New Teacher Academy

Training the Uncertified to Teach

District of Innovation (DOI)

1. DOI was established by House Bill 1842 and passed by the 84th Texas Legislative Session in 2015.
2. DOI is a designation that allows school districts rated acceptable or higher to exempt from certain sections of the Texas Education code.
3. DOI allows districts to implement creative strategies and gain more flexibility.

District of Innovation (DOI)

A District must create and adopt an Innovation Plan that outlines specifically the exemptions they wish to pursue.

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Budget
- Hiring practices
- School Calendar

Non-negotiables are ESL, Pre-K, and Special Ed

District of Innovation (DOI)

DOIs are still held accountable for governance, curriculum and assessments, school finance and federal requirements.

DOIs may only retain their DOI status for 5 calendar years. Districts may amend, renew and rescind their DOI plan at any time

Examples of Exemptions for DOIs

School calendar

Length of school day

Duty-free lunch periods for teachers

Maximum class size

Teacher contracts

Educator certification requirements (CTE and STEM hard to fill positions)

District of Innovation

- The state of Texas is divided into 1207 Independent School Districts (ISD)
- 983 of the ISDs are DOI (75%)

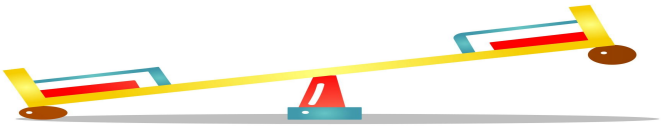
How does DOI affect DKG?

There is a good chance that the DOIs across Texas have DKG members that are either actively teaching or are retired.

DKG members, as leaders in education, have an opportunity to work with non-certified teachers to help them become more competent and confident in the classroom.

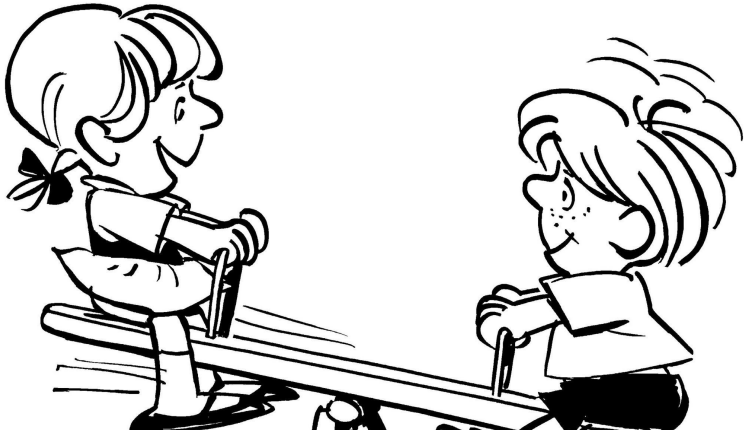
New Teacher Academy (NTA)

The NTA is a place of trust and open dialogue. It serves as a cohort of educators. There is a balance of GPISD administrators being present occasionally to answer questions and impart important CTE-related information and the absence of administrators that allows truly open dialogue about issues, flops and failures in the classroom.



Role of the NTA Leader

As the NTA leader I serve both the new teachers and the administrators by bringing forth any concerns I have with the classroom teachers and student experiences to the administrators. Yet, I support and explain the administration & district policies to the new teachers.



Dr. Melissa Jensen, GPISD Assistant Director of CTE

“… The New Teacher Academy has proven to be an invaluable asset to the Galena Park Independent School District (GPISD), significantly contributing to the retention of our new educators. Many of our new teachers, transition into teaching from various industries.

This shift often leaves them feeling overwhelmed as they navigate the complexities of educational pedagogy alongside the myriad of responsibilities that accompany the teaching profession.”

Dr. Jensen continues…

“The Academy provides a structured mentorship framework throughout the academic year, fostering an environment of support and encouragement for these new teachers. This mentorship is crucial in alleviating feelings of isolation and uncertainty, allowing them to build confidence in their roles.”

New Teacher Academy

10 sessions beginning in August; ending in April

Schedule of sessions is published in August, reminders are sent prior to each session

Attendance is mandatory.

Instructor is provided the opportunity for a personalized school visit with any teacher that is absent for a session.

Meals are often provided for 2 -3 sessions that occur either during a lunchtime or later after school time.

Snacks are always available at every session.

New Teacher Academy failure!

A local district implemented the New Teacher Academy for one year. Problems that prohibited the success of this district's program were:

- Non certified teachers were "asked" to attend, not required to attend
- The meeting times changed between morning meetings and after school meetings with no rhythm or published schedule.
- The instructor never knew if there would be two participants or 30 participants.
- Continuity of instruction was non-existent due to the lack of required attendance.

New Teacher Academy

- **First session** is like the first day of school. Expectations are outlined, names are learned, contact information is exchanged.
- First day/week of school activities are modeled.
- Resources such as Harry Wong's ***First Days of School*** are suggested.
- Finding a Campus mentor is encouraged
- Membership in professional organizations is encouraged
- Professional jargon is explained via a "dictionary/fast reference guide" provided

Session Two

- Struggles and Successes (this activity opens each Session of NTA)
- Communication with parents
- Basic lesson planning - TEKS to objectives to actions to assessment
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Formative and Summative assessments

Session Three

- Struggles and Successes
- Rubrics, Focused Observations
- Run, Fight, Hide preparations
- Guest Teachers and Just-in-Case lessons
- TELPAS writing
- Kagan Strategies
- Use of A.I. by teachers and students

Session Four

- Struggles and Successes
- Guest speakers
- Alternative Certification
- Good habits of professional teachers
- Sponge topics for the CTE classroom

Session Five

- Struggles and Successes
- Phases of the first year of teaching
- Communication with administrators and parents
- Creating the Final exam or end of semester exam
- Forms of communication and learning activities to accompany lessons on interpersonal communication

Session Six

- Struggles and Successes
- Final Exam prep
- Review Bingo Activity (Sarah McCann)
- Edutopia article review and discussion
- Engaging the Disengaged students
- Changes for the upcoming new semester
- Review of NTA teaching strategies - what has worked, what has flopped

Session Seven

- Struggles and Successes
- Spring school district calendar
- Prom, Pollination and Senioritis
- Review of the Phases of Teaching
- Review of the Final exam and closing of first semester
- Administrative evaluations and Observations
- Check-in for Alternative Certification

Session Eight

- Struggles and Successes
- Maslow’s Pyramid of Human Needs
- Ruby Payne - Teaching Students
- Project Based Learning

Session Nine

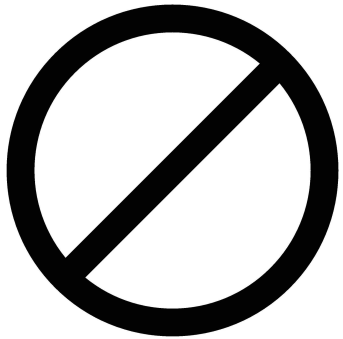
- Letters
  - Student recommendation
  - Reasonable Assurance
  - Letter to next year’s student
  - Letter from the past
- Strip Game- educator jargon and concepts review
- Highs and Lows of the Year
- Toasts to Success!

New Teacher Academy does not…

The New Teacher Academy **does not** provide teacher certification.

The New Teacher Academy **does not** observe teacher's for administrative purposes

The New Teacher Academy **does not** perform professional evaluations, hiring and firing of teachers.



New Teacher Academy does…

Serve as resource to equip non-certified teachers from industry with the tools, skills and knowledge they need to successfully teach students

Toby Castro, GPISD CTE Director

“I started the New CTE Teacher Academy to support the many non-certified teachers we hire through the District of Innovation provision who bring years of industry experience but need pedagogical training to be successful in the classroom.

Research indicates that similar programs lead to higher teacher retention through year five and improved instructional quality, reinforcing the importance of structured support for career changers in education.”

Toby Castro continues…

“Beyond professional development, I wanted to create a safe space where new CTE teachers could connect with like-minded peers to vent, plan, and reflect on their practices and experiences. By fostering collaboration and continuous learning, the academy ensures our teachers feel confident, supported, and equipped to provide high-quality instruction to our students.”

GPISD’s evaluation of NTA

Retention -

- 2022-2023 New Teacher Academy 10/12 teachers remain in the classroom!
- 2023-2024 New Teacher Academy 8/8 teachers remain in the classroom.
- 2024-2025 there are four participants in the NTA

NTA Successes

Some teachers now have limited seating for their course

A teacher is now serving as the school CTE Department Chair

A few teachers have developed practicum classes

Students are attending competitions such as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

More NTA successes

Students are participating in CTSO under the guidance of NTA graduates

Blood drives, Designer Showcases and Industry Certifications are all now occurring under the guidance of the NTA graduates

Automotive club students led an afterschool professional development for teachers!

Circling Back to DKG, DOI and NTA

It is my belief that any one of you can implement a NTA in your school district.

As DKG members we are leaders in education. We are called to support the next generation of educators.

I will happily share all that I have with you as you pursue your own New Teacher Academy.

Questions and Comments