

Cuero Independent School District



Board Approved

April 20, 2017

Board Amended

June 21, 2018

Cuero ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Great local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empower to innovate.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

PROCESS

On January 19, 2017, the Cuero ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and local initiatives to improve student learning.

On February 6, 2017, the Cuero ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public discussion on whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District of Innovation. With there being no objections, the Board of Trustees appointed the District of Innovation committee to discuss and draft this local innovation plan. This committee represents various stakeholders to include teacher, parents, community and business and administrator members. The District of Innovation plan committee met on February 7, 2017 to discuss and develop the plan. A follow up meeting to finalize the plan was held on February 9, 2017.

The plan was posted on the district website on February 10, 2017 and was posted for 30 days before being presented to the District Planning Committee (DPOC) on March 20, 2017. Plan was submitted to the Board at the March 2017 Meeting and notice to the Commissioner and Accreditation was emailed on April 6, 2017. Some minor changes were made and the updated plan was submitted to and approved by the Cuero Board of Trustees on April 20, 2017.

TERM

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in 2017-2018 school year and will remain in effect for five years, through the 2021-2022, unless terminated or amended by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The DPOC will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.

TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity/Task
January 19, 2017	Board of Trustees passed Resolution to initiate District of Innovation Plan
February 6, 2017	Board of Trustees held public hearing and appointed committee to draft Plan
February 7, 2017	Initial meeting of DOI Committee to discuss and draft District of Innovation Plan
February 9, 2017	Meeting to finalize District of Innovation Plan
February 10, 2017	Post District of Innovation Plan on Cuero ISD website
March 20, 2017	District Site Based Committee Meeting
March 23, 2017	District of Innovation Plan to Board
April 6, 2017	District Of Innovation Notice Emailed to Commissioner and Accreditation
April 20, 2017	Board of Trustees Approve Updated District Of Innovation Plan
April 24 , 2017	Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to Commissioner of Education
May 23, 2018	Amended District of Innovation Plan (Teacher Certification section) o District Site Based Committee Meeting
June 21, 2018	Amended District of Innovation Plan (Teacher Certification section)to Board
June 25, 2018	Approved amended District of Innovation Plan submitted to Commissioner of Education

Planning Committee

First Name	Last Name	Member Category
Ben	Colwell	Superintendent
Pam	Longbotham	Assistant Superintendent
Kim	Fleener	Campus Principal
Donnie	Garrison	Community
Ray	Reese	Business
Jennifer	Netardus	Teacher
Courtney	Moore	Parent
Leona	Pullin	Parent

INNOVATIONS

Uniform School Start Date (TEC 25.0811)

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August.

Proposed

This flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and community. This flexibility of the start date offers:

- The first and second semesters to be more equal in the number of days of instruction.
- An early start date permits students additional time prior to state assessments in December.
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters.

Local guidelines

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.

Teacher Certification

Dual Credit, Career and Technical Education Instructors, and Hard-to-Fill Areas (TEC §21.003; TEC §21.053; TEC §21.057; TAC Chapter 231)

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aid, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not consider the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his/her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 20 consecutive instructional days.

Proposed

In order to best serve Cuero ISD students, decisions on certifications will be handled at the district level. Due to a limited applicant pool and teacher shortage, this exemption will allow greater flexibility in staffing in specific areas of need. Special education and bilingual teachers must continue to be certified.

Local Guidelines

- a. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. Cuero ISD will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where 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.
- b. For grades 6-12 the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life

experiences the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.

c. An individual with experience in the content of an elective course may be eligible to teach a vocational skill or elective course through a local teaching certificate. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. *Examples:* an experienced homebuilder teaching a building trade's course, a licensed corrections officer teaching a criminal justice course, or a retired CPA.

d. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided additional supports such as teaching mentoring, increased observations and feedback, additional professional development or instructional resources, and other supports.

e. The superintendent will report this action to the Board at the first board meeting following the teaching assignment.

f. Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the TEA. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

g. Any candidate for employment that requires local certification will need Board approval before issuing a contract. This would include summer hiring when the authority to hire is granted to the Superintendent.

Submitting Waivers for Kindergarten-Grade 4 Class Size (TEC 25.112, 25.113)

Kindergarten-Grade 4 classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them that the waiver has been submitted.

Proposed

While Cuero ISD believes that a small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe that it has a negative effect when one or two students are added. It may not be the number of the students in the class but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influences the learning environment. Being exempt from the 22:1 ratio requirement will allow students to remain with the teacher and classmates that they began the year with, enabling continuity and stability that will support increased student achievement.

Local Guidelines

- a. Cuero ISD will attempt to keep K-Grade 4 classrooms to the 22:1 ratio. In the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- b. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-Grade 4 classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

Teacher Contracts (TEC 21.401)

Texas Education Code requires educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposed

Cuero ISD seeks flexibility in the minimum 187 days of service requirement.

Local Guidelines

Teacher contracts will more closely align with the 75,600 instructional minutes required for students and also include staff development/work days. This flexibility will afford Cuero ISD to create a climate that values the individual's time and empowers the ability to leverage that time in what will be a focus on student outcomes. **Professional employees will not receive a reduction in pay for any reduction in their workload due to this change.** This proposal may enhance teacher recruitment and also impact and improve teacher morale.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Cuero ISD Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.

