



# Italy Independent School District *District of Innovation Plan*

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## *August 2017 – July 2022*

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### *District of Innovation Committee*

*IISD Board Approved – March 6, 2017*

Davee Garcia, Elementary Teacher Grades 3 - 5  
April Mathers, Elementary Teacher Grades PreK - 2  
Shelbi Simon, Secondary Teacher Grades 6 - 8  
Andi Windham, Secondary Teacher Grades 9 - 12  
Roger Ginnett, Community Member, Parent  
Joe Jackson, Community Member, Grandparent  
Lisa Jacinto, District PEIMS Coordinator  
Natasha Blackburn, Director of Finance  
Pamela Thomas, Elementary Principal  
Eric Janszen, Secondary Principal  
Lee Joffre, Superintendent

### **Implementation Dates**

Public Hearing	March 6, 2017
IISD Board Approved Pursuit of DOI Designation	March 6, 2017
IISD Board Approved DOI Committee	March 6, 2017
DOI Committee Initial Meeting	March 7, 2017
DOI Sub-Committee Meetings	
Teacher & Principal Evaluations	March 9, 2017
First Day of Instruction, Length of Day, Campus-Planning, Certification & Inter-District Transfers	March 10, 2017
Teacher Contract Days & Probationary Contracts	March 20, 2017
DOI Committee Review Meeting	March 24, 2017
Site-Based Decision Making Committee Meeting	April 11, 2017
DOI Plan Posted on District Web-Page	April 12, 2017
Notification to Commissioner of Intent to Adopt DOI Plan	April 12, 2017
Site-Based Decision Making Committee Public Meeting	April 26, 2017
IISD Board Approved Adoption of DOI Plan	May 15, 2017

## **District of Innovation Plan – Exemptions**

### **First Day of Instruction**

**TEC 25.0811:** A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

#### **Proposed:**

- The District Improvement and Planning Committee will have the flexibility to start school prior to the fourth Monday in August.
- Starting earlier will better balance the two semesters with a natural Winter Break, set exams prior to Winter Break, and create more instructional time before STAAR/EOC testing.
- The balanced semesters will align with college semesters.

#### **Local Guidelines:**

- The District Improvement and Planning Committee will receive parent and staff input, then decide, subject to School Board approval, the school start date on an annual basis.

### **Length of Day**

**TEC 25.081:** State law currently requires that all school days must be at least 420 minutes long in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes towards the 75,600 minutes required annually.

#### **Proposed:**

- Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development. Additionally, this would allow the district the flexibility to shorten a school day for relevant school-wide events and activities. Italy ISD would still meet the 75,600 instructional minute requirements.

#### **Local Guidelines:**

- Italy ISD does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year.

### **Inter-district Transfers**

**TEC 25.036:** A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

#### **Proposed:**

- Italy 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 records, work habits, and attendance records are evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulation 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. In addition, occasionally a student’s work habits decline and is evident in their academic success. In these rare cases, Italy ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

**Local Guidelines:**

- While Italy ISD is very generous in accepting inter-district transfers, nonresident students who have been accepted as an inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. An inter-district transfer may also be revoked if a student's work habits decline and affect their academic success. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

**Campus Planning and Site-Based Decision Making**

**TEC 11.253:** Requires the District to establish campus-level planning and decision-making committees as provided in Sections 11.251(b)-(e).

**Proposed:**

- Italy ISD is a small town consisting of 1783 residents. The District has an enrollment of 585 students (PreK – 12). Resources for persons serving as members of the District Planning Committee and the Campus Planning Committees are limited without asking the same people to serve on several. The campuses are located less than one mile apart and communication between the superintendent and the principal of each campus occurs on a daily basis. The proposal to allow the Campus Planning Committee to become synonymous with the District Level Planning Committee to be known as the District Improvement and Planning Committee with the same duties as required by law of the District Planning Committee. Italy ISD would be able to develop a more cohesive plan that establishes continuity of programs and performance through grades Pre K – 12.

**Local Guidelines:**

- Italy ISD will use one committee, the District Improvement and Planning Committee, to develop one plan for the District/Campus and integrate the District Plan of Innovation into the District/Campus Plan. Membership of the committee would consist of parent(s), community patron(s), business person(s) non-teaching professionals, and an equal number of teachers from each campus.

**Certification**

**TEC 21.003(a)** states 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 as provided by Subchapter B. TEC 21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.

**Proposed:**

- In order to best serve Italy ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. With the innovative ideas of increasing Career & Technology offerings as well as Fine Arts opportunities, the district's exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow the district to consider part time professionals to teach courses at the elementary and secondary levels. Out of state certified teachers could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. Often there are experienced certified teachers that could teach a course outside of their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.

**Local Guidelines:**

- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject or grade level out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject. A teacher will not be required to teach outside of his/her field of certification. Teachers in the Special Education & Bilingual Education classrooms will be required to be SBEC Certified.
- An individual with experience in a CTE or a Fine Arts field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.

**Teacher and Principal Evaluation**

**TEC 21.203, TEC 21.352, TEC 21.354, TEC 21.3541:** The State of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), teacher appraisal system since 1997. The state issued a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). Prior to T-TESS, PDAS was the appraisal instrument.

**Proposed:**

- Italy ISD is currently implementing the T-TESS and T-PESS evaluation instruments produced by TEA. To best serve the needs of Italy ISD staff, one district committee of administrators and teachers will have the option to develop alternate appraisals for specific groups of teachers, where the adopted teacher evaluation may not be the most appropriate evaluation. Italy ISD will allow one district committee, consisting of central office, administrators and teachers, the option to develop a local, district-wide teacher evaluation that can be used in the place of the commissioner's recommended instrument (T-TESS). It will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-PESS, and any other relevant best practice. The newly developed instrument would not include a student growth measure, nor would it require annual online recertification for appraisers. Appraisals for teachers, administrators and principals will include indicators based on campus and district goals.

**Local Guidelines:**

- Formal evaluations will consist of an observation 35 – 45 minutes in length during instructional class periods.
- All teachers will be formally evaluated at a minimum of once every year. Administrators will have the authority to formally evaluate a teacher more often if the teacher is performing below expectations.
- All new teachers to the district will be formally evaluated twice annually during their probationary employment.
- All teachers will have an annual summative appraisal and shall set goals. A conference will be scheduled to discuss the summative appraisal. The teacher may opt out of the summative conference.
- Every teacher will receive a minimum of six, informal walk-throughs per year.
- Principals and administrators will continue to be evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.
- These locally developed plans should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for Italy ISD.

## **Teacher Contract Days**

**TEC 21.401:** defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.

### **Proposed:**

- Decrease contract days by 5 days, based on the needs of Italy ISD in each of the calendar years under the District of Innovation Plan,
- Reduce teacher contract days with an increase in daily rate to negate effect on teacher salaries,
- Better alignment with student instructional day requirement of 75,600 minutes,
- Increased daily rate enhances recruitment of essential quality teachers,
- Improves morale and promotes retention of teachers in Italy ISD more competitively with neighboring districts,
- Provide teachers more opportunities during the summer months to seek beneficial staff development relative to their field.

### **Local Guidelines:**

- Italy ISD will present a recommendation to the Italy ISD School Board regarding the number of contract days as a part of the total compensation and benefits package.

## **Probationary Contracts:**

**TEC 21.102:** requires the probationary period not exceed one year for a person employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district.

**TEC 21.101:** defines “teacher” as a “principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, school counselor, or other full-time professional employee” required to hold certification under Subchapter B, “or a nurse”.

### **Proposed:**

- One year is not sufficient time to assess teacher effectiveness as related to student outcomes on state assessments, which usually provide student results well after the district is required to make recommendations for teacher contract renewals.
- “Experienced teacher” will encompass the positions of principal, classroom teacher, school counselor, and school nurse.

### **Local Guidelines:**

- At the time of contract recommendation consideration, newly hired teachers and counselors with 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, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member’s effectiveness. Appropriate administrative documentation will be used when considering an additional probationary contract. Providing an additional year of probationary status for experienced teachers allows campus and district administration to: (1) better evaluate effectiveness; (2) ensure fit for the district and campus culture; and (3) provide opportunity for the teacher growth.