

WILDCATS



District of Innovation Plan

Posted: May 11, 2023

Excelsior ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

The 84th legislature passed House Bill 1842, which allows 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, the district must seek designations as “District of Innovation.” On Monday, April 10th, 2023, the Excelsior ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by adopting a resolution to pursue a “District of Innovation” designation.

Term

Excelsior ISD’s Innovation Plan will begin July 1, 2023 and terminate June 30, 2028 unless amended, rescinded, or renewed by the Innovation Plan Committee and the Board of Trustees. The District of Innovation Committee will review the plan annually to confirm consistent alignment with the needs of the district. Any recommended plan changes will be posted to the district website for 30 days and require the approval of the District of Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees.

Public Comment

The District of Innovation Plan will be available for public comment from May 11, 2023 until June 11, 2023. Comments should be submitted to:

Name: Johnny Lewis
Title: Superintendent
Email: jlewis1@excelsior.esc7.net
Phone: (936) 598-5866

The EISD Board of Trustees will consider this District of Innovation Plan at 7 p.m., Monday, June 12, 2023.

Innovation Committee

Johnny Lewis	Superintendent
Roni Waller	Principal
Leslie Schulz	Superintendent Secretary
Megan Adkinson	Nurse/Parent
Terri Snider	Teacher/Parent
Becky Adkison	Teacher
Terre Noble	Business Manager
Benny Russell	School Board President

District of Innovation Initiatives

Teacher Certification

Exemption from: (TEC 21.003a)

Currently: TEC 21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, education diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B. In order for a teacher to provide instruction for a course that is outside of their teaching field, the District is required to submit a request to TEA. An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate. Also, TEC 21.057 requires the District to notify the parent/guardian of each student in a classroom if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Proposal: Excelsior ISD will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. This exemption will afford the district the flexibility to hire professionals in Career and Technical and other hard to fill content area positions and allow the district to recruit and hire qualified individuals that would normally not be able to fulfill specific teaching roles.

The District Principal will make a recommendation to the Superintendent to hire an individual under the local certification plan. The Superintendent will review the request and if appropriate, recommend the individual for hire to the Board of Trustees. Excelsior ISD will continue to comply with TEC 21.057 and with all certification requirements and regulations related to Special Education and Bilingual programs. Exemption from Texas Education Code 21.003 may require the district to review its policies at DBA (Legal) and (Local) as well as the policies at DK (Legal) and (Local).

Probationary Contracts for Teachers

Exemption from: (TEC 21.102)

Currently: For experienced teachers who are 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. A one-year probationary period is not a sufficient amount of time to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposal: Currently, contracts for Excelsior ISD teachers occur in March/April, which demands that employment decisions be made with very little time for mindful completion of teacher summative appraisals and student data. For experienced teachers who are new to the district that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for a maximum of 3 years from the first day of employment in Excelsior ISD. This exemption will allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

Teacher Contract Days

Exemption from: (TEC 21.401)

Currently: Education law in chapter 21 requires a teacher who is on a 10-month contract to work an equivalent of 187 days. There is no flexibility in this area to allow the district to align the teachers work schedule with the new statutes of number of minutes required, rather than the old days required of student instruction.

Proposal: Excelsior ISD would like to have the flexibility to align the teacher contract days to the minimum 75,600 minutes required of students. The District will have the option to reduce the number of contract days while maintaining a 10-month contract with no effect on teacher salaries based on the district's annual calendar.

Inter-District Transfers

Exemption from: (TEC 25.036)

Currently: Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year. Excelsior ISD maintains a transfer policy requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, the student's disciplinary records, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district.

Proposal: Excelsior ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. In rare circumstances, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Excelsior ISD would benefit from an exemption from the one-year transfer commitment. Non-resident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer students at Excelsior ISD may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned a discipline consequence of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

School Start Date

Exemption from: (TEC 25.0811a) First day of instruction

Currently: TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of students.

Proposal: Excelsior ISD would like the flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year, earlier than the 4th Monday of August which will:

- Enable the district to balance the amount of instructional time in the 1st and 2nd semesters.
- Enable the district to balance the amount of instructional time in each grading period.
- Enable professional development days to be distributed throughout the school year which allows teachers more opportunity to process their learning and respond to needs throughout the school year.