



## **Yorktown Independent School District**

**Final District of Innovation  
Plan  
2017-2018**

## **Introduction**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1842 which gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to the state's open enrollment charter schools. HB 1842 provides Yorktown ISD an opportunity to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of our student population, in order to prepare them for success and life-long learning.

Yorktown ISD took the first step in exploring this opportunity when the YISD Board of Trustees approved a resolution initiating the process in March after a public hearing to consider whether the district should develop an innovation plan, at which time the Board decided to move forward in the process. A committee was appointed to develop an innovation plan, and the plan was then created. The innovation plan will be posted online for at least 30 days. The committee will have a public meeting to approve the plan before it can be submitted to the Board.

## **Goals**

- To utilize flexibility in meeting the growing needs of our students
- To utilize the flexibility to use our personnel in the best way to facilitate this
- To utilize the flexibility to plan and coordinate more effective professional development,
- To utilize the flexibility to foster collaboration and planning between teachers
- To utilize the flexibility to foster more positive teacher /parent interactions

## **Process**

On March 20, 2017 the Yorktown ISD Board of Trustees voted to form a District of Innovation committee to pursue developing a plan for District of Innovation status following a public hearing at the March Regular Board Meeting. The committee was formed and met initially on March 27, 2017 to learn about Districts of Innovation and the process for becoming one. The committee met again on March 31, 2017 and began developing the plan and a calendar for the district. On April 6, 2017, the committee finalized the plan and it was posted to the district website on April 15, 2017 as the committee continued developing calendar options for the district. On April 17, 2017 a letter was sent to Commissioner Mike Morath at the Texas Education Agency notifying him of Yorktown ISD's intent to pursue the District of Innovation Status. On April 28, 2017, Yorktown ISD's Superintendent was notified by the Commissioner's office of their receipt of the letter. On May 15, 2017 the District Committee met to approve the District of Innovation Plan for Yorktown ISD.

## **District of Innovation District Committee**

Chad Gee, Superintendent

Sylvia Hernandez, Curriculum Director

Dr. Carlos Garza, Secondary Principal

Pamela Edwards, Elementary Principal

Nancy Gohmert, Secondary Counselor

Dina Menn, Elementary Counselor and parent

Kegan Perez, Junior High Teacher

Jeanne Curbow, Junior High Teacher

Caleb Gips, High School Teacher

Tracy Heasley, Secondary SPED Teacher

Carla Sullivan, Elementary Teacher and parent

Stacey Gee, Elementary Teacher and parent

Karen Casten, Elementary Teacher

Sierra Ibrom, Elementary Teacher and parent

Steven Gowens, Secondary Teacher and parent

Lana Brysch, Community member

Edie Boyd, Parent

Adrianna Longoria, Parent

Anna Foerster, Parent

Megan Geffert, Parent

## **Innovations**

Yorktown ISD, in conjunction with the District of Innovation Committee, proposes the following flexibilities with the Texas Education Code to provide the best and most innovative educational opportunities for students at YISD.

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### **1. First and Last Day of Instruction (EB Legal)**

Exemption from: TEC 25.0811  
TEC 25.0812

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. For many years this was the rule. However, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in August.
- TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

These laws restrict flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community.

#### **Proposal:**

The district will develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in YISD by incorporating the flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters, more instructional days prior to mandatory testing, more focused and innovative professional development, and a school end date prior to June.

By ending the school year earlier, YISD can support students who need remediation during the summer months, as well as students who are entering college or trade school. An earlier school start date allows students to register for summer classes and attend new student orientation meetings without missing instructional time.

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## **2. Minimum Minutes of Instruction per Day (EB Legal)**

Exemption from: TEC 25.081  
TEC 25.082

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC 25.081 requires that each school day must be 420 minutes long in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes and to accumulate instructional minutes toward the 75,600 minutes of instruction required for students annually.
- TEC 25.082 provides that a school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

### **Proposal:**

The district will consider altering the length of an instructional day on a limited basis when it is locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. Yorktown ISD does not have any intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis or without specific purpose (i.e. bad weather, professional development, early dismissal for events of community interest, for implementation of innovative instructional strategies, etc.).

To the greatest extent possible, shortened days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media.

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### **3. Teacher Certification Requirements (DB Legal, DB Local, DBA Legal, DK Legal, DK Local)**

Exemption from: TEC 21.003  
TEC 21.053

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC 21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher or other certified position unless the person holds an appropriate certificate. 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 for Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.
- TEC 21.053(b) states that an educator may not be paid for teaching or work done before the issuance of a valid certificate.

**Proposal:**

The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. 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.

Yorktown ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. Such teachers would be employed on an at-will basis. The areas for this type of local certification would include, but are not limited to, CTE and languages other than English. Special Education teachers will continue to be required to hold a standard teaching certificate. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Yorktown ISD will notify parents if a locally certified teacher is employed for their child's class.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide the ability to offer more innovative curriculum options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

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## 4. Probationary Contracts (DCA Legal)

Exemption from: TEC 21.102(b)

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals:

- TEC 21.102(b) states that a probationary contract period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

Due to the unique nature of YISD, including our initiatives and processes, this period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data.

**Proposal:**

Upon exemption from TEC 21.102(b), all new contract certified employees subject to T.E.C. Chapter 21, will be subject to a two year probationary period in order to allow more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance. Partial years will not count toward the full year requirement.

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years. This strategy will give the District sufficient time to truly consider the performance of experienced teachers before having to make a decision to end their employment, and it will allow the school district the time to employ more innovative professional development strategies with teachers who may be struggling before having to make a decision to end employment. Teachers hired in the district with less than five of the previous eight years of experience may remain on probationary status for three years, and may be issued a fourth year of probation in accordance with TEC 21.102(c).