

Notice of Public Hearing for District of Innovation plan

The Board of Trustees Nordheim ISD

A Public Hearing for District of Innovation plan of the Board of Trustees of Nordheim ISD will be held Wednesday, March 8, 2023, beginning at 6:00 PM in the Conference Room, 500 North Broadway, Nordheim, TX 78141.

The subjects to be discussed or considered or upon which any formal action may be taken are listed below. Items do not have to be taken in the same order as shown on this meeting notice. Unless removed from the consent agenda, items identified within the consent agenda will be acted on at one time.

1. Opening
2. Call to Order, Roll Call, Declaration of Quorum
3. Pledge of Allegiance of the United States Flag
4. Discussion concerning the District of Innovation plan developed by the District Advisory Committee 2
5. Adjourn

If, during the course of the meeting, discussion of any item on the agenda should be held in a closed meeting, the board will conduct a closed meeting in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Government Code, Chapter 551, Subchapters D and E or Texas Government Code section 418.183(f). Before any closed meeting is convened, the presiding officer will publicly identify the section or sections of the Act authorizing the closed meeting. All final votes, actions, or decisions will be taken in open meeting. [See BEC(LLEGAL)]

The notice for this meeting was posted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act on Posted March 5, 2023 at 1:00pm By Kevin Wilson, Superintendent, Nordheim ISD.

For the Board of Trustees

**NORDHEIM INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT-
DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN**



NORDHEIM ISD

Approved March 1, 2023

By District of Innovation Committee

District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842)

Introduction:

The 84th Texas Legislative, Regular Session, 2015, passed HB 1842, allowing Texas school districts to be designated District of Innovation. In accordance with 19 TAC 102.1303, Nordheim ISD is eligible to be designated a District of Innovation as the District's most recent performance rating under TEC 39.054 is "Met Standard" therefore representing acceptable performance. Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control and obtain exemption from certain operations of the Texas Education Code (TEC). Nordheim ISD believes that this Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan will allow our local Board of Trustees and district staff to make decisions based on the unique needs of our students and community.

District Innovation Committee

Kevin Wilson	Superintendent
Richard Cardin	Principal
Carlton Williams	Athletic Director
Jennifer Jennings	Special Education Director
Robert Sager	Teacher
Shawndra Staley	Teacher

I. District of Innovation Timeline

II. Term of the Plan

The term of Nordheim ISD's Innovation Plan will be five years. The plan was unanimously approved by the Nordheim Independent Board of Trustees on March 8, 2023, and will be effective to March 8, 2028. The District Innovation Committee will annually assess the effectiveness of the plan. If recommendations are made to amend the plan it would be done as required by law that includes public posting, approval by the committee, and the Board of Trustees. Under HB 182, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) that "inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan." Given the necessity for local control in decision making of the plan elements, Nordheim ISD seeks exemption for all allowable TEC requirements under the HB 1842 statute. The following exemptions are highlighted as examples, but not all inclusive.

III. Innovations

TEACHER APPRAISAL SYSTEM (TEC 21.352) Currently

Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, the state issued a new teacher appraisal system called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS).

Problems

Nordheim ISD is currently using T-TESS. While this system is designed to meet the needs of the entire state, Nordheim ISD seeks to customize certain aspects of the system to better meet the needs of its teachers.

Proposed

Nordheim ISD is seeking flexibility within the recommended Texas appraisal process for teachers and staff evaluated using the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). Nordheim ISD seeks to continue utilizing portions of the T-TESS model as the teacher evaluation appraisal instrument, while desiring exemption from the Student Growth Measure. Data provided from district and campus local assessments will continue to be utilized to determine overall student growth and performance.

While the district currently uses T-TESS, the district would like the option to exercise local control of decisions regarding teacher and administrative appraisals in alignment with Board Policy.

Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Credit: (FEC Legal and FEC Local)
(Education Code 25.092)

State Law currently requires students to attend class 90% of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on “seat-time” rather than based on content mastery.

Innovation Strategy

The 90% rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow Nordheim ISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they have attended a certain number of school days. Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28, () 214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

Post-Secondary and Military Excused Absences

Currently, only students classified as junior or senior years are allowed two excused absences per year to pursue military enlistment and/or visit colleges or universities for the purpose of determining the student’s interest in attending the institution of higher education.

Innovation Strategy

Nordheim ISD is requesting to expand age requirements and increase the excused absence threshold for post-secondary visits. This will allow students to gain a greater understanding of the steps needed to achieve college/career goals at an earlier age.

Teacher Contract Days

(DCB Legal, DCB Local) (ED. Code 21.401)

Currently, education law defines a teacher contract as a ten-month contract equivalent to 187 days. We would propose having the option to reduce teacher contract days from 187 to better align with the current required minutes of instruction with no effect to salaries. This plan would take effect beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

In subsequent years, it will be part of the calendar planning process to maintain the reduced number of contract days.

Innovation Strategy

The reduction in contract days at our current salary schedule would make us more competitive since we are a small rural school district competing for teacher applicants in the surrounding school districts.

This plan would increase the daily rate of pay for our teachers.

Teacher Certification

(DK Legal, DK Local, DK Exhibit, Ed. Code 21.003a, Ed. Code 21.053, Ed. Code 21.057)

Currently

TEC 21.003 (a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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 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 take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator as a teacher 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 or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Problems

Rural, high poverty districts have difficulty filling positions with quality instructors, especially in subjects where state-wide shortages exist. Since the pandemic, the shortage of high-quality certified teachers has increased. Institutes of higher education have less people pursuing an education degree. Rural districts are now faced with higher needs and less certified teachers to fill vacancies.

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/local certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEA then approves or denies this request. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district. Furthermore, there have been instances when persons meeting the criteria outlined in TEC 21.057 have been denied local certification because they were actively, yet unnecessarily, pursuing an alternative certification. Additionally, highly

qualified standards/notifications have been removed from federal requirements under repeal of the NCLB Act.

Proposed

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. However, when 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. Nordheim ISD would like the ability to issue District Teaching Permits (local certification) in areas of high demand to better meet the educational needs of our students.

1. In order to best serve Nordheim ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.
2. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified.
 - The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the subject/field of study.
 - Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
3. Nordheim ISD will allow District Teaching Permits (local certification) based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.
 - An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas such as mathematics, science, Languages Other than English (LOTE), Career & Technical Education (CTE), other core academic areas, Pre-K, etc.
 - A person seeking District Teaching Permit (local certification) should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.
 - The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications.
 - Qualification that may be considered include, but are not limited to:
 - *Professional work experience;
 - *Formal training and education;
 - *Active professional relevant industry certification or registration; *Combination of work experience, training, and education; and/or *Demonstration of successful experience working with students.
 - The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills, and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to the students.
 - An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will not receive a contract, but will work on an at-will basis.

- Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.
- 4. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.
- 5. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.
- 6. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal as required of all certified teachers.
- 7. Nordheim ISD will notify parents if a teacher working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) is employed for their child's class.
- 8. Nordheim ISD may post the DOI position each year and consider hiring a certified, experienced, quality teacher. Should the vacancy not be filled by June 1st, the DOI teacher may be offered the position the following year.
- 9. It is understood that special education and bilingual/ESL teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.

Inter-district Transfers

(FDA Legal, Local) (Ed. Code 25.036)

A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Nordheim ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated.

Innovation Strategy

Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Nordheim ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Professional Development/ Mentor Teachers

(DEAA Legal) (Ed. Code 21.451; Ed. Code 21. 458)

TEC 21.458 sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees. This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, despite the fact that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. The District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced

teachers in need of assistance. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers.

Innovation Strategy

The District will exercise local discretion in determining the areas of need, content, duration, and frequency for professional development for its instructional and non-instructional staff. The District will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.

School Year Calendar

Currently students may not begin before the 4th Monday in August.

Innovation Strategy

To allow a district calendar that fits the local needs of the community, we would like to consider a flexible calendar option which may include an early start date. Students may begin the school year earlier than the fourth Monday of August.

A flexible calendar empowers the district to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

School Health Advisory council

Currently the School Health Advisory Council is required to meet four times a year.

Innovation Strategy

The Nordheim ISD School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) will meet a minimum of one time per year. Additional meetings may be held if the SHAC committee, district administration, or board of trustees feel there is a need for additional meetings.

Nordheim ISD's size and committee make up ensures that committee members are aware of the needs of the district's students and are often able to review, advice, and revise plans using just one meeting a year.

Bank Depository Bid

At least 60 days before the end of the current depository contract the school must decide to use either competitive bidding or a request for proposal to choose a new depository.

Innovation Strategy

Nordheim ISD would like to renew the depository contract with the current depository entity if the relationship is currently positive without going out for competitive bids or requests for proposal at the conclusion of a contract.

Nordheim is a rural community located in Nordheim Texas. There are currently no banks within the school district and limited banks within a reasonable radius. Going out for bid or requesting proposals is a time consuming process that adds bureaucracy and paperwork to a process with little to no choice.

Counselor Work Time

(DP LEGAL, LOCAL) Exemption from: TEC 33.006(d-h) Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals: TEC 33.006 subsections (d) – (h) places restrictions on the duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, requires policy adoption and annual review by the school board, and limits contracting options with counselors in the district. NISD wishes to maintain flexibility in its school counseling and guidance program by waiving compliance with the requirement of TEC 33.006(d) that a counselor spend 80 percent of total work time on duties identified by statute, as well as removing burdens imposed by subsections (e) – (h) related to policy adoption, annual review, and counselor employment contracts. The requirements of TEC 33.006(d) – (h) impede the district's ability to meet the ever-changing needs of its students and school operations by restricting the ability of NISD counselors to fulfill other important roles throughout the district, including but not limited to, special education and 504 monitoring, scheduling, student assessment, etc. While it is still the intent and goal of NISD that its certified counselors focus on the school counseling program, temporal restrictions and time logging/tracking requirements, which would be necessary to confirm strict adherence to an 80/20 duty allocation, are an ineffective use of employee time and impedes the district's ability to use its counseling staff in a variety of roles to best serve the needs of NISD students and the community.

Innovation Strategy

The district will exercise local discretion in determining the additional duties fulfilled by certified counselors in the district, by taking into account each individual counselor's professional education, certifications, experience, and knowledge, and will also consider the specific needs of the students and staff on each campus. The district will exercise local discretion in determining how counselors allocate their work time to perform all duties, including those duties that are not identified in TEC 33.006, enabling the district to meet student needs and address local challenges as they arise.

District and Campus Level Planning

State law requires that each campus and district shall have an improvement plan developed, evaluated, and revised annually. Under this statute the campus and district improvement plans must include nine compliance components and the improvement planning committees must hold at least one public meeting each year.

Innovation Strategy

Nordheim ISD will continue to provide collaborative improvement plans being reflective of action oriented tasks and measurable goals. The district, however, will no longer restrict and overburden the content of the plans to encompass the previously included items relative only to compliance rather than relevant actions aimed at progress toward goals.

The nature of the components indicated in the standards references often make the campus and district improvement plans cumbersome compliance documents rather than workable guides for actionable goals.