

# **Cross Roads Independent School District**

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## **District of Innovation**

A District of Innovation is a concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 giving traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to the state's open enrollment charter schools. Any district with an academic performance rating of at least Academically Acceptable is eligible.

The idea behind Districts of Innovation is that a local school district may want to pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, budgeting, or other areas. An innovation plan allows a district to gain exemption from many Texas Education Code requirements, thus gaining more local control. Each innovation plan is expected to be unique to each school district, allowing for local values and goals to be incorporated into the plan.

Cross Roads ISD took the first step in exploring this opportunity when the Board approved a resolution initiating the process in February. The Board then held a public hearing to consider whether the district should develop an innovation plan, at which time the Board decided to move forward in the process appointing a committee to develop an innovation plan. The plan then will be posted on-line for at least 30 days. Following the 30 days on-line, the District's Plan of Innovation will go back to the Board for approval.

Some areas where Districts of Innovation can gain flexibility are: school start date, minimum minutes of instruction, class size ratio, 90-percent attendance rule, teacher certification and contracts, teacher appraisal system and student discipline provision. Each district may identify different areas where their plans would take advantage of the flexibility that is available.

Requirements that Districts of Innovation cannot be exempted from are: elected Boards of Trustees, PEIMS reporting, criminal history checks, curriculum and graduation requirements, bilingual education, special education, pre-K programs, academic accountability including student assessments, financial accountability, open meetings and public records rules, and purchasing regulations.

The term of the Local Innovation Plan will begin at the start of the 2017-2018 school year and end with 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 and wishes of the district. Any changes recommended would be on the website for 30 days and require approval of the Innovation Committee and the School Board.

## District of Innovation Committee Members

1. Richard Tedder	Superintendent
2. John Miller	High School Principal
3. Julie Koepp	JH School Principal
4. Cathy Sulak	Elementary Principal
5. Kim Mattingly	Director of Student Services
6. Natalie Tappan	District Nurse
7. Loretta Campbell	Interventionist
8. Zach Tappan	CTE Teacher
9. Shari Musick	Special Education
10. Gary Cahill	Technology Director
11. Diana Bell	Instructional Aid
12. Cory McCulloch	Instructional Aid
13. Kim Sherrell	HS Teacher
14. Sandy Fulton	HS Teacher
15. Barbara Gunnels	JH Teacher
16. Cheryl Hope	JH Teacher
17. DeLain Pryor	Elem Teacher
18. Michelle Lucius	Compensatory Education
19. Lynn Stultz	Business Owner
20. Patti Thomas	Community Member
21. Linda Upchurch	Community Member
22. Amanda Sawyer	Parent
23. Jenny Collins	Parent
24. Kacey Watson	Parent

# **AREAS OF INNOVATION**

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

## **1. School Start Date**

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

### **Currently**

Students may not begin school before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, some even going as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday.

The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, with no exceptions.

### **Proposed**

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the mandatory start date back one week which would better benefit our students.

- a. Students will begin no earlier than the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of August.
- b. The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

## **2. Teacher Certification**

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.003)

### **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 CRISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their 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.
- b. 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.
- c. This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

### **3. Probationary Contracts**

(DCA LEGAL) (TEC 21.102)

#### **Currently**

A probationary contract may not exceed one year for new teachers to our district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district. Under this circumstance, the district must either give the teacher a term contract or terminate their contract after their first year in the district.

#### **Proposed**

Cross Roads ISD would like to have the ability to renew the probationary contract one additional one-year period, for a maximum of two school years, for all teachers that are new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of eight years preceding employment by the District.

#### **4. Submitting Waivers for Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size**

(EEB LEGAL)(Ed. Code 25.112)(Ed. Code 25.113)

##### **Currently**

Kindergarten- 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many time soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

##### **Proposed**

While we certainly believe that small size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add 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.

- a. CRISD will attempt to keep all K-4<sup>th</sup> core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- b. In the event a K-4<sup>th</sup> core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4<sup>th</sup> classroom exceeds the 22:1 ration.
- d. This gives CRISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.