

Cayuga Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

2017-2022



In an effort to better meet the needs of Cayuga ISD's students, this District of Innovation plan has been developed in accordance with the Texas Education Code, specifically Chapter 12A. The elements of this plan are related to the provision of a comprehensive educational program. The plan also identifies requirements of the Texas Education Code that inhibit Cayuga ISD's goals and from which the district seeks exemption.

This plan will be implemented on July 1, 2017. It will expire on June 30, 2022. This local innovation plan may be amended, rescinded or renewed if approved by the District-Wide Improvement Council and the Board in the same manner that it was initially adopted. If, within the term of this plan, other innovative strategies are proposed, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and recommend additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment approved by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan.

Cayuga Independent School District

Board of Trustees

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District-Wide Improvement Council

Christie Smith	Laurie Walls	Laura Poland
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Jeffrey Quattlebaum	Jennifer Scheppler	Tracie Campbell
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District of Innovation Planning Committee

Mandy Grayson	Ashley Hearrell	Kimberly Davis
Linda McNeill	Don Sharp	Jeffrey Quattlebaum
Melvin Shead	Cheryl Ellis	Jackie Willingham
Tracie Campbell	Sherri McInnis	Russell Holden

Cayuga ISD's District of Innovation Timeline

December 15, 2016

The Cayuga ISD District-Wide Improvement Council discussed issues related to the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation. The discussion included innovative strategies used by other Districts of Innovation and the benefits of such strategies.

February 6, 2017

The Cayuga ISD Board of Trustees and administration discussed issues and procedures related to possible designation as a District of Innovation.

February 13, 2017

The Board approved a resolution regarding designation as a District of Innovation. The resolution included text related to implementation of the process to become a District of Innovation, including the scheduling of a public hearing.

March 27, 2017

The Cayuga ISD Board of Trustees approved an amended version of a resolution regarding designation as a District of Innovation. The Board held a public hearing to consider the development of a District of Innovation plan. Following the public hearing, the Board approved the membership of a District of Innovation planning committee.

April 4, 2017

The District of Innovation planning committee met to begin developing a comprehensive educational plan. The plan includes a list of Texas Education Code provisions from which the district seeks exemption. It also includes descriptions of innovative strategies related to the exemptions.

April 11, 2017

The District-Wide Improvement Council held a public meeting regarding the District of Innovation plan. The plan was unanimously approved by the council's members.

April 12, 2017

The District of Innovation plan was posted on Cayuga ISD's website.

April 17, 2017

The Board of Trustees will make a decision related to notifying the Commissioner of Education of the Board's intent to vote on the proposed District of Innovation plan.

April 18, 2017

Notify the Commissioner of Education of the Board's intent to vote on the plan.

May 15, 2017

The Board of Trustees will vote on the proposed District of Innovation plan.

May 16, 2017

The Commissioner of Education will be notified of the Board's decision about the plan.

July 1, 2017

Implementation of the District of Innovation plan will begin, including the revision of relevant district policies.

Relevant Provisions of the Texas Education Code

As a District of Innovation, Cayuga Independent School District will be exempted from the following provisions of the Texas Education Code.

1. First Day of Instruction

TEC 25.0811(a)

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

2. School Day; Operation of Schools

TEC 25.082(a)

A school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

TEC 25.081(e)

...a reference to a day of instruction means 420 minutes of instruction.

3. Probationary Contract

TEC 21.102(b)

...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.

4. Minimum Service Required

TEC 21.401(a-b)

A contract between a school district and an educator must be for a minimum of 10 months' service.

An educator employed under a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

5. Certification Required; Presentation and Recording of Certificates

TEC 21.003(a)

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...

TEC 21.053(a-b)

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.

An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate.

Cayuga ISD's Innovative Strategies

For each strategy, the relevant provision of the Texas Education Code is cited in italics. The amended portion of the TEC is underlined. This portion of CISD's District of Innovation plan also includes explanation of the basis and benefits of each strategy.

1. First Day of Instruction

Cayuga ISD will not begin instruction for students for a school year before the third Monday in August.

This innovative strategy will allow Cayuga ISD to make decisions about the school's calendar at the local level and on an annual basis. It will result in grading periods and semesters that are more balanced. This initiative will also be helpful to the district in maintaining its practice of concluding the fall semester prior to the Christmas holidays. Another benefit of this strategy is that it will result in more school days and minutes of instruction occurring prior to the state assessments.

2. School Day; Operation of Schools

For Cayuga ISD, a school day will be at least four hours each day, including intermissions and recesses. A reference to a day of instruction will mean at least 240 minutes of instruction.

This innovative strategy will allow Cayuga ISD the flexibility needed to alter the length of the school day when it is locally determined to be beneficial for the district and its stakeholders. Exemption from the relevant provisions of the TEC will give the district more local control over scheduling with no loss in state funding. It will also be beneficial to the district in obtaining credit for the required amount of instructional time in a school year.

Cayuga ISD will not decrease the length of school days on a regular basis or without a specific purpose. Instead, to the extent that it is possible, the district will schedule its "early release" days on the school calendar that is developed prior to the beginning of the school year. The calendar, including the predetermined "early release" days, will continue to be approved by the Board of Trustees and distributed to parents and other community members. The calendar will also continue to be developed in a manner that complies with the state's requirements for instructional time. However, as noted above, this strategy will allow the district the opportunity to adjust the length of certain school days as it is determined to be beneficial for the district and its students, parents, faculty and community members.

3. Probationary Contract

At Cayuga ISD, the probationary period will not exceed two years 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.

As the relevant TEC provision states, this strategy will apply to teachers who have taught in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding their initial employment by the district. This strategy will allow Cayuga ISD to renew the probationary contract of such an experienced teacher for one additional year, for a maximum of two school years.

In some cases, one year of employment is insufficient to fully determine even an experienced teacher's effectiveness. This innovative strategy will provide Cayuga ISD with another employment option in addition to the options of offering term contracts to such faculty members or non-renewing their probationary contracts. Another benefit of this initiative is that it will provide additional time for the district to mentor teachers prior to hiring them under term contracts. This strategy will also allow experienced teachers the opportunity to accept another year of employment by the district under a probationary contract in addition to the option of seeking other employment prior to the deadline for teacher resignations.

4. Minimum Service Required

A contract between Cayuga ISD and an educator will be for a minimum of 10 months' service. At Cayuga ISD, an educator employed under a 10-month contract will provide a minimum of 182 days of service.

Determinations regarding the number of days required to fulfill employees' contracts should be a local decision. This innovative strategy will reduce the minimum number of days in teacher contracts from 187 days to no less than 182 days. This strategy will better align the number of days included in teachers' contracts with the currently required 75,600 minutes of student instruction in a school year. Teachers' current salaries will not be reduced by this reduction in their contract days. So, their daily rates of pay will increase as a result of this initiative. Hopefully, this strategy will also enhance teacher recruitment and improve teacher morale.

On an annual basis, the Cayuga ISD Board of Trustees will determine the number of days to be included in teachers' contracts. This determination will be made as a component of the district's total compensation and benefits program.

5. Certification Required; Presentation and Recording of Certificates

A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by Cayuga ISD unless the person holds an appropriate certificate, permit, or other qualifications, such as relevant training and experience.

FOR NON-CTE SUBJECTS

Decisions regarding teacher certification will be made by the district. Such decisions will be made locally in order to better serve Cayuga ISD students, including the opportunity to provide more course offerings for the students. This strategy will also allow for more flexibility in teacher assignments and campus schedules. For grades six through twelve, in all subjects except Special Education and ESL/Bilingual, the campus principal may submit a request to the superintendent to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a field related to the faculty member's current certification but for which the teacher is not certified.

RELATED FIELDS

English:	Reading, Speech, Journalism, any other course accepted by the SBOE for graduation credit in English
Social Studies:	History, Government, Economics, Political Science, any other course accepted by the SBOE for graduation credit in Social Studies
Science:	Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biology, Earth Science, Physics, Chemistry, any other course accepted by the SBOE for graduation credit in Science
Fine Arts:	Art, Music, Theater Arts, Dance, any other course accepted by the SBOE for graduation credit in Fine Arts
Mathematics:	Engineering, Statistics, Accounting, any other course accepted by the SBOE for graduation credit in Mathematics

The principal shall specify in writing the basis for the request and document the certified teacher's credentials that qualify the faculty member to teach the requested subject in a related field. The superintendent will decide whether or not to approve such requests.

FOR CTE SUBJECTS

The district will establish local qualifications and criteria for teachers of CTE courses. By establishing its own CTE teacher qualifications and criteria, Cayuga ISD will receive the following benefits: the ability to employ teachers who are industry certified and experienced in their vocation, the opportunity to offer more CTE courses and the increased possibility of recruiting and employing part-time teachers for CTE courses.

In making recommendations for teachers of CTE subjects, the principal shall specify in writing the basis for the recommendation and document the candidate's credentials that

qualify the recommended individual to teach a CTE course. Prior to the candidate's employment by the district, the superintendent will decide whether or not to recommend the applicant to the Board of Trustees. If approved by the Board, the staff member will be employed on an at-will basis.

As with all district employees, the criminal history of candidates for CTE teaching positions will be checked prior to being recommended to the Board. In considering such applicants, efforts will also be made to verify the candidates have sufficient education and experience to effectively teach the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the courses they are to be assigned. Faculty members hired using these "District of Innovation" procedures will receive training in instructional delivery methods, classroom management training, meeting the needs of Special Education students and the state curriculum (TEKS) for their assigned course(s). During their first year of employment, they will receive some form of mentoring.

