



BRAZOS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

District of Innovation Plan

2017/2018 thru 2021/2022

Approved by Brazos ISD School Board on _____

District of Innovation Committee:

Special Programs: Teresa Ressler

Principal: Mary McCarthy

Principal: Lauren Almanza

Principal: Clay Hudgins

Counselor: Nanette Kubena

Spec. Ed. Monica Gross

Parent: Rachelle Demny

Community: Carolyn Raska

Teachers:

Chad Divin

Stephanie Snedaker

Jill Hutchins

Kimberly Vykukal

Ray Hanzelka

Karen McCain

Patricia Banse

Janice Hajek

Holly O'Rourke

Jessica Galan

Pamela Hengst

Introduction:

A District of Innovation is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemption from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code. To create a District of Innovation, a school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan according to the Texas Education Code.

Exemptions:

What areas of flexibility can BISD consider in its District of Innovation plan?

A District of Innovation may adopt a plan that includes exemptions from most of the same state laws that are not applicable to open enrollment school districts. These laws could include:

- Uniform school start date
- Class size ratio
- Minimum minutes of instruction
- The 90 percent attendance rule (but compulsory attendance still applies)
- Student discipline provisions (with some key exceptions, like the requirement to have a code of conduct and restrictions on restraint and seclusion)
- Teacher appraisal system
- Teacher certification (except as required by federal law)
- Teacher contracts
- Teacher benefits
- Site-based decision making processes (to the extent required by state law)

Brazos ISD is not seeking exemptions from all areas as they do not fit the needs of our district.

Time Frame:

November 14, 2016 : DEIC Committee met and discussed district of innovation process.

November 21, 2016: School Board took action to approve a resolution to initiate the process of Brazos ISD becoming a District of Innovation.

December 14, 2016: Board approved the District of Innovation Committee

January 3, 2017: Superintendent and Special Programs Coordinator met with all 4 campuses to discuss and evaluate the plan with the faculty.

January 9, 2017: DEIC edited and approved proposed plan

Proposed Exemptions:

1. DETERMINE A FLEXIBLE SCHOOL START DATE (TEC §25.0811a) (EB LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan: The Texas Education Code states a school district may not begin student instruction before the fourth Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to begin earlier, even as early as the second Monday in August. The start-date waiver was eventually removed when the legislature determined school districts should begin the first semester no earlier than the fourth Monday of August, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design and balancing of instructional semesters to meet the needs of students or the wishes of the local board of trustees, who represent community interests in this matter.

The flexibility of school start date allows the district to determine, locally on an annual basis, a school calendar that will best meet the needs of our students and local community. The flexible start date allows us as a school district to balance the amount of instructional days in each semester. Additionally having this flexibility allows for a shortened start of school week, flexible staff development planning, and the ability to synch our calendars with local community colleges for our dual credit students. A shortened start week allows for easier transitioning for our pre-k and kindergarten students.

- Brazos ISD will determine on an annual basis the local start date of the first semester, not to precede the second Monday in August of any given year.
- The annual calendar will be developed and submitted by the District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC) and approved by the board of trustees.

2. ALLOW ALTERNATIVES TO EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION FOR DISTINCTIVE SUBJECTS (TEC §21.003a) (TEC §21.057a-e) (DK LEGAL)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan: Texas Education Code states a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a school district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside his or certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the State Board of Educator Certification.

In lieu of these requirements, the district will establish its own local qualification procedures. The current system does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district, as well as the location of the district. Freedom from these requirements will make it possible to hire industry experts and post-secondary instructors to teach dual-credit, STEAM,STEM and vocational/CTE courses, thereby increasing the number of students able to receive such instruction. Brazos ISD proposes the district will establish its own local qualification procedures so that individuals whom are degreed or professionals in an area may be allowed to teach a CTE course and difficult to fill positions such as secondary math, science and foreign languages. In addition certified teachers may be allowed to teach a course, subject or grade level that he/she is not certified by the state to teach. The following procedures will be put into place to ensure that highly qualified professionals and/or certified teachers are put into these positions.

- In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator is not found, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a non-certified, yet highly qualified professional to teach, **or** a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not certified by the state.

- The principal must specify in their request the reason for the request and document what qualifications the individual possesses to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
- A support plan, through the use of a mentor will be put in place when possible. High quality lesson plans, a partnership with a certified teacher in the same field and/or curriculum guides will be used to support the uncertified, yet highly qualified teacher.
- In the event an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional is assigned to a course, the superintendent will inform and obtain consent from the board of trustees and will notify parents of students who benefit from this decision.
- A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.