



**Dickinson ISD
District of Innovation Plan**

Introduction

House Bill 1842, created and passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session in Spring 2015, provides a unique opportunity for Texas public school districts to exempt themselves from some parts of the Texas Education Code. In order to do this, a public school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12 A.

As a District of Innovation, Dickinson ISD may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

District of Innovation Process and Timeline

- March 31, 2016 – Special presentation for Dickinson ISD district and campus administrators by David Anthony, Raise Your Hand Texas
- April 27, 2016 – District of Innovation presentation with David Anderson at Region IV for district administrators
- Fall 2016 – Review of district plans submitted for District of Innovation
- November 15, 2016 – CAPE meeting to review and discuss District of Innovation Plans developed by districts in the Gulf Coast area of Region IV
- December 12, 2016 – District of Innovation Resolution passed by Dickinson ISD Board of Trustees and the District Educational Improvement Committee designated as the local innovation committee
- December 12, 2016 – Public Hearing to discuss purpose for District of Innovation
- December 13, 2016 – Letter from Superintendent to all district employees and teacher professional organizations informing of the district’s intent to pursue District of Innovation

- December 13, 2016 – DOI process and timeline shared with DEIC members and posted on district website
- December 15, 2016 – DOI process and timeline shared with campus and district administrators
- January 3-6, 2017 – Draft plan developed by DOI subcommittee
- January 9, 2017 – District of Innovation update provided to Board of Trustees
- January 10, 2017 – DISD District of Innovation Public Meeting
- January 10, 2017 – Draft District of Innovation Plan reviewed by DISD District Educational Improvement Committee
- January 12, 2017 – February 12, 2017 – Dickinson ISD’s District of Innovation Plan posted on the DISD website; concurrently, the plan will be submitted to Texas Education Agency Commissioner, Mike Morath
- March 6, 2017 – DISD District of Innovation Plan submitted to DISD Board of Trustees for approval
- March-April 2017 – Updates of all DOI related local and legal policies will be reviewed, revised and submitted to the Dickinson ISD Board of Trustees for approval.

Term

Dickinson ISD will be recognized as a District of Innovation for a term of five years, renewable within six months of the plan’s expiration date of February 2022. If, within the term of the plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board of Trustees will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. The plan is amendable by a majority vote of the District Educational Improvement Committee and Board of Trustees. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. Dickinson ISD will not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Innovation Plan

Dickinson ISD proposes flexibility and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

Teacher Certification	
Texas Education Code §21.003, §21.044, §21.053, §21.055(d.I), §21.057(A-E), §25.7	DBA(LEGAL), DBA(LOCAL), DK(LEGAL), DK(LOCAL), DK(EXHIBIT)
Rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the event a certified teacher cannot be hired for a position or a teacher is assigned to a subject outside his/her certification, the district must submit an emergency certification/exception/waiver to TEA.• The passing rate for the state required bilingual certification test is relatively low.• Many of the career pathways set forth by HB 5 require very specialized certification. The current laws limit the District's ability to hire teachers for hard-to-fill, high demand career and technical courses when quality certified teachers are not available.• Proposed TAC Rule (§231.611) states that individuals assigned to deliver content instruction in a special education setting must be certified in special education and the specific content area being taught. The proposed rule change compounds the current critical staffing shortage area of special education teachers.	
Innovation: <p>Dickinson ISD Human Resources Dept. will submit a written request for approval to fill a teaching position to the Superintendent or designee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. For a certified teacher to teach a subject area out of his/her certified field2. For a certified teacher to work collaboratively with a bilingual teacher to meet the needs of ELL learners in grades K-63. For a degreed, non-certified professional with career/industry experience to teach a CTE subject within his/her area of expertise4. For a certified special education teacher to address the special education needs of students while receiving support from teachers with appropriate content knowledge. <p>The written request will outline the reason for the request and it will document the credentials the recommended teacher possesses which qualify him/her to teach the subject. In addition, the written request must be submitted to the Superintendent or designee for approval prior to recommending to the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>Exemption from the Texas Education Codes would enrich the applicant pools for English Language Learners, Career Technical Education content areas and Special Education positions . This will enable more students in our ELL Program to obtain high-quality first instruction from master teachers; our secondary students will obtain the educational benefits of CTE course offerings because of the District's flexibility to hire skilled professionals in certain trades and vocations; and our special needs population will continue to benefit from qualified special education teachers.</p>	

Teacher Appraisals	
Texas Education Code §21.351 (a)(2), §21.352(a)(2)(B)	DNA(LEGAL), DNA(LOCAL)
Rationale: The commissioner shall adopt a recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers. The criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior that includes the performance of teachers' students.	
Innovation: The Dickinson ISD District and Campus Improvement Committees have adopted and support the locally developed teacher appraisal system. The evaluation criteria are rigorous, and student performance data (failure rates, passing rates, reading levels, common assessments, curriculum-based assessments, TELPAS, STAAR, PSAT and SAT) are monitored routinely. The district will update the locally developed appraisal rubric and each teacher will develop annual performance and professional goals. However, we feel student learning objectives are subjective and they will not be part of our locally developed appraisal process.	

Length of Instructional Day (Minimum Minutes of Instruction)	
Texas Education Code §25.081 and 25.082	EC(LEGAL), EB(LEGAL)
Rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HB 2610 amends TEC §25.081 by eliminating language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing it with language requiring districts to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction. The bill also allows school districts to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment or another calamity. • DISD is a fast-growing district and does not have the space to provide full-day Pre-Kindergarten. Because of this, our half-day Pre-K program does not meet time requirements. 	
Innovation: The Dickinson ISD Superintendent or designee will determine whether to amend our District calendar to make up lost instructional time. This will eliminate a waiver request to TEA for unforeseen changes to the school calendar and will provide Dickinson ISD the opportunity to adjust school day schedules to better meet the instructional needs of students. Pre-Kindergarten will continue to be a half-day and this exemption will eliminate the TEA waiver.	

First Day of Instruction	
Texas Education Code §25.0811	EB(LEGAL)
Rationale: Texas Education Code states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4 th Monday in August. This forces the district into a calendar that has minimal opportunity for teacher professional development, causes shortened grading periods when the first semester ends in December, and provides negligible time for summer school before state mandated assessment re-takes in the summer.	
Innovation: To best serve the students in Dickinson ISD, we will move the school start date for students to no earlier than the third week of August. Starting earlier will allow for creative scheduling that allows for more intentional teacher professional development throughout the school year and also allows students to have a schedule that is more conducive to their learning.	

Teacher Contracts (Probationary)	
Texas Education Code §21.102	DCA(LLEGAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, a person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by the district for two consecutive school years, shall be employed under a probationary contract. • DISD is a fast-growing district and at times our staffing model is not able to accurately project class size enrollment. • Non-certified teachers and/or teachers that are hired after the first instructional day are not always the most qualified for the position. 	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>In an effort to provide quality educational opportunities for all students throughout the district, DISD would like the option of offering non-certified teachers and/or late hires (after the first day of instruction) an agreement rather than a contract. This will allow for flexibility in taking timely employment actions that, in turn, would provide students with a quality teacher.</p>	

Student/Teacher Ratios; Class Size	
Texas Education Code §25.111-13, §25.112(A-G), §25.113(A-B)	EEB(LLEGAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <p>A 22 to 1 student/teacher ratio is required by State law for Kindergarten to 4th grade classes. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency, and the district must notify parents of waivers to class size limits.</p>	
<p>Innovation:</p> <p>Dickinson ISD is a fast-growth district, and for the past several years, a class size waiver to TEA has been required. Based on our observations, we believe it is not the number of students but the relationship of the teacher to students and make-up of the classroom which most directly influence the learning environment. Dickinson ISD will continuously monitor enrollment at the elementary campuses. When each teacher in a grade level has 25 students, an additional teacher will be added. A TEA waiver will not be submitted, however, the Superintendent will report enrollment to the Board of Trustees.</p>	

Professional Development	
Texas Education Code §21.451, §21.458	DMA(LLEGAL)
<p>Rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a diverse student population, Dickinson ISD’s educators must be well equipped to meet the unique needs of each student. Currently, the district is required to implement state-mandated professional development that may not be beneficial to our staff needs. • The state currently lays out specific requirements for teacher mentors. An exemption from these requirements would allow DISD to determine qualified mentors based on classroom performance rather than on seniority. 	
<p>Innovation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dickinson ISD believes that the district level committee (EIC) is better equipped to determine professional development that will best meet the needs of local staff so that staff development can remain flexible and responsive to newly emerging data. • As a fast-growth district, Dickinson ISD employs many new teachers each year. It is very important that mentors be effective classroom teachers who can support new teachers in their first years in the profession. Being exempt from this requirement would increase the pool of teachers from which the district could draw for our mentoring program. 	

Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator	
Texas Education Code §37.0012	FO(LLEGAL)
Rationale: Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a Campus Behavior Coordinator on each campus. This person is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.	
Innovation: Dickinson ISD believes in a collaborative approach to discipline, with multiple people providing emotional social support to students, rather than just one person. All campus principals and assistant principals handle student discipline. Each campus administrator will serve as a Campus Behavior Coordinator in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the Dickinson ISD Student Code of Conduct.	

School District Depositories	
Texas Education Code §45.205-45.209	BDAE(LLEGAL)
Rationale: Districts are required to bid depository banking services at minimum every 6 years.	
Innovation: There are a limited number of banking entities with the interest in serving the district’s financial needs. In addition, changing banks requires a burdensome administrative effort. DISD already monitors the availability of services and the pricing. Newer banking regulations are making local-government-entity business unattractive to banks, so the options are expected to remain limited in the near future.	

Summary

Through HB 1842, Dickinson ISD will have increased flexibility and local control to make decisions. The Dickinson ISD Innovation Plan identifies current State laws from which the district seeks relief in order to best meet the needs of all stakeholders. Adjustments to Board policy will be reviewed, updated and presented to the DISD Board of Trustees.