



**“We Serve,
Students Win”**



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TAHOKA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

2129 North Main Street, Tahoka, TX 79373 (806) 561-4160

**Tahoka ISD
District of Innovation Plan
2017-2022**

The 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 passed into law the concept of the District of Innovation, which created Texas education Code chapter 12A. The law allows traditional independent school districts to access many of the flexibilities afforded to Texas’ open enrollment charter schools. Consequently, Tahoka ISD has created a plan that our district believes will allow us to innovatively reach the values outlined within the district’s visioning document titled *W.I.N. 2025- A vision of Service and Hope*. With a focus on our 4 C’s (Community, Character, Civic Involvement, and Continuous Improvement) the TISD Innovation plan will allow us to fulfill our district mission of serving the needs of our students so that they may be successful in learning.

District of Innovation Development Team:

Tammi Barnett	High School math teacher
Sonia Colon	Elementary teacher
Ben Freitag	High School math teacher
Nancy Greenhill	Elementary teacher
Rebecca Henley	Retired Teacher/substitute
Dr. George McFarland	Superintendent
Stephen Overstreet	Middle School Social Studies teacher
Carroll Rhodes	High School Band Director
Tammy Shepherd	High School Science teacher
Klyssa Woodley	High School Special Education teacher
Ryan Curry	Parent Representative
Miranda Underwood	Middle School ELA teacher
Tina Wuensche	Elementary PE teacher
Ray Box	Business Representative

Tahoka ISD District of Innovation Timeline:

Thursday, March 26, 2016	The TISD Board of Trustees adopt a board resolution allowing the district to pursue the concept of becoming a District of Innovation
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| Thursday, April 21, 2016 | A public Hearing is held by the Tahoka ISD Board of Trustees on the possibility of pursuing the concept of the District of Innovation. Following the Public Hearing, the TISD Board of Trustees holds a regular board meeting and votes unanimously to appoint a committee to develop a plan with a comprehensive educational program that lists the Texas Education Code exemptions that the district will be seeking. |
| Monday, October 3, 2016 | 1 st meeting of the District of Innovation Committee |
| Tuesday, November 1, 2016 | 2 nd meeting of the District of Innovation Committee |
| Monday, January 16, 2017 | 3 rd meeting of the District of Innovation Committee |
| Tuesday, January 17, 2017 | Plan posted to District Web Site to begin 30 days that the plan is available online |
| Friday January 21, 2017 | District-wide vote on the DOI Plan |
| Monday February 6, 2017 | Plan approved by the District Consultation Committee |
| Tuesday, February 7, 2017 | Plan emailed to the Texas Commissioner of Education |
| Thursday, February 16, 2017 | Plan unanimously approved by the TISD Board of Trustees |



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INNOVATIONS:

1) Length of the Instructional Day

(TEC §25.081, §25.082)

According to current statute, for each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students. Education Code §25.081(e) defines a day of instruction as 420 minutes of instruction. Additionally by definition, a school day shall be at least seven hours (*TEC §25.082*) each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Innovative Plan

(TISD Values Addressed: Civic Involvement, Community, Student-Centered learning)

The plan would allow for the district to arrange its instructional day so that days of less than 420 minutes of instruction were considered as part of the total yearly instructional minute total (without the need to apply for and be limited to 6 early release days), as long as the district conducted enough instructional time that the 75,600 minute minimum for the school year was met.

With regard to the district’s focus on community partnerships and civic involvement, core pieces of our district’s vision, this innovation would allow the district the opportunity to utilize built-in school days where less than 420 minutes of instruction occurred so that we could partner with businesses to have our students participate in mentoring programs, internships, skill training, career choice exposure, and job shadowing opportunities. In addition, the students would have the opportunity to have days of less than 420 minutes of instruction paired with service project days so that our students would be civically involved with improving our community through giving of their time and efforts.

Another benefit of the strategic use of half days within the school calendar would be the ability to use targeted instruction for our students who require additional time and interventions in order to succeed academically. As such, students who had mastery of content would be able to be released at a half-day, thereby allowing teachers to give focused, concentrated instruction to students who have not mastered content, all in smaller student-teacher ratios. This would allow the district to address a core goal of reducing the achievement gap.

The ability to count these half days of less than 420 minutes toward our total instructional minute total for the year would provide the district with an optimal chance of not only ensuring that our students are academically prepared to enter the real-world as



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they will certainly meet the 75,600 instructional minute minimum, but will do so with a holistically developed mindset that is also focused on building our community.

2) Start/End Dates of the School Year

(EB LEGAL) (TEC 25.0811, §25.0812)

Legal school policy and statute currently prevents school from beginning the school year prior to the 4th Monday in August. The last day of school, addressed in Section 25.0812 of the Education Code, specifies that the last day of school may not occur before May 15.

Teacher Contract Days

(DCB LEGAL, DBC LOCAL) (TEC§21.401)

Chapter 21 of the TEC defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Innovative Plan

(TISD Values Addressed: Continuous Improvement, student-centered learning)

The plan would allow the district the opportunity to balance the fall and spring semesters by beginning the school year earlier, if the district calendar selection committee so desired. In addition, the district could build in staff development days throughout the school year based on data-determined needs for the individual campuses and district as a whole, rather than simply using the majority of staff development days prior to the beginning of the school year so that teachers reached 10 additional work days beyond the 177 instructional work days the district has typically had in place in order to meet the 187 day teacher contract requirement. Lastly, if the district adopts a calendar that meets the minimum instructional minute requirements yet is under 175 instructional days, the district is not obligated to fill in teacher work days just to meet the 187 teacher contract day total.

These changes would provide the district with opportunities to seek continual improvement (a core district value) by providing its employees with more strategically targeted professional development because it would occur during the year when the district and campuses have timelier student data to work with as it seeks to improve student performance. The flexibility with the district's end date, in combination with an earlier start date, would allow the district to maximize instructional time prior to the May STAAR and EOC testing dates, thereby, reducing the amount of instructional time after state STAAR testing time.



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3) Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL) (TEC §21.003, §21.053 and §21.057)

A superintendent or designee who cannot secure an appropriately certified and qualified individual to fill a vacant position may activate an emergency permit for an individual who does not have one of the appropriate credentials for the assignment. The superintendent or designee must:

- Document the efforts the district has taken to employ a fully certified individual in the position for which an emergency permit is activated;
- Apply for an emergency permit when a vacant position is filled with an uncertified or inappropriately certified individual who will serve as the teacher of record or will serve in the assignment for more than 30 consecutive instructional days. The application must be submitted to TEA within 45 instructional days of the date of assignment;
- Verify that the district maintains a support system, has assigned a trained mentor, and will provide release time as needed to assist the individual serving on an emergency permit. However, a district shall not be required to provide a mentor for a degreed, certified teacher assigned on an emergency permit if the teacher has one or more creditable years' experience within the district, as defined at 19 Administrative Code Chapter 153, Subchapter CC; and
- Verify that the individual for whom the emergency permit is activated has been advised of the SBEC rules regarding permits and permit renewal requirements in 19 Administrative Code Chapter 230, Subchapter F.

Innovative Plan

(TISD Values Addressed: Community, Student-centered learning, Continuous Improvement, Character)

The plan would put allow the district to hire personnel in hard-to-fill, high demand, dual credit, and career and technology courses at the discretion of the local school board. Tahoka ISD is located in a rural, small town setting that does not allow for optimal teacher recruitment/retention due to the ability of teachers to drive to a city of over 300,000 in 30 minutes and earn a much larger salary.

By allowing local control over teacher certification requirements, the district will have the ability to increase student offerings to students by hiring individuals with expertise in content and or/technical areas who may not have a Texas teacher certification. This may increase the opportunity for the district to use business/community partnerships (a core district value) in order to find people with



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needed expertise to educate and train our students while providing community values through the experience.

In addition, the district would be able to determine its own local qualification requirements and training requirements for individuals without proper teacher certification so that they might fit the specific needs of this rural district, rather than the requirements set forth in law that account for uncertified hires around the entire state.