



# AISD District Plan of Innovation

June 1, 2017 – June 1, 2022

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, therefore providing increased flexibility and local control.

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning June 1, 2017 and ending June 1, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

## **Areas of Innovation for AISD**

### **1. Uniform School Start Date**

*(EB LEGAL) (TEC 25.0811)*

#### **Current**

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

#### **Innovation Rationale**

The flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. This empowers us to personalize learning, based on student and staff needs.

- a) The district will increase professional development through-out the school year to increase staff instructional support and increase student learning.
- b) The district will balance semester instructional days.
- c) The district strives to reduce the amount of summer gaps to promote student achievement and increase academic retention to support at-risk students.
- d) The district site-based/strategic planning committee will annually seek input from the district and community stakeholders to review calendar options that best meet the needs of AISD.

### **2. 90 Percent Attendance Rule**

*(FEC LOCAL) (TEC 25.092)*

#### **Current**

(a) Except as provided by this section, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through 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.

(b)

#### **Innovation Rationale**

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow AISD administrators to award

credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they've attended a certain number of school days.

The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. AISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption.

This exemption supports overarching goals in the strategic plan to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.

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

- a) Students involved in extra-curricular and curricular activities through the AISD organization will be allowed to participate in those activities with prior approval and must demonstrate mastery of content in all course work.

### **3. Student Discipline Provisions**

*(FO LEGAL & LOCAL) (TEC 37.0012)*

#### **Current**

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

#### **Innovation Rationale**

The proposal is for the District to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. AISD's approach to discipline is becoming more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the AISD Student Code of Conduct.

- a) All certified campus administration will serve as joint behavior coordinators and work collaboratively with campus and district staff to promote campus goals.

#### **4. Teacher Certification**

*(DBA Legal) (TEC 21.003, 21.055, 21.057,)*

##### **Current**

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 issued as provided by Subchapter B.

21.057 (a) A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom.

##### **Innovation Rationale**

In order to best serve AISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high demand courses. The District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

- a) The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question ( e.g., CTE, STEM, and Dual Credit)
- b) For grades 6-12, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. ( e.g., CTE, STEM, and Dual Credit)
- c) An individual with experience in the content of an elective course could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or elective course through a local teaching certificate. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. ( e.g., CTE, STEM, and Dual Credit)
- d) Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.
- e) The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- f) Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. There will be no requirement for parent notification regarding teacher certification, and the District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teacher have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.
- g) These positions will be employed under a non-chapter 21 contract and considered "at will" based on district needs.

## **5. Probationary Contracts**

(DCA LEGAL) (TEC 21.102)

### **Current**

(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.

### **Innovation Rationale**

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to three years from the last date of district employment.

a) As a fast-growing school district, this will allow AISD to properly assess and assist new personnel in the acclimation of the district.