



PECOS-BARSTOW-TOYAH INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

PROPOSED District of Innovation - Local Plan 2022-2027

Introduction

House Bill 1842, Section 4, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to be designated as Districts of Innovation (DOI), thereby allowing them the flexibility to be exempt from or modify state requirements at the local level to meet the needs of the students better and personalize learning.

Districts of Innovation provide opportunities for:

- Greater local control over the educational and instructional needs of students;
- Increased autonomy from state mandates and governing of education programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from curriculum, graduation requirements, or academic and financial accountability statutes.

Like the district's first innovation plan, this plan was developed by a diverse group of thirty-five members, including teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, representing all PBTISD. The advisory committee reviewed the current DOI plan and the recent revisions from April 2021. With a continued focus on exploring innovations to give teachers time for planning, preparation, and professional development, the committee also wanted to affirm the commitment to high-quality teachers and instruction for PBTISD students.

On November 18, 2021, the District Educational Improvement Committee met and signed a petition to move forward with renewing the district's DOI plan. On February 9, 2022, a public meeting was held where the DOI plan was reviewed and the plan's renewal was considered. The District of Innovation Committee voted to renew the proposed plan for 2022-2027, and the plan was posted on the district's website for 30-plus days. The Board of Trustees adopted final approval of the PBTISD DOI plan on March 21, 2022.

Term

The PBTISD's Local Innovation Plan will be in effect for five years, beginning in March 2022 and ending in March 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board per the statute. If within the term of this plan, other areas are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, proposed exemptions in the form of amendments will be presented to the DOI Committee, DEIC, and Board of Trustees for approval. Any amendments will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any given time.

Members of the DOI Advisory Committee

Aguilar, Carly - Business Partner
Aguilar, Felicia - Teacher
Ansagay, Arcairren - Teacher
Apolinar, Ana - Community Partner
Barmore, Ginny - Business Partner
Birch, Lindsey - Assistant Principal
Blain, Chad - Principal
Chavez, Anabelle - Teacher
Corrales, Lisa - Parent
Fields, Cynthia - District Administrator
Flores, Belia - Community Partner
Fowlkes, Stacie - Teacher
Godby, Amber - Assistant Principal
Hill, Karen - Teacher
Hathorn, Tanya - Parent
Henson, Chris - Principal
Henson, Katie - Teacher
Jaco, Brent - Superintendent

Keese, Joe - Teacher
Lara, Lucy - Teacher
Matt, Karen - District Administrator
Matta, Nikki - Teacher
McKinney, Analisa - Parent
Metcalf, Angelica - Teacher
Mondragon, Marty - Teacher
Olivas, Luzema - Teacher
Palomino, Brittany - Parent
Rayos, Jenny - Parent
Riley, Kelsey - District Administrator
Sadler, LaTanya - Principal
Shelton, Sophia - Counselor
Terry, Penny - Teacher
Torres, Precilla - Parent
Velez, Cindy - Teacher
Wimberly, Susan - Parent

Comprehensive Educational Program

The District's innovation plan allows for a comprehensive educational program guided by and aligned with the Board's Vision, Mission, and Beliefs for the District.

A. Vision

The Board of Trustees has adopted the following Vision to guide the District:

Inspiring and Empowering for Excellence!

B. Mission

The Board of Trustees has adopted the following Mission to guide the District:

The mission of Pecos-Barstow-Toyah Independent School District, the premier educational leader of West Texas, encompassing collective communities, is to inspire and empower each individual to achieve excellence, positively impact the community, and transform the world through a culture characterized by authentic relationships, shared responsibility and state-of-the-art learning environments.

C. Beliefs

The district's fundamental convictions, values, and character: We believe:

- Each person deserves a safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment
- Physical and emotional well-being is foundational to learning
- Integrity, trust, and respect are vital for authentic relationships
- Respect for heritage and diversity builds community
- Each person has unique strengths and potential
- Positive attitude and effort drives excellence
- Mutual accountability to one another is essential
- Families, students, school, and community have a shared responsibility for the education of each student
- A measure of the success of the community is the strength of its schools

School Culture & Climate Exemptions

School Start Date

Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §25.0811 | Board Policy EB (LEGAL) & EB (LOCAL)

- *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:

Removing the constraints of the current uniform start date, PBTISD would determine what is best for our community locally and on an annual basis. The ability to modify the start date provides increased local control of the instructional calendar to balance semester days; align classes to college courses, advanced placement exams, state assessment timelines; and be more responsive to community needs.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. Allow local control through a collaborative committee of community partners and District staff members to develop an instructional calendar that provides balanced semesters and begins instruction before the fourth Monday in August.
2. Provide campus flexibility to provide a year-round school of choice for identified student populations.

Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §37.0012 | Board Policy FO (LEGAL) & FO (LOCAL)

- *A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.*

Rationale:

TEC 37.0012 limits children's ability to develop positive relationships with various adults who have a vested interest in their mental and emotional development and wellness. Current law restricts campus administrators' and educators' ability to focus on each student's needs through a collaborative disciplinary approach. PBTISD utilizes positive behavioral interventions and supports embedded within a Response to Intervention model to help students with behavioral deficits. Teachers, administrators, counselors, interventionists, and behavior specialists deliver tiered behavioral interventions within a structured discipline system. The designation of one person who will be primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline restricts the District's ability to promote a more collaborative discipline program, in which multiple members within the organization collectively support students and maintain student discipline.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. Each campus will undergo a process to develop a plan that collaboratively creates a chain of communication that will best meet students' needs and the campus.

Curriculum & Instruction Exemptions

Class Size Requirements

Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §25.112 & TEC §25.113 | Board Policy BF (LEGAL) & EEB (LEGAL)

- *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.*
- *A District shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.*

Rationale:

While class size is indeed a contributing factor to overall classroom success, it must be balanced with the District's comprehensive staffing plan and the ability to attract/hire quality teachers. It is often quoted that smaller class size improves academic performance; however, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the most significant impact on student learning, not absolute class size. Schools begin the school year with staff based on projections of student enrollment. It is not uncommon for enrollment to exceed projections in one grade level while under projections in another. As a result, teachers and/or students may be moved to meet the 22:1 ratio of students to teacher limits in K-4th-grade. Being exempt from the 22:1 ratio requirement will allow students to remain with the teacher and classmates they began the year with, thus fostering continuity and stability which will support increased student achievement. This exemption provides PBTISD local control over class size ratios without the unnecessary step of seeking a waiver from TEA.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. PBTISD will attempt to keep all K-4 core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio of student to teacher.
2. If a K-4 classroom exceeds this ratio, the District will allow class sizes to go to 24:1 to provide greater flexibility.
3. Should a class size exceed 22:1 for more than 35-days, the Board of Trustees must approve the exception, and parents/guardians, whose students are in classes that have exceeded the 22:1 ratio will be notified.
4. While the class size exception innovation will allow K-4 classrooms to exceed the 22:1 ratio, the District will implement the following action steps in its effort to keep the classroom ratio at 22:1:
 - a. Survey campus enrollment, staffing ratios, and class sizes at the beginning of each school year and monitor throughout.
 - b. Regularly review campus enrollment, staffing ratios, and class sizes with the Superintendent and Cabinet personnel.

Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §25.092 | Board Policy FEC (LOCAL)

- *Except as provided by this section, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.*

- *A student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class.*

Rationale:

To be awarded credit or a final grade for a class, a student is required to attend 90 percent of the days class is offered regardless of whether the student's absences are excused or unexcused. According to statute, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 shall not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance 90 percent of the days the class is offered. The 90 percent minimum and the 75 percent floor are arbitrary percentages based on "days in class" and not mastery of content. PBTISD has implemented a one-to-one device initiative that has placed electronic devices in the hands of every student. As a result, students absent from school have greater flexibility in making up assignments or completing classwork using their devices. Students can electronically communicate with teachers and access missed work. Exemption from §25.092 will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, location, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts or absences, and reducing the number of dropouts and increasing the number of qualifying graduates.

Relief from §25.092 will not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Moreover, opting out of §25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade under Texas Education Code §28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades per Texas Education Code §28.0216.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. Through the flexibility provided by this exemption, PBTISD will seek innovative educational arrangements allowing for a wider variety of instructional delivery, including dual-credit classes, virtual classrooms, blended learning, or work-study opportunities, as well as other instructional methods approved by District administration.
2. Combining instructional time in class with time spent learning online will increase college and career readiness options. Additionally, the award of credit will be based upon demonstrated mastery of the learning, instead of arbitrary 90 and 75 percent rules based on "seat time" in class.
3. PBTISD will continue to stress and enforce the 90 percent rule; the District is seeking an exemption to this statute to provide greater flexibility to principals and attendance committees in awarding credit or a final grade to students who:
 - a. Earn a passing grade to receive a credit;
 - b. Demonstrate mastery of the content;
 - c. Are present for less than 75% of days in class due to district-approved extenuating circumstances;
 - d. Provide district-approved documentation supporting the extenuating circumstances; and
 - e. Meet all requirements in the principal's plan and/or the attendance committee's requirements for receiving credit or a final grade.

Employment Exemptions

Teacher Contracts

Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §21.002 & TEC §21.102(b) | Board Policy DC (LOCAL), DCA (LOCAL), DCB (LOCAL)

- *A school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under: (1) a probationary contract, (2) a continuing contract, or (3) a term contract.*
- *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:

Currently, an applicant cannot be hired to teach a subject without appropriate certification, causing vacancies or deficiencies. It is the current PBTISD practice to issue a Chapter 21 contract for the remainder of the school year to certified teachers hired after the first day of instruction, binding the District to potentially ineffective instruction for students. Experienced teachers new to the District have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years, limiting the time to determine the staff member's effectiveness fully.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. The PBTISD Human Resources Department will submit a written request for approval to fill a teaching position to the Superintendent without issuing a Chapter 21 Contract:
 - a. For a non-certified applicant to teach
 - b. For a teacher hired after the first day of instruction (late hire)
2. The written request will outline the reason for the need, and it will document the credentials the recommended teacher possesses which qualify him/her to teach the subject. In addition, the written request must be submitted to the Superintendent for approval before employing the applicant.
3. The Superintendent will approve recommendations for a second and/or third-year probationary contract for teachers employed by the District, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the District, to continue to evaluate the staff member's effectiveness.

Educator Certification

Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §21.003 & TEC §21.053 | Board Policy DBA (LEGAL), DBA (LOCAL), DK (LEGAL), DK (LOCAL), & DK (EXHIBIT)

- *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.*
- *A person who desires to teach in a public school shall present the person's certificate for filing with the employing district before the person's contract with the board of trustees of the district is binding.*

Rationale:

The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (STEAM), and Fine Arts courses. To provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such individuals instead of the requirements set forth in law. Currently, a certified teacher cannot be hired for a position or be assigned to a subject outside his/her certification, limiting the District's ability to utilize personnel to ensure quality instruction effectively.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. PBTISD Human Resources Department will submit a written request for approval to fill a teaching position to the Superintendent or designee:
 - a. An individual with professional or vocational experience who does not possess a traditional teaching certificate is highly credentialed, as evidenced by a license, degree, or experience, to teach non-core courses such as CTE or Fine Arts.
 - b. For a certified teacher to teach a subject area out of his/her certified field in grades 6th - 12th, candidate qualifications may include a combination of:
 - i. Professional work experience;
 - ii. Formal training and education;
 - iii. Relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or
 - iv. Any combination of work experience, training, education, or industry credential related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching.
2. The written request will outline the reason for the need, and it will document the credentials possessed by the recommended teacher which qualify him/her to teach the subject. In addition, the written request must be submitted to the Superintendent or designee for approval before employing them as a teacher.

Mentor Teachers**Texas Education Code Requiring Exemption: TEC §21.458 | Board Policy DEAA (LEGAL) & DEAA (LOCAL)**

- *Each school district may assign a mentor teacher to each classroom teacher who has less than two years of teaching experience in the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned. A teacher assigned as a mentor must: (1) to the extent practicable, teach in the same school; (2) to the extent practicable, teach the same subject or grade level, as applicable; and (3) meet the qualifications prescribed by commissioner rules adopted under Subsection (b).*
- *The rules concerning qualifications must require that to serve as a mentor a teacher must: (1) complete a research-based mentor and induction training program approved by the commissioner; (2) complete a mentor training program provided by the District; (3) have at least three complete years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students, as a whole, in achieving improvement in student performance; and (4) demonstrate interpersonal skills, instructional effectiveness, and leadership skills.*

Rationale:

This statute's teacher-mentor requirements are a considerable barrier to identifying and training high-quality mentors in PBTISD. Additionally, the District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers in need of assistance or any other teacher who could benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. An exemption from these requirements would allow for effective teachers with more than two years of experience to be assigned as mentors, better utilizing our most effective teachers as peer coaches. PBTISD needs local discretion in assigning mentors that excel in areas that are targeted for improvement or innovation.

Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD Local Innovation Plan Proposal:

1. Teachers assigned to serve as mentors would be selected based on various factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.