



## District of Innovation Update

*April 10, 2018*

### **Background**

The Crowley ISD Board of Trustees chose to explore possible exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC) through the District of Innovation Process. This opportunity is designed to allow the district flexibility in creating new opportunities to help us meet our mission of providing students with excellence in education so that all students achieve their full potential.

In a resolution passed by the School Board on December 1, 2016, Trustees voted unanimously (6-0) to initiate the process to consider becoming a District of Innovation.

An advisory committee appointed by the school board approved a District of Innovation Plan on February 20, 2017. That plan was posted online for 30 days before going to the school board for final approval on March 30, 2017.

The five-year plan began with the 2017-18 school year and will terminate at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless amended, rescinded or renewed by the advisory committee and school board. Any recommended plan changes will be posted to the district website for 30 days and require the approval of the advisory committee, DWEIC and school board.

The advisory committee will review the plan annually to confirm consistent alignment with the needs to the district.

### **Next Steps**

1. Review current plan
2. Explore possible amendments
3. Post possible amendments on district website for 30 days
4. Approval of advisory committee, DWEIC and school board

## Current District of Innovation Plan

*Approved March 30, 2017*

*Available online at [www.crowleyisdtx.org/DistrictOfInnovation](http://www.crowleyisdtx.org/DistrictOfInnovation)*

### **First and Last Day of School**

**§25.0811 First Day of Instruction** (a) A school district may not begin instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August, unless the school operates year-round, or if district has more than 190,000 students: the days are financed by local funds, or the campus is under comprehensive reform, or the majority of the students at the campus(es) are educationally disadvantaged.

**§25.0812 Last Day of Instruction** (b) A school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

#### **❖ Rationale for the Exemption:**

Restricting school start date to the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August operationally challenges CISD because the 75,600 instructional minutes must be calendared between the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August and generally late May due to constraints of the venue contract for HS graduation.

#### **❖ Benefit of Exemption for CISD:**

Flexibility of the school calendar would offer the District the following advantages:

1. Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules
2. Alignment of calendar with TCC, Dual Credit, Advanced Placement exams and STAAR/EOC timelines
3. Ensure hour/seat time requirements for certification courses
4. Provide flexibility for innovative educational models, including but not limited to summer programming for identified populations
5. Provide flexibility to the Calendar Committee in developing the school calendar
6. Provide flexibility for professional development opportunities

#### **❖ Local Guidelines:**

The district will have the flexibility to designate the first day of school each year. The calendar exemption does not affect the number of contract days for teachers which will remain the same.

## Possible Amendments

*Require approval by Advisory Committee, DWEIC and CISD Board of Trustees*

1. Teacher Certification and Required Field-based Experience
2. Kindergarten Start Age
3. Other amendments?

## **1. Teacher Certification and Required Field-based Experience**

***TEC §21.003 Certification Required*** A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

***TEC §21.0051 Required Field-based Experience*** Before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities under supervision at a public school campus accredited or approved for the purpose by the agency or a private school recognized or approved for the purpose by the agency.

### **❖ Rationale for the Exemption**

- The teacher certification requirements enacted in these statutes inhibit the District's ability to hire highly-skilled individuals to teach career and technical education (CTE) courses and other non-traditional, industry-based courses.
- The availability of certified individuals to teach these CTE and other non-traditional, industry-based courses is limited.
- This exemption would allow the District to hire teachers for hard-to-fill positions in CTE and other non-traditional, industry-based courses.

### **❖ Benefit of Exemption for CISD**

- This exemption would provide the District flexibility to fill positions in CTE and other non-traditional, industry-based courses by hiring qualified professionals in certain trades and vocations if certified teachers are not available.

### **❖ Local Guidelines**

- Local qualifications and training requirements would be established.
- Requests to fill a CTE teaching position with a non-certified teacher in CTE courses or other non-traditional, industry based courses would be submitted to the superintendent or designee for approval.
- The written request must outline the reason for the request and document what credentials the applicant possesses which would qualify this individual and would be submitted by the principal to the superintendent or designee for approval.

## **2. Kindergarten Start Age**

***TEC §29.151 Free Kindergarten*** The board of trustees of each school district shall establish and maintain one or more kindergartens for the training of children residing in the district who are at least five years of age on September 1 of the school year.

### **❖ Rationale for the Exemption**

- Children mature and demonstrate readiness for school at varying rates, and their social/emotional development can be affected by a wide range of factors.
- The September 1 deadline for entering public kindergarten does not provide the flexibility needed for the District to serve students who are ready for school slightly earlier than the established date.
- Parents/guardians of students who are ready for kindergarten curriculum and learning environments are enrolling their children in private kindergarten or other educational institutions.

### **❖ Benefit of Exemption for CISD**

- This exemption provides students who are equipped academically and socially to begin instruction in kindergarten programs without penalizing them because of age.
- This will provide the flexibility to enroll sooner and immerse students in an academic learning environment that provides a strong foundation in early literacy and growth development.
- Students who are ready for school can develop a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy to prevent potential gaps in achievement and accelerate their learning.

### **❖ Local Guidelines**

- The District will establish a local committee to develop and recommend a local criteria for kindergarten readiness and the creation of the Early Kindergarten Start program to the Superintendent and Board of Trustees.