

District of Innovation Amendment

Presented to the Board on August 25, 2020

Presented to DEIC August 5, 2020 as per TEC 12A.007



WHAT IS A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

A **District of Innovation** is a concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 that gives traditional school districts most of the *flexibilities* available to Texas' open enrollment charter schools.

To access these *flexibilities* that exempt a district from certain state mandates, a school district must adopt an innovation plan as set forth in Texas Education Code chapter 12A which constitutes the state's regulatory framework and statutory safety net for public schools.

A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION STRATEGIC PLAN / INNOVATION - POLICY

A local innovation plan must identify requirements imposed by the Education Code that inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. The local innovation plan should specify the manner in which a particular statute inhibits one or more goals of the plan.

The exemption does not relieve the district of any requirement imposed by other state or federal law or a duty imposed under federal regulation, grant compliance, agency rule applicable to a charter school or a local legal requirement.

The district's innovation plan is a legally binding document. Therefore, the plan must describe the intentions of the board-appointed advisory committee with specificity to avoid any confusion or ambiguity regarding the district's legal duties.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

- Allows districts to plan to improve students' educational outcomes with local input and less regulatory control from Austin.
- Can serve as a way to market district schools to parents and students that is competitive with private and charter schools.
- Could be a mechanism for districts to access some programmatic and administrative freedoms that charters currently have.
- May facilitate and support efforts to reform some of the lowest performing campuses in school districts.

A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION STRATEGIC PLAN / INNOVATION

District Advisory Committee's Role:

A local innovation plan must be developed for a school district **before** the district may be designated as an Innovation District. A local plan must provide for a comprehensive educational program for the district, which may include:

Innovative curriculum and instructional methods;

Provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement;

Modifications to the school day or year;

Provisions regarding the district budget and sustainable program funding;

Accountability and assessment measures that exceed the requirements of state and federal law;

Identify requirements imposed by code that inhibit the goals of the plan and form which the district should be exempted on the adoption of the plan; and

Any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

Five Year Plan

The Seguin ISD Plan has a term of up to five years. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by the district advisory committee (DAC) and the Board of Trustees in the same manner required for initial adoption.

The 2020-21 school year will be Year 3 for the Seguin ISD plan.

Current Innovation: Determine a Flexible Start Date

Innovation: A flexible start date would allow Seguin ISD many options which may positively impact student learning and growth. An earlier start date would allow for balanced semesters, innovative and timely summer programs to provide enrichment and intervention, and targeted professional development and school transition opportunities.

Requirement: Texas Education Code §25.0811 state that a school district may not begin instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.

Local control advantages:

.Balanced instructional time in the first and second semesters may improve the ability to implement special programs at various schools.

.The alignment of the calendar with colleges and universities may allow for quality pacing of instruction, assessment, and intervention to support college, career or military readiness. In addition, students will have the ability to participate in summer college camps and courses.

.Timely professional development may positively impact student learning.

.A flexible start provides options for quality enrichment and intervention programs that may limit the loss of knowledge gained during the previous year.

.A shortened week at the beginning of the school year may ease the transition to a new campus for kindergarten, middle school, and high school students.

Current Innovation: Allow Alternatives to Educator Certification

Innovation : Educator certification alternatives may increase the number of dual credit and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses offered at the secondary level. This change may allow students more opportunities to receive college credit and/or industry certifications while in high school.

Requirement: Texas Education Code § 21.051 provides that before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities. Teacher certification for Career and Technical Education Instructors; TEC § 21.003 CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. (a) A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Local control advantages:

Flexibility in recruiting and hiring teachers from the field, including experienced individuals from unique trades or vocations, may lead to more dual credit and/or industry certification opportunities for students enrolled in Career and Technology Education (CTE) courses.

This initiative will allow for the potential to offer additional languages and dual credit courses by employing college instructors, university professors, or retired part-time teachers.

Proposed Innovation: Professional Development

Innovation: Nearly 40% of Seguin ISD teachers have between 0-5 years of experience. With a diverse student population comprised of 70% economically disadvantaged, 56% at risk, 16% LEP, and 12% Special Education, along with a blended platform of face to face and online learners, the district's educators must be well-equipped to meet the unique needs of each student.

Requirement: Texas Education Code § 21.404 entitles each classroom teacher to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning.

Local control advantages: Relief from this provision will allow for the district's teachers to participate in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) on at least a weekly basis during the work day without compromising instructional time, where they can share best practices, critically examine student data, and plan collaboratively.

**Board approved 7 to 0 on 8/25/20*

District Advisory Committee Vote

