



Iraan-Sheffield ISD

PO Box 486
Iraan, TX 79744
432-639-2512

District of Innovation

This District of Innovation Plan relates only to the specific exemptions outlined below. The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning April 10, 2017 and ending April 10, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with applicable law. The district will adhere strictly to the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If it becomes apparent that changes to the Plan are necessary the district will reconvene the District of Innovation Planning Committee to discuss and potentially enact those changes.

House Bill 1842 was passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session. This law gives Texas public school districts an opportunity to modify state requirements to meet the needs of their students. As a District of Innovation, Iraan-Sheffield ISD will have the increased flexibility necessary to customize student learning experiences due to the uniqueness of every student. House Bill 1842 will allow Iraan-Sheffield ISD to make important educational decisions locally and put the needs of the students first.

Iraan-Sheffield ISD seeks, as a District of Innovation, to fully bring to life the district's vision of education for the future. The District of Innovation Planning Committee have been involved throughout the process of developing our innovation plan, providing feedback regarding what they want for an exceptional learning experience for students.

This plan requires to Iraan-Sheffield ISD to evolve, thinking differently about the utilization of the current educational system and to formulate a new system that incorporates the exemptions from House Bill 1842 to enhance the learning experience for each child. House Bill 1842 allows us to re-examine how we teach, how we recruit and retain talented teachers, how we organize our educational system, how we grow as a learning community, what kinds of educational experiences we provide, and how we involve our staff, families, and our community in the process.

House Bill 1842 allows Iraan-Sheffield ISD to exempt itself from a limited subset of requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code. The purpose of House Bill 1842 is to encourage and expedite innovation in school districts. Iraan-Sheffield ISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the Texas Education Code as allowed in statute:

Uniform School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

The District may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposed

The flexibility provided by permitting an earlier start date will allow Iraan-Sheffield ISD to annually determine, at the local level, the start date that best meets the needs of the students and the community. This exemption will enable us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, balance the amount of instructional time per semester, and provide more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff. Removing the uniform start date would allow Iraan-Sheffield ISD to start classes on a Wednesday or Thursday to ease the transition to schooling for students entering pre-k/kindergarten, as well as, transitioning through the elementary schools, junior high school, and high school.

Students will start to school no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction and Length of School Day

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.081) (Ed. Code 25.082)

Currently

House Bill 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amended Texas Education Code TEC §25.081 by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring the District to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess) each school year. Additionally, TEC §25.082(a) currently requires that a school day be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed

Exemption from the seven hour school day requirement would allow Iraan-Sheffield the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it was locally determined as beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is an existing waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a six day maximum per school year.

Exempting Iraan-Sheffield ISD from the 75,600 minutes annual requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling without diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to be out of compliance with the annual minute requirement. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

Iraan-Sheffield ISD does not intend to shorten the school day on a regular basis or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days will 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.

Class Size in Kindergarten through 4th Grade

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

Currently

Texas Education Code § 25.112 requires enrollment in Kindergarten through 4th Grade classes to be limited at 22 students. If maintaining this limit creates an undue hardship, the District may request a waiver from the Texas Education Agency. Texas Education Code § 25.113 requires written notice to be sent home to parents each time a waiver is granted.

Proposed

The Iraan-Sheffield ISD student population changes as the economy fluctuates. While we believe that a small class size may play a positive role for students, this must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff while also considering the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. It must also be noted that it is not the number of students in a classroom but the dynamics of the classroom that most influence the learning environment. Research has shown that the teacher in the classroom has the greatest impact on student learning as opposed to absolute class size. Under the Iraan-Sheffield ISD District of Innovation Plan, in the event that a class size exceeds the 22:1 student limit for Kindergarten through 4th Grade classes, a TEA waiver will not be necessary. This plan emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student needs. The plan grants flexibility in class size at all times for regrouping for student success, small groups, large groups, and etc. This plan minimizes paperwork requirements to focus on student success. An exemption from the class size ratio requirements of Texas Education Code § 25.112 will allow the district the ability to group students based upon academic, social, and emotional needs when applicable without adding ongoing filings of waivers. When exceeding the 22:1 ratio in a K-4th Grade classroom, district policy will be to consistently evaluate the possible need to add additional staff. The following guide will be followed throughout this process:

Above 22:1 Principal will inform the Superintendent, Superintendent will inform Board of Trustees

Above 25:1 Principal will inform the Superintendent, Superintendent will inform the Board of Trustees and notify parents

90 Percent Attendance Rule

(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)

Currently

Texas Education Code § 25.092 requires students to attend class for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered in order to earn class credit or be given a final grade for the class.

Proposed

The 90 Percent Rule is an arbitrary standard, which means that school districts award credit based upon seat time rather than based upon content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district will no longer be required to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the district to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow Iraan-Sheffield ISD administrators to award credit to students based upon student mastery of the content rather than student attendance. The proposal would allow administration to refocus efforts on students who are truly at-risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the district by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students. The exemption will also accommodate students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reduce drop outs, and increase the number of qualifying graduates. Iraan-Sheffield will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate content mastery if granted this exemption. Exemption to the 90 Percent Attendance Rule supports the districts overarching goals and provides the flexibility needed to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.

Exempting Iraan-Sheffield ISD from the 90 Percent Attendance Rule does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League rules. Furthermore, opting out of Texas Education Code § 25.092 does not limit or modify a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code § 28.0214, and it does not restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with the district grading policy adopted pursuant to Texas Education Code § 28.0216.

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

(FO LEGAL & LOCAL) (Ed. Code 37.0012)

Currently

Senate Bill 107 amended the Texas Education Code by adding Section 37.0012 which requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposed

The proposal is for the district to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. Iraan-Sheffield ISD has a collaborative approach to discipline with multiple staff providing emotional and social support to students. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration with regard to student discipline.

Teacher Contract Days

(DCB LEGAL, DCB LOCAL) (Ed. Code 21.401)

Currently

Texas Education Code § 21.401 currently requires a contract between the District and an educator to be for a minimum of 10 months. Additionally, an educator employed under a 10 month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposed

This proposal reduces teacher contract days from 187 without reducing teacher salaries. This exemption is an attempt to provide flexibility to better align teacher service days to instructional days. Exemption from this requirement allows Iraan-Sheffield ISD to increase the daily rate the district pays teachers, enhances teacher recruitment, improves teacher morale, and provides teachers more opportunities during the year to seek beneficial staff development that specifically relates to their teaching field.

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, a district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency and provide notification to parents of each student assigned to a classroom taught by a non-certified teacher.

Proposed

Iraan-Sheffield ISD is committed to placing a certified teacher in every classroom. In order to best serve students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill and high demand courses such as dual credit and career and technical, and STEM (Applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts & Mathematics) courses, in addition to bilingual education classes. These requirements also inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers moving in with out-of-state credentials. In order to enable more students to obtain educational benefit of such course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for the training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in the Texas Education Code. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, Iraan-Sheffield ISD will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area for full and/or part-time course loads. This will enrich the applicant pool in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, and etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses, or their quality of expertise would benefit the students in that area.

Probationary Contracts

(DCA LEGAL) (Ed. Code 21.102(b))

Currently

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.

Proposed

This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Exemption from Texas Education Code § 21.102 will permit Iraan-Sheffield ISD the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to 3 years for experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses newly hired in Iraan-Sheffield ISD.

Planning and Preparation Time

(DL LEGAL) (Ed. Code 21.404)

Currently

Teachers are entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for preparing to teach, conducting parent conferences, and evaluating students' work.

Proposed

Exemption from the planning and preparation time requirement would allow flexible scheduling. Having flexibility in planning and preparation time helps in creating schedules where select teachers can reach more students and have more planning time on teacher teams. All teachers will have appropriate planning and preparation time, but flexibility is requested.

Summary

This District of Innovation Plan will reduce restrictions and help Iraan-Sheffield ISD to better support our students, employees, families, and community. Moving our district toward the locally-customized learning environment our students deserve will enable us to better prepare them according to their individualized needs and their unique traits and talents. Through House Bill 1842, Iraan-Sheffield ISD will be able to create local innovative approaches while making the best decisions for our students.

The implementations of exemptions from the Texas Education Code will require Iraan-Sheffield ISD to revise policies. We will utilize a local policy development process that includes stakeholder input. This District of Innovation Plan will be in effect for five years from the date of implementation. As necessary, the superintendent of schools will promulgate regulations, policies, and procedures to govern areas for which local flexibility has been sought.

We appreciate the opportunity to incorporate innovative strategies into our district, and we will implement this plan to the best of our ability to provide exceptional educational experiences for our students.