

Windthorst ISD



Proposed District of Innovation Plan
March 1, 2022- February 26, 2027

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. Windthorst iSD is exercising this opportunity of becoming a District of Innovation to obtain more flexibility in order to better meet the unique needs of our district, students and community.

Term

Windthorst ISD's Innovation Plan will begin March 1, 2022- February 26, 2027. If at any time within this 5 year plan, other areas of exemptions are to be considered, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider new exemptions. Any future amendments will adhere to the same term of the original plan.

Teacher Employment Contract Days

(DCB Legal) Ed. Code § 21.40 I (b)

MINIMUM SERVICE REQUIRED. (b) An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Rationale

Windthorst ISD would like to have the freedom to consider the reduction in contract days from 187-182 to better align with the 75,600 minutes required of students. This potential decrease in days would have no effect on teacher salaries, which increases a teacher's daily rate and enhances teacher recruitment.

Teacher Probationary Contracts

(DCA Legal) TEC 21.102(b)

PROBATIONARY CONTRACT. (b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary 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 by the district.

Rationale.

A probationary contract may not exceed one year for new teachers to our district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district. Under this circumstance, the district must either give the teacher a term contract or terminate their contract after their first year in the district. This artificial limitation can prevent the district from adequately assessing the teaching and interpersonal skills of the incoming teacher.

Windthorst ISD would like to have the ability to renew the probationary contract one additional one- year period, for a maximum of two school years, for all teachers who are new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of eight years preceding employment by the District.

Length of Instructional Day

(Ed. Code 25.081, 25.082(a))

LENGTH OF INSTRUCTIONAL DAY. Sec.25.081. OPERATION OF SCHOOLS. (a)

Except as authorized under Subsection (b) of this section, Section 25.084, or Section 29.0821, for each school year each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students.

Rationale

The opportunity to exempt from the 420 minute school day requirement will provide the district the opportunity to provide each campus with the flexibility of creating a daily schedule that will better serve the students and teachers on each campus. This flexibility will give local control to the district in meeting the yearly requirement of 75,600 minutes in relation to the district calendar for each specific school year. This exemption will provide greater flexibility than the current 6 day waiver maximum that relates to the length of the school day. The opportunity to be exempt from the seven hour day requirement will allow the district to create more flexibility within the daily schedule for students and staff. This will also enable the district to create a unique bell schedule that can provide teachers and administration the opportunity for staff development within the school schedules.

Inter-district Transfer Students

(FDA (Local) & Ed. Code 25.036)

TRANSFER STUDENTS. Under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Windthorst ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring non-resident 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. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by 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.

Rationale.

Windthorst ISD seeks exemption from the requirement that a transfer must be a commitment for one year, and allow the district to rescind a transfer upon review of the entire circumstances.

Absences for College Visits

(Ed. Code 25.087 (b-2))

EXCUSED ABSENCES. (b-2) A school district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that: (1) the district may not excuse for this purpose more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year; and (2) the district adopts: (A) a policy to determine when an absence will be excused for this purpose; and (B) a procedure to verify the student's visit at the institution of higher education.

Rationale.

Currently students are only allowed to have two excused school days to visit colleges or universities as College Days. In some cases, where students are visiting colleges out of state, students need more than the two days that are currently allowed to safely visit a college they are interested in attending or doing comparative visit to multiple colleges. Windthorst ISD will be exempt from the two-day excused absence limit for students visiting institutions of higher education. Students would be allowed more than the current two-day excused absence limit. Each situation would be evaluated by the attendance review committee on a case by case basis. The committee includes the principal, counselor and attendance clerk

School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.081 I(a))

FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION. (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Rationale.

Windthorst ISD, who does not qualify for any of the exceptions noted in the statute, would like to have the freedom to develop a calendar that better fits the needs of the community should the committee choose. Having greater flexibility in this area would allow us to better balance the first and second semesters and provide more instructional days prior to state testing.

Teacher Certification Required

(DK Legal) (Ed. Code 2 I.003(a))

CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. (a) A person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Rationale.

Windthorst ISD would like to make decisions regarding certifications locally and based on the needs of the campus and students. In the event that the district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or are teaching a subject outside of their certification, WISD would like to be afforded the flexibility to consider entering into at-will employment agreements with noncertified individuals that have field experience in a CTE, STEM field or a vocational skill that would provide more options for students and flexibility in scheduling. Windthorst ISD would also like to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject outside of their certified field in the event there is a need. Windthorst ISD will locally document the reasoning for the request and the credentials the certified teacher possess which qualify this individual to teach the subject.

Class Waivers (Kindergarten-4 th Grade)

(EEB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.112- 25.113)

CLASS WAIVER. Sec. 25.112. CLASS SIZE. (a) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class. That limitation does not apply during: (1) any 12-week period of the school year selected by the district, in the case of a district whose average daily attendance is adjusted under Section 42.005(c); or (2) the last 12 weeks of any school year in the case of any other district.(b) Not later than the 30th day after the first day of the 12-week period for which a district whose ADA is adjusted under Section 42.005(c) is claiming an exemption under Subsection (a), the district shall notify the commissioner in writing that the district is claiming an exemption for the period stated in the notice.(c) In determining the number of students to enroll in any class, a school district shall consider the subject to be taught, the teaching methodology to be used, and any need for individual instruction.(d) On application of a school district, the commissioner may except the district from the limit in Subsection (a) if the commissioner finds the limit works an undue hardship on the district. An exception expires at the end of the school year for which it is granted.(e) A school district seeking an exception under Subsection (d) shall notify the commissioner and apply for the exception not later than the later of: (1) October 1; or(2) the 30th day after the first school day the district exceeds the limit in Subsection (a).(f) If a school district repeatedly fails to comply with this section, the commissioner may take any appropriate action authorized to be taken by the commissioner under Section 39.131.(g) Expired. Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 889, Sec. 1, eff. June 14, 2001. Amended by: Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1347 (S.B. 300), Sec. 2, eff. June 19, 2009. Sec. 25.113.

NOTICE OF CLASS SIZE. (a) A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112(d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each

student affected by the exception. The notice must be in conspicuous bold or underlined print and:

- (1) specify the class for which an exception from the limit imposed by Section 25.112(a) was granted;
- (2) state the number of children in the class for which the exception was granted; and
- (3) be included in a regular mailing or other communication from the campus or district, such as information sent home with students.

(b) The notice required by Subsection (a) must be provided not later than the 31st day after:

- (1) the first day of the school year; or
- (2) the date the exception is granted, if the exception is granted after the beginning of the school year.

Rationale.

Kindergarten - 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the TEA. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio. While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

a. WISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.

b. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.

- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- d. This gives WISD the flexibility without having to submit waivers to the TEA.