

District of Innovation Plan

Port Neches Groves Independent School District



Introduction

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. To promote systematic improvement and allow for more local control. PNGISD elected to become a District of Innovation. The initial five-year plan expires at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

A district of innovation plan may be renewed if the action is approved by a majority vote of the District Advisory Council and a two-thirds majority vote of the board of trustees. The term of the designation as a district of innovation may not exceed 5 years.

District of Innovation Renewal Timeline

October 5, 2021	District level personnel (Administrative Team) will review and update the current District of Innovation Plan
December 14, 2021 3:45 PM – PNG High School LGI	A public meeting will be held prior to the District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC) meeting to review the plan. DEIC must pass the District of Innovation renewal plan by a majority vote.
December 15, 2021	The Port Neches Groves ISD District of Innovation Plan will be posted on the district website for 30 days. The Commissioner of Education will be notified of the Board of Trustees' intent to vote on renewing the Port Neches Groves ISD District of Innovation Plan.
February 14, 2022	PNGISD Board of Trustees will vote to approve the District of Innovation Plan. The PNGISD Board of Trustees must approve the District of Innovation Plan by a 2/3 majority. If approved: The Commissioner of Education will be notified of the Board of Trustees' approval of the renewal of the Port Neches Groves ISD District of Innovation Plan.

	<p>The local innovation website will be updated on the PNGISD webpage for the duration of the designation as an innovation district.</p> <p>No later than the 15th day after the February 2022 board meeting, the district will provide a copy of the link to the current innovation plan to the Texas Education Agency for posting on the agency website.</p>
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District Education Improvement Committee Roster

Name	Group	Campus
Greg Picazo	Classroom Teacher	High School
Annette Meier	Classroom Teacher	High School
Laura Haycock	Classroom Teacher	High School
Julie Latiolais	Classroom Teacher	Alternative Center
Connie Swope	Classroom Teacher	Groves Middle
Victoria Angus	Classroom Teacher	Port Neches Middle
Brittany Novich	Classroom Teacher	Groves Elementary
Denise White	Classroom Teacher	Port Neches Elem.
Sabrina Weatherly	Classroom Teacher	Ridgewood
Donna Cole	Classroom Teacher	Taft
Cindy Downs	Classroom Teacher	Van Buren
Jamie Haining	Classroom Teacher	Woodcrest
Cara Holder	Classroom Teacher	WGELC
Kerrie Davis	Special Populations	Elementary Level
Maureen Padilla	Special Populations	Middle School Level
Andrea Ballew	Special Populations	High School Level
Kevin Schexnaider	Administrator	Elementary Level
Brian Richardson	Administrator	Middle School Level
Amber Oleksy	Administrator	High School Level
Taylor McDonald	Support Professional	Elementary Level
Angela Harper	Support Professional	Middle School Level
Rachel Lawson	Support Professional	High School Level
Adam Anders	Community	Port Neches
Pete Konidis	Community	Groves
Mike Spencer	Business	Port Neches
Micah Hallmark	Business	Groves
Samantha Morris	Parent	WGELC
Florinda Ceja	Parent	Taft

Deedra Young	Parent	Van Buren
Candace Whitewood	Parent	Ridgewood
Katherine Tatum	Parent	Woodcrest
Christi Fuller	Parent	PNE
Amy Gassen	Parent	GE
Jessica LaGrappe	Parent	PNMS
Kristen Baxter	Parent	GMS
Allison Zeig	Parent	PNGHS
Julie Gauthier	Administration	Admin
Brett McPhatter	Curriculum	High School
Tanya Davis	Curriculum	Middle School
Roxanne Ferguson	Curriculum	Elementary
Misty Higgins	Administration	SPED
Crystal Werkheiser	Administration	Technology

Term

The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is five years; therefore, the plan shall commence with the 2022-2023 academic year and conclude at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

Areas of Innovation

To meet the district needs and address Board Goals, flexibility is required to exert local control, at both the District and campus levels to create the following benefits:

1. School Start and End Dates

Exemption from: TEC 25.0811; TEC 25.0812

Related Board Policies: EB LEGAL

Current:

TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. The current practice allows little flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests related to school calendars.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

Port Neches-Groves ISD will develop a calendar with start and end dates that focus on student instruction and professional development in line with district goals and the 75,600 instructional

minutes requirement, rather than days. Relief from these statutes will provide for increased local control of the district's instructional calendar to better meet the needs of its two communities.

2. Teacher Certification

Exemption from: TEC 21.003; TEC 21.053; TEC 21.057

Related Board Policies: DBA LEGAL/LOCAL; DK LEGAL/LOCAL; DK EXHIBIT

Current:

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern, or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor 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 for Educator Certification.

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 certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The District will make every attempt to hire secondary teachers according to TAC Title 19, Part 7, Subchapter 230; however, where that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to create local certification requirements for qualification and training for individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. If the teacher is performing on T-TESS at a level that is acceptable to the District, the District may consider retaining the services of this employee with the expectation that the employee show they are working toward obtaining the appropriate teacher certification through workshops, college classes, and/or other venues to prepare them for the examination. In addition, the employee will remain at will until the employee acquires SBEC certification. The District will maintain the documentation at the local level.

The district will also allow certified secondary teacher(s) to teach subject(s) out of their certified area for individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course for which

he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document the credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency but will be filed locally. The district will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

3. Planning and Preparation Periods

Exemption from: TEC 21.404

Related Board Policies: DL LEGAL

Current:

TEC 21.404 requires that each classroom teacher be provided at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

The district seeks flexibility to allow teachers to earn additional compensation by electing to teach more courses and waive the statutorily required planning time. This allows our students greater access to quality teachers and more flexibility in the campus master schedules. In addition, the district believes that when teachers collaborate and share ideas, they are more effective in the classroom, which directly correlates to student achievement. Allowing for group planning time and mentoring during the school day prevents the district from extending the length of the teacher workday.

4. Class Size Reporting Requirement

Exemption from: TEC 25.111, TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113

Related Board Policies: EEB LEGAL

Current:

TEC 25.111 requires that each school district employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance. TEC 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for every one teacher for prekindergarten through Grade 4. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with TEA. TEC 25.113 requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

Port Neches-Groves ISD will strive to keep the 22:1 student to teacher ratio for grades K-4, but in the event that class size exceeds 22 in grades K-4, the District will take every effort to provide

teacher support, as needed. The requirement to seek a waiver from TEA and parents of larger class size will be eliminated.

5. Removal of Individual from District Property/Facilities

Exemption from: TEC 37.105

Related Board Policies: GKA LEGAL, LOCAL

Current:

TEC 37.105 requires a district to maintain a record of each verbal warning issued, including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property, the district must provide the person written information explaining how to appeal. Each school district must adopt a policy that uses the district's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person with 90 days of the commencement of the appeal unless the appeal is granted sooner.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

Texas Education Code section 37.105 includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate for the school setting.

To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in Port Neches Groves ISD, the district will not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities, nor will PNGISD 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 currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities. The District will 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. Any appeal regarding denial of entry should be processed in accordance with the District's existing grievance policies.

6. Suspension Limitations for Students Below 3rd Grade

Exemption from: TEC 37.005(c)

Related Board Policies: FOB LEGAL

Current:

TEC 37.005 (c) provides that a student who is enrolled in a grade level below 3rd grade may not be placed in out of school suspension unless the student engages in an offense related to weapons, a violent offense, or selling, giving, or delivering drugs and/or alcohol.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

PNGISD currently monitors the suspensions of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure that District policy and the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the district. There are times when students engage in behaviors that do not necessarily fit into the categories of weapons, violent offenses, or being under the influence, but warrant removal from the instructional setting. An example might include students who engage in “persistent misbehaviors” that are deemed to be harmful to the students or others. At times, students in these situations fail to understand the seriousness of their behaviors due to the statutory limitations in responding to student behavior.

This innovation will allow for school-based decision making, assist in maintaining an orderly learning environment for all students, and allow school administrators to ensure the safety and security of all students more effectively.

7. Counselor Work Time

Exemption from: TEC 33.006(d-h)

Related Board Policies: DP LEGAL, LOCAL

Current:

TEC 33.006 subsections (d) – (h) places restrictions on the duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, requires policy adoption and annual review by the school board, and limits contracting options with counselors in the District. PNGISD wishes to maintain flexibility in its school counseling and guidance program by waiving compliance with the requirement of TEC 33.006(d) that a counselor spend 80 percent of total work time on duties identified by statute, as well as removing burdens imposed by subsections (e) – (h) related to policy adoption, annual review, and counselor employment contracts.

The requirements of TEC 33.006(d) – (h) impede the district’s ability to meet the ever-changing needs of its students and school operations by restricting the ability of PNGISD counselors to fulfill other important roles throughout the district, including but not limited to, special education and 504 monitoring, scheduling, student assessment, etc. While it is still the intent and goal of PNGISD that its certified counselors focus on the school counseling program, temporal restrictions and time logging/tracking requirements, which would be necessary to confirm strict adherence to an 80/20 duty allocation, are an ineffective use of employee time and impedes the district’s ability to use its counseling staff in a variety of roles to best serve the needs of PNGISD students and the community.

Proposed Innovation Strategies:

The District will exercise local discretion in determining the additional duties fulfilled by certified counselors in the District, by taking into account each individual counselor’s professional education, certifications, experience, and knowledge, and will also consider the specific needs of the students and staff on each campus.

The District will exercise local discretion in determining how counselors allocate their work time to perform all duties, including those duties that are not identified in TEC 33.006, enabling the District to meet student needs and address local challenges as they arise.