



CONROE
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION CONROE ISD

December 15, 2020

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

- Texas Education Code Chapter 12A establishes “districts of innovation,” a designation that allows a school district to exempt itself from various state laws. In 2015, the District became a district of innovation and exempted itself from only one provision.
- Texas Education Code §25.0811, which pertains to starting school prior to the fourth Monday in August. To maintain its designation as a district of innovation, a district must review and update its innovation plan every five years. It is now time to renew the District’s innovation designation.

THE PROCESS

- A public hearing was held during the Board meeting on October 20, 2020.
- After the hearing, the Board of Trustees approved a resolution initiating the process of renewing the District's designation as a District of Innovation (DOI).
- The Board also designated the District Level Planning and Decision-Making Committee, which includes teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, as the committee to develop the DOI plan.

THE DISTRICT LEVEL PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE

- The DOI committee, after reviewing public feedback, approved a DOI plan for recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
- In addition to continuing the exemption from Texas Education Code §25.0811, which allows the District to begin the school prior to the fourth Monday in August, the plan includes a waiver from requirements of Texas Education Code §21.003, which pertains to teacher certification. Specifically, the exemption will allow the District to hire teachers for hard-to-fill career education programs such as welding, automotive technology, and health sciences. This specific waiver is recommended by our Director of CTE and was supported by the two high school principals serving on the DOI committee.

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Flexible Calendar:

- **Current law:**

- TEC §25.0811

- *"... a school district may not begin instruction for students for a year before the fourth Monday in August."*

- **Proposed:**

- *Students may begin instruction earlier than the fourth Monday in August.*

Starting school prior to the fourth Monday in August allows for a calendar that fits the needs of our community and benefits our students by allowing a more balanced number of days of instruction in the first and second semesters as well as the ability to conclude the semester prior to the winter break.

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Teacher Certification:

- **Current law:**
- TEC §21.003
- *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.*

Subchapter B establishes the certification requirements for Texas Educators.

- **Proposed:**
- *A person may be employed as a teacher without an appropriate certificate or permit issued by Subchapter B of Texas Education Code Chapter 21, if the person, in the subject matter to be taught, has: (1) relevant work experience, (2) formal training, or education, and (3) licensure, certification or registration.*

The District would use this exemption to fill CTE positions in areas where it cannot find qualified applicants, such as automotive technology, engineering, manufacturing, health sciences, and media courses. This benefits the students of the District by providing opportunities for the District to consider qualified industry professionals who may have industry training and certification but may not hold teacher certification.

CTE CERTIFICATIONS

- High school students are able to earn “endorsements” in specific units of study, including business and industry. Many students seek to earn endorsements in areas such as manufacturing, technology, and health services. Finding certified teachers for some Career and Technical Education (CTE) positions can be very difficult. An exemption from Texas Education Code §21.003 will allow the District to hire qualified candidates who may not be certified teachers, but who bring authentic field and industry knowledge and skills to the classroom. Such professionals can provide students with not only unparalleled learning experiences, but also real-world work experiences, as they typically hold multiple certifications in their area of expertise.

CTE CERTIFICATIONS

To ensure that this exception is used to obtain the most qualified candidate, the District will implement administrative procedures that require 1) establishing credential guidelines for the position (experience, training, and licensure), 2) ensuring there is a training plan for this position, and 3) seek the superintendent's approval:

- Establishing “local credential guidelines” that will require, in the subject matter to be taught, requisite work experience, formal training and education, and industry licensure, certification, and/or registration.
- Teachers employed under this certification program will receive pedagogy and classroom management training.
- Prior to an offer of employment, the Superintendent will review and approve all candidates that fall under this exception.
- The Superintendent will periodically update the Board on the number of candidates hired under this provision along with the courses they teach.

HOW LONG WILL THE PLAN LAST?



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- Must be renewed in 5 years.
- The Board can terminate or amend the DOI plan at any time by following the procedures set out in Chapter 12A.
- The DOI does not compel the District to use the exemption.

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- The District Level Planning and Decision-Making Team respectfully requests your approval.