

Booker Independent School District of Innovation Plan

Background:

House Bill ("HB ") 1842 passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code ("TEC"). On March 1, 2017 at the direction of the Booker Board of Trustees District of Innovation Advisory Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross- section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, the superintendent, central office personnel, parents, and community members met to investigate the benefits of developing a Plan for Booker ISD. On January 8, 2018, the Booker Independent School District's Board of Trustees (the "Board") passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan ("Plan") seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and community.

Term:

The term of this Plan is for five years, beginning on February 1, 2018, and ending on January 31, 2023, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. The committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of this Plan and recommend to the Board any modifications to this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any single point in time.

Amended Plan:

The Plan was amended on April 4, 2022, by the BISD District Advisory Committee and submitted for discussion and renewal to the BISD Board of Trustees at the BISD May, 2022, board meeting. The current District of Innovation term will begin on June 1, 2022, and end on May 31, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Booker ISD Board in accordance with the law.

Innovations:

The District proposes the innovations below by exempting itself from the requirements of the Texas Education Code in the following areas:

1. Uniform School Calendar - {TEC § 25.0811} {TEC § 25.0812}

Currently, Section 25.0811 of the Texas Education Code states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Section 25.0812 of the Texas Education Code states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Innovative Practice:

This Plan gives the District the flexibility to change the date of the first and last days of school. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- This allows the District to determine, locally, on an annual basis, what start and end dates best meet the needs of students, the school, and the community.
- This allows for the alignment of the school calendar with Advanced Placement Exams and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- This allows the District to better align its start date with the start of local colleges, which the District uses for dual credit courses.
- This allows the District to look at starting classes in the middle of the week as opposed to the first day of the week in order to provide a short first week of school, which can ease the transition for students entering pre-k, kindergarten, middle school, and high school.
- This provides the District, the ability to better balance the amount of days in each semester.

2. Teacher Certification - (TEC § 21.003)

Currently, Section 21.003, of the Texas Education Code states, "A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern, or teacher trainee, librarian, education aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issue as provided by Subchapter B." In the event the District cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or where a teacher will teach a subject outside of his/her certification, the District must submit a request to TEA.

Innovative Practice:

In order to best serve the students at Booker ISD, the District seeks to handle certification issues locally as follows:

- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certification field, without seeking approval from TEA. The principal must provide written documentation of the reasons for the request and credentials that the certified teacher possesses, which qualify him/her to teach the relevant subject(s). The superintendent will determine whether to allow the certified teacher to teach the relevant subject outside of his/her certified field.
- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow an uncertified individual to teach a particular class or classes, without seeking approval from TEA. The principal must provide written documentation of the reasons for the request and the credentials that the uncertified individual possesses, which qualify him/her to teach the relevant subject(s). The superintendent will then determine whether to recommend to the Board that the Board hire the individual to teach the relevant subject(s). The Board retains final authority for the employment of uncertified individuals as teachers.
- This practice will increase flexibility with the master schedule and provide additional class/course offerings to our students.
- The district will send parent notification for all individuals teaching in an area where they do not currently hold the appropriate certification.
- The district will provide increased observations, professional development, and mentoring for all locally certified individuals.

3. Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs - (TEC § 37.008 (7))

Currently, Section 37.008 of the Texas Education Code states, “Each school district shall provide a disciplinary alternative education program which employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements established under Subchapter B, Chapter 21.”

Booker ISD is a small, rural district that assigns a limited number of students to alternative education; often classes could be provided using computer based instruction and/or a blended model with support from certified personnel. Booker ISD is a small rural district, and we do not have access to the funds or certified personnel to completely comply with this requirement.

Currently, we have a service agreement with a neighboring larger school district to serve any student who is placed in an Alternative setting for disciplinary reason or for early graduation. However, the district must pay for this arrangement, and the student must provide transportation to and from the alternative school placing a financial burden on the district and on the student and the parents.

Chapter 25 sets the instructional year for students at 75,600 minutes including intermissions and recess each year. TEC 25.081(e) defines a day of instruction to be 420 minutes while 25.082 (a) requires a school day to be at least seven hours per day including intermissions and recess.

Innovative Practice:

A Booker ISD alternative education setting will offer an education program designed to meet the needs of non-traditional students. This program offers an opportunity for students to acquire credits

at a faster rate and mitigate credit deficiencies. This provides an alternate route to graduation for students who require a more flexible education setting. Being exempt from the minimum minute requirement will permit the District to offer alternative programming with fewer minutes and will focus on quality programming and cost savings to fit the need of the student. This arrangement allows us to meet the needs of Booker ISD students and comply with the Texas Education Code.

4. Campus and District Planning (TEC § 11.251, TEC § 11.25 TEC § 11.253), and Student Health Advisory Council TEC (§ 28.004)

Currently, Section 11.251, 11.252, and 11.253 of the Texas Education Code specifies that committees will be formed at the district and at the campus level to plan, establish, and review the district's and campuses' educational plans, goals, performance objectives, and major classroom instructional programs. Section 28.004 of the Texas Education code specifies that a committee will be formed at the district level to ensure that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. Booker ISD is located in a small rural community with about 1,300 residents. The District has an enrollment of 375 students. Resources for persons serving as members of the District Site-Based Committee and the Campus Site-Based Planning Committees are limited without having to ask the same people to serve on several committees. The campuses are located on the same property and communication between the superintendent and principal of campus occurs on a daily basis.

Innovative Practice:

Booker ISD proposes to have one committee, District Advisory Committee, in order to

- Plan, establish, and review the district's educational plans, goals, performance objects, major classroom instructional programs
- Ensure that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction
- Review, amend, and extend the district's innovation plan

Implementation:

This Plan is designed to create parameters with which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate personnel. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.