

NAVARRO ISD
DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN
2017-2022

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in 2015. The statute provides each public school district the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. By following a prescribed process for public input and committee planning, followed by website posting, Board action and TEA notification, a district may identify certain state statutes from which it wishes to be exempt. The intent of the Texas Legislature was to provide for greater local control and flexibility, as local districts plan for their particular students and needs. A district may not exempt itself from state curriculum or graduation requirements, or from academic and financial accountability.

Timeline

On October 17, 2016 the Navarro ISD Board of Trustees adopted a Resolution to Initiate Consideration of Becoming a District of Innovation. The Resolution affirmed that the district has an Acceptable performance rating, as required by law.

On January 23, 2017 the Navarro ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing, inviting members of the public to comment on the Resolution.

Also on January 23, 2017, after the public hearing, the Board of Trustees voted to appoint a committee to develop a District of Innovation Plan for the Board's consideration.

The planning committee met on February 20, 2017 and March 8, 2017. At the March meeting committee members considered areas of innovation that they agreed would be a benefit to the district, and outlined a rationale for each area.

The District Improvement Team met on April 12 to discuss the plan; the Team voted in favor of the proposals.

The district faculty had an opportunity to review the plan and offer comments at a staff meeting on Monday, April 17.

At the Regular Board Meeting of April 17, the Board of Trustees discussed the proposed plan. TEA was notified and the proposed plan has been posted on the NISD website for 30 days. Final action will be taken by the Board on May 22, 2017.

The Plan was unanimously approved by the Navarro ISD Board of Trustees on May 22, with submission to TEA and TASB on May 24, 2017. TASB will prepare adjustments to local policy as needed.

Committee

Representing community, parents, faculty and administrative staff:

Karl Boysen

DeeDee Jones

Kacy Zaleski

Crystal Just

John Gary

Robyn Steffen

Libby Lanford

Gary Haass

Betsy Flood

Alissa Elley

Lacey Gosch

Luke Morales

Kim Schlichting

Dee Carter

The committee believes that Navarro ISD will be able to offer a more effective, comprehensive educational program by implementing the following exemptions:

1. Flexible Start Date

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 prohibits the district from beginning instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August. Navarro ISD strives to support professional learning for staff members and meet the individual academic needs of its students. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier will enable the district to balance

the amount of instructional time and professional learning time more evenly between semesters. Providing for increased time within the first semester will support learning for one-semester classes, as well as provide preparation time for students completing End of Course assessments during the December administration. Balancing the time between the semesters will also increase the opportunity to finish at the end of May, allowing teachers to prepare for summer school, and students to prepare for college enrollment, enrichment programs and summer employment.

2. Teacher Certification for Dual Credit and Career and Technical Education

Texas Education Code Section 21.003 says: *A person may not be employed as a teacher...unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by subchapter B.* As the district seeks to increase course offerings to enhance college and career readiness for all of our students, we anticipate challenges in finding exceptionally qualified applicants in specific fields who are also traditionally certified teachers. Because we are a relatively small school with a not very competitive salary schedule compared to the larger districts around us, the district would benefit from having the ability to seek out people with specialized skills and experience in such areas as health careers, welding, law enforcement, business and industry. These jobs would largely be part-time as we develop more pathways and endorsement areas. We would hope to attract community college and/or university professors, as well, to help us expand our on-campus dual credit offerings.

3. Class Size and Notice of Class Size, Grades Kindergarten through Four

Texas Education Code Section 25.112 requires public school districts to maintain a 22:1 student to teacher ratio for grades kindergarten through four. If class size exceeds this ratio the district must apply to TEA for a waiver. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires the district to send letters home with students notifying parents that the district has exceeded the required ratio.

At Navarro ISD we value relationships, and excellence is our standard in all that we do; however, we feel that it is not the specific number of students in a class that determines learning outcomes, but the environment in which the student is learning. As a district we plan to stay within the requirements of TEC 25.112, and we do

believe that smaller class sizes benefit students by providing more individual attention. However, in late fall or mid-year, when just a few new students may arrive on the scene, it can be more disruptive than helpful to students to add a new teacher. The district seeks flexibility to manage unexpected increases in class size ratios, with the commitment to providing the optimum learning environment for our students. Each instance will be assessed by the teachers and principal affected, and an appropriate recommendation made to the Board of Trustees.

4. Contract Service Days for 10-Month Educators

Texas Education Code Section 21.401 requires that educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service. Navarro ISD would like the freedom to consider a reduction in contract days to better align with the 75,600 minutes required for student instruction and provide flexibility in staff development support to best meet teachers learning needs, with no effect on teacher salaries. Teacher contract days would be reduced by no more than 5 days per year.

The District seeks to provide competitive compensation and attract a diverse staff that to engage all students. By allowing the flexibility in teacher contract days, the District seeks to boost teacher morale and provide an impetus to teacher recruitment and retention, while providing a schedule that best meets the learning needs of the students and employees.

5. Minutes of Instruction and Length of the School Day

Texas Education Code Sections 25.081 and 25.082 define the length of the instructional day as “420 minutes of instruction” or “seven hours each day including intermissions and recesses.” This code standardizes the amount of time students engage in classroom learning across all school districts. The code allows school district and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather condition, fuel curtailment or another calamity.

Navarro ISD will maintain the total of 75,600 minutes of instruction per year, and operates a minimum of 440 minutes each full school day. The district seeks an exemption from the statutes so that it may approach the 75,600 minutes goal in a more efficient manner by utilizing the total minutes Navarro ISD students receive instruction and not be confined to a 420 minute rule or 7 hour instructional day every day.

Exempting from the 420 minutes per day or 7 hour day requirement would give the District local control over scheduling without fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. In addition, the district would have flexibility to schedule early release days as needed and ensure that students received a minimum of 240 minutes (4 hours) of instruction on these early release days.

6. Planning and Decision Making Process—Campus and District Levels

Texas Education Code Section 11.251 requires that each campus level council and the district level council include community and business representatives, as well as parents and professional staff members. Due to the relatively small size of the district and its still-rural nature, with little business and industry, it is difficult to systematically recruit and retain community and business participants. The district would like to be exempt from the requirement to have both representatives on each council. Each council will still be expected to have community or business representation, assuring that the interests of the community as a whole are heard and included in the decision making process.