



Royal ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

The 84th Legislature passed House Bill 1842, which allowed traditional independent school districts the ability to access flexibilities, which had previously been reserved for Texas' open enrollment charter schools. In order for an independent school district to obtain these flexibilities, districts must seek designation as a "District of Innovation". On Monday December 10, 2018 the Royal ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by adopting a resolution to pursue a "District of Innovation" designation.

Timeline of Events for DOI

December 2018	Begin Planning process for District of Innovation status
December 10, 2018	Royal ISD Board approved resolution seeking District of Innovation status
February 11, 2019	Royal ISD Board Approved District of Innovation committee
February 25, 2019	DOI Plan posted on Royal ISD website
March 18, 2019	Public Hearing at Board Meeting
March 25, 2019	DOI committee to consider and approve DOI Plan
April 8, 2019	Royal ISD Board to consider and approve District of Innovation Plan

Committee Members

Stacy Ackley	Superintendent
Kendra Strange	Asst. Superintendent C&I
Tony Runnels	RHS Principal
Justin Johnston	RJH Principal
Melissa Baker	STEM Director
Arona Green	RES Principal
Susan Cardiff	Federal Programs and Assessment
Karen Stockman	Campus Secretary
Rachel Anderson	Campus Testing/Coordinator/Instructional Leader
Tonya Gage	Special Programs Director
Crystal Lang	Counselor/Testing Coordinator
Juli Melton	RES PK-1 Teacher
Carlos Cabassa	RES 2-5 Teacher
Manuel Reyes	RES 2-5 Teacher
Sherlyn Baxley	STEM Teacher
Paulina Vences	STEM Teacher
Clare Morgan	RJH Teacher
Sylvia Rojas	RJH Teacher
Lisa Zdancewicz	RHS Teacher
Alejandro Dubois	ECHS Teacher
Jason Woods	RHS CTE Teacher
Daniel Cardiff	Parent Representative
Angie Ibarra	Parent Representative
Joan Hubbard	Parent Representative

1. Probationary Contracts

(DCA LEGAL) (Ed. Code 21 Subchapter C)

Currently

For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period 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 is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years. For any teacher returning to Royal ISD that was previously employed by RISD, the same rules will apply for the length of the probationary contract. A teacher hired to return to the district would be on a probationary status for up to two school years.

2. School Start Date

(EB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. In the past, districts could apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier to meet the needs of the local community. This waiver opportunity was met with resistance from the Texas tourism groups who lobbied to have the practice ended because they believed it was detrimental to the Texas tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would better support semester course curriculum. In addition, flexibility in the start and end of the school year would allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also allow Royal ISD to begin the first week of classes with a shortened week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

3. Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.003, 21.053, 21.057)

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

Royal ISD is committed to placing a certified instructor in every classroom. In order to best serve RISD 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, high demand dual credit, and career and technical/STEM (applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in the law. This exemption directly supports the move from "highly qualified" requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. 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, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

DOI Amendment

Royal ISD would like for decisions regarding certification to be handled locally and approved by the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent of Schools. The goal of the district will be to continue to hire qualified candidates with a TEA certification for all teacher positions. Flexibility is needed in areas that are difficult to find highly effective candidates with the required teacher certification. If a satisfactory candidate is not available, the district will implement a process permitting the district to employ an uncertified person, who is in the process of obtaining certification and paid as a teacher before the effective date of the issuance of a valid certificate. Upon written recommendation from a campus principal, a qualified individual may be eligible to teach through a local teaching certificate. The district will establish its own local qualification requirements and its own professional development requirements in the areas of classroom management/behavior, instructional and differentiation strategies, content standards. All certification requirements will remain in place for Special Education, Bilingual Education, or English as a Second Language (ESL).

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on November 14, 2022

4. Ninety Percent Attendance Rule

(FEC LEGAL) (FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)

Currently

In order to be awarded credit or a final grade for a class, a student is required to attend class 90 percent of the days class is offered regardless of whether the student's absences are excused or unexcused. According to statute, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 shall not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance 90 percent of the days in class offered rather than based on content mastery.

Proposed

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Exemption from §25.092 will provide educational advantages to student of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to the students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts or absences, and reducing the number of dropouts and increasing the number of qualifying graduates Relief from §25.092(a)(1) and §25.092(b) will not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Moreover, opting out of §25.092(a)(1) and §25.092(b) in no way limits or modifies a teacher's rights to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code §28.0216.

Royal ISD implemented a one-to-one device initiative in 2018-2019 that placed a Chromebook in the hands of every secondary school student. As a result, students who are absent from school have greater flexibility in making up assignments or completing classwork using their device. Students can electronically communicate with teacher and access missed work. While Royal ISD will continue to stress and enforce the 90 percent rule, the district is seeking an exemption to §25.092 in order to provide greater flexibility to principals and attendance committees in awarding credit or a final grade to students who: earn a passing grade in order to receive credit; demonstrate mastery of the content; are present for less than 75% of days in class due to district approved extenuating circumstances; provide district approved documentation supporting the extenuating circumstances; and meet all requirements in the principal's plan and/or the requirements of the attendance committee for receiving credit or a final grade.

5. Teacher Contract Days

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

Currently

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

Proposed

Royal ISD may reduce the number of days of service from a minimum of 187 to a number determined by the school board for educators employed under a 10-month contract. The reduction in days will have no effect on salaries, which will increase the teacher's daily rate, enhance educator recruitment, and improve morale. This plan will also provide more opportunities for teachers to seek beneficial staff development related to their fields.

6. Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented.

CRD (LEGAL) and CRD (LOCAL) (Ed. Code 22.004)

Currently

Texas Education Code 22.004(i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverage provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all District employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverage for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision does not give the District the flexibility needed to acquire benefits packages that would potentially be more attractive to prospective employees.

Proposed

In order to have the option to offer additional benefits options to employees. The District proposes that the District of Innovation Plan be amended to exempt the District from the health insurance requirements in Texas Education Code 22.0040.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on March 16, 2020.