notices; Bid and Proposal Forms
- §45.207 Award of Contract
- §45.208 Depository Contract; Bond
- §45.209 Investment of District Funds

Other

Please list any additional exemption required for your Innovation District Plan:

- §28.004 School Health Advisory Council
- §25.036 Inter-District Transfers
- §25.087 Absences for College/University Visits
- §22.004(i) Expanded Insurance Options for Employees