



Cherokee Independent School District

2022-2027 District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

In order to take advantage of the opportunities afforded to Independent School Districts by HB 1842, Cherokee ISD is seeking to modify Education Code requirements at the local level in order to better meet the needs of our student population.

Cherokee ISD is eligible for designation as an innovation district because the district's most recent performance rating under the Texas Education Code (TEC), §39.054, is at least Academically Acceptable, as indicated in the applicable year's academic accountability manual adopted under TEC §97.1001.

Cherokee ISD is seeking to renew the District of Innovation in order to facilitate areas of concern created by traditional public school restrictions imposed by the legislature through various laws enacted. Those areas specifically addressed in this plan are Teacher Certification requirements, Probationary Contracts, the First Day of Instruction, and Teacher Contract Days.

District of Innovation Committee

Jennifer Bordner
Rebecca Sharkey
Tiffany Berrio
Regina Randolph
Math Teacher
Kim New
Laura Weeks

Brooke Beck and Tina Wilson
Kaci Morrison and Tiffany Latta
Franky Penney and Debbie Dugger

Superintendent
Secondary Principal
Elementary Principal
Dean of Students/Nurse
9th-12th Math Teacher
6th-8th Math & Floral Design Teacher
1st Grade Teacher
Para-professional
Parent Representatives
Community Representatives

Timeline

October 27, 2021- Final Version of the proposed plan posted on the district's website

January 24, 2022 – The Board of Trustees notified the Commissioner of Education of the Board's intent to vote on adoption of proposed plan

April 6, 2022 – District-level committee held public meeting to consider final version of the proposed plan and approved by majority vote

April 11, 2022 – The Board of Trustees Plan Adoption

April 12, 2022 – Local Innovation Plan posted on the school website

April 12, 2022 - Notify TEA of local innovation plan and link to the plan on the website

November 30, 2022 – District-level committee held public meeting to consider exemption from SHAC requirements and meet the need through the District Site Based Decision Making Committee

December 12, 2022 – The Board of Trustees adopted the proposal to amend the DOI plan to exempt the district from the SHAC requirements and meet the need through District SBDM Committee

December 14, 2022 – Notify TEA of local innovation plan amendment and link to plan on website

The District of Innovation Plan

Certifications Required

(DK(LEGAL), DK(LOCAL), DK(EXHIBIT); TEC §21.003)

Currently

State law requires teachers to hold appropriate certifications by the appropriate state agency in order for a district to employ them. In the likelihood that a district is unable to locate a person with the appropriate certifications, a certified person may teach a subject outside of his or her certification only if the district requests an emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification.

Rationale for Exemption

The current system makes it difficult to hire teachers for high needs core content areas as well as elective content areas. This system does not take into account the unique instructional, financial or community needs of our rural school district. Cherokee employs 20 educators who teach multiple areas within each day. In order for Cherokee to offer additional courses and be flexible in scheduling the district must have the ability to establish local qualification requirements. This would enable the district to employ community members, or current employees, who have working knowledge with limited certification(s). This flexibility would allow the district to hire professionals in areas of vocations, trades and languages. This would also enable the district to

expand the CTE program by hiring professional tradesmen in areas such as welding, health science and criminal justice. This exemption does not include Special Education and ESL/Bilingual teachers.

Innovation Strategies

- The process begins with the principal. The principal will interview the already certified teaching candidate and request all necessary credentials from the candidate as they relate to position. This will only be to allow the candidate to teach one subject outside of candidate's teaching certifications. Once the information is gathered the principal will begin the following process:
 - The reason for the request and credentials supporting qualification of the candidate to the superintendent
 - The superintendent will then evaluate the information presented and choose whether or not to take it to the Board for approval
 - The recommendation will be presented to the Board at the first meeting after the principal makes the request
- Individuals with trade experience, being considered for a CTE position, would be eligible to teach vocational skills through local district certification. The same process as above will be followed with the exceptions below.
 - The prospective employee would be considered at-will and not fall under a standard teaching contract
 - The Board would be notified, but not required to approve since the employee will be considered at-will
- Individuals with a college degree or certification in an elective or CTE area would be eligible to teach in his or her area of expertise through local district certification. The same process as above would be followed with the exceptions below.
 - The prospective employee would be considered at-will and not fall under a standard teaching contract
 - The Board will be notified, but not required to approve since the employee will be considered at-will

Probationary Contracts

(DCA(LEGAL); TEC §21.102)

Currently

State laws allows for those that are new to the profession be provided a probationary contract not to exceed three (3) years, and a new teacher who has taught five (5) of the last eight (8) may be offered a probationary contract not to exceed one (1) year.

Rationale for Exemption

The time period to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom is not long enough given the constraints put on the district by contract renewal guidelines, state assessment results and end of year progress testing.

Innovation Strategies

Experienced teachers that meet the current guidelines for a one (1) year probationary contract would be issued a probationary contract for no more than two (2) years. This will provide the administrative staff to more effectively evaluate the teacher's performance.

First Day of Instruction

(EB(LEGAL); TEC §25.0811)

Currently

State law requires that school districts may not begin school instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.

Rationale for Exemption

The current start time does not allow for the district to implement many research based scheduling techniques that will provide for flexibility to increase student learning and success, promote staff development and collaboration, provide opportunities to for college and career readiness and balance the semesters for instructional and remediation times.

Innovation Strategy

Cherokee ISD would operate a 4-day week calendar that begins no earlier than the 1st Monday in August. This would provide the following opportunities for the district.

- More instructional time and better balance the semesters
- More opportunities for staff development during the school year for professional growth, collaboration and student growth analysis
- Allow time for students and staff to recover over the course of the year by flexible scheduling opportunities

Teacher Contract Days

(DCB (LEGAL), DCB (LOCAL); TEC §21.401)

Currently

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

Rationale for Exemption

Cherokee ISD has developed and implemented a four-day week school calendar. Due to the shortened workweek, teachers will not meet the minimum number of days of service.

Innovation Strategy

Cherokee ISD will reduce teacher contract days from 187 with no effect on teacher salaries. This stems from an attempt to provide flexibility to better align teacher service days to instructional days.

- This proposal will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- This proposal should enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with larger districts.
- This proposal will significantly improve teacher morale.
- This proposal will provide teachers more opportunities during the year to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

School Health Advisory Council

(BDF (LEGAL); TEC 28.004)

Currently

Texas Education Code § 28.004 requires members to meet specific requirements including the requirement that the majority of the members must be parents who are not employed by the district. The board of trustees must appoint a least five of these members.

Rationale for Exemption

Due to the size of the district, it is very difficult to meet the specific SHAC member requirements. Several of the members of SHAC also serve on the District Site Based Decision Making Committee. The district believes that the requirements and duties outlined for the School Health Advisory Council may be met through the District Site Based Decision Making Committee.

Innovation Strategy

- The district takes exemption from the requirement to establish a School Health Advisory Council and the subsequent duties of that council.
- The District Site Based Decision Making Committee will meet the duties of SHAC. The committee will plan and communicate with all necessary personnel to meet state and federal requirements for health related to health education, curriculum, food service, budget, and other related items as needed.