



Alvord Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan

Alvord ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session provides public school districts the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On January 26, 2017, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation.

Districts of Innovation 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
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum, graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

Timeline of Events:

1. **November 10, 2021** - District of Innovation Committee developed Alvord ISD District of Innovation Plan Renewal with Amendment.
2. **December 7, 2021** - Board of Trustees vote to notify the Commissioner of Education of the District's plan to renew the DOI Plan with an Amendment.
3. **December 7, 2021** - Day 1 of timeline for posting proposed plan to District Website
4. **January 6, 2022** - Day 30 of timeline for posting proposed plan to District Website
5. **February 9, 2022** - DEIC will hold a Public Meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan.
6. **March 1, 2022** – Board of Trustees vote to adopt the final renewed plan.
7. **March 2, 2022** - Texas Education Agency Commissioner notified of Board of Trustees adopted plan.
8. **March 2, 2022** – Final adopted plan posted to District Website.
9. **May 15, 2024** – DEIC met to consider amending the Alvord ISD plan
10. **May 28, 2024** – Board of Trustees considers the amendments to current Alvord ISD District of Innovation Plan

District of Innovation Plan

1. District Calendar

Exemption from: TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposal: To best serve the students of Alvord ISD, we propose to create a school calendar which serves the needs of our local community. We propose moving the mandatory start date earlier than the fourth Monday. Waiting to start classes until the fourth Monday in August forces semesters to be significantly unequal in length, with second semester being approximately four weeks longer than the first semester. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable our district to better balance instruction time in each semester as well as making an effort to end our first semester prior to Winter Break.

2. Probationary Contracts

Exemption from: TEC 21.102 (b)-TEC 21.102 (b) states that a probationary contract 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 with the district.

Proposal: This period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom data and/or student data. Upon exemption from TEC 21.102 (b), all new contract employees will be probationary for three one-year periods, allowing more time for the district to fairly and thoroughly assess an employee's performance.

3. Teacher Certification

Exemption from: TEC §21.003(a) TEC §21.053, TEC §21.057

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification.

This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator or teacher if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

TEC §21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Proposal: The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when 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. Alvord ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas would include, but are not limited to CTE and languages other than English. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Local certification of teachers in non-core subject areas must also be approved by the Alvord ISD Board of Trustees.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry recognized certifications.

3a. Amended Proposal:

*These areas would include, but are not limited to CTE, languages other than English and certified social studies teachers. Teachers with industry certifications and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. In addition, certified social studies teacher can be eligible to teach social studies subjects outside of their certification through a local teaching certification. The Alvord ISD Board of Trustees must also approve local certification of teachers in non-core subject areas and social studies. This proposal does not include the following core subject area certifications: Math, ELAR, or Science. Bilingual and Special Education teacher certifications are excluded by federal law.

This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and hiring of teachers and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry-recognized certifications.

4. Preclusion from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented.

Exemption from: TEC §22.004(i) and Related Board Policies: CRD (LEGAL) and CRD (LOCAL). TEC §22.004 (i) states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Alvord ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision is in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

Texas Education Code 22.004 is not in any of the prohibited exemptions that can be included in a District's local innovation plan pursuant to Texas Education Code 12A.004 and the list of the Commissioner's prohibited exemptions in Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Chapter 102, subchapter JJ, Section 102.1309.

Proposal: Increased local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee and community needs.

5. Interdistrict Transfers

Exemption from: TEC 25.036 states that students attending a district through an interdistrict transfer may apply for transfer annually. This is interpreted that the interdistrict transfer must be for a term of one school year.

FDA (Local) states that Transfers shall be granted for one regular school year at a time.

Proposal: On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Alvord ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Local Guidelines:

1. AISD will continue to accept transfers as space and local policy allows.
2. An interdistrict transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion.
3. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

Alvord ISD District of Innovation Proposed Innovations Spring / Summer 2024

1. Removal of Unwanted Visitors

Exemption from: TEC §37.105 UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS: REFUSAL OF ENTRY, EJECTION, IDENTIFICATION. (a) A school administrator, school resource officer, or school district peace officer of a school district may refuse to allow a person to enter on or may eject a person from property under the district's control if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and: (1) the person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person; or (2) the person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and: (A) the administrator, resource officer, or peace officer issues a verbal warning to the person that the person's behavior is inappropriate and may result in the person's refusal of entry or ejection; and (B) the person persists in that behavior.

Texas Education Code Section 37.105 limits a school district's discretion as to how and when a person can be refused entry or ejected from a school district's property or school-related event. Under the law, an individual must first refuse to leave peaceably upon request and either (1) pose a substantial risk of harm to any person or (2) behave in a manner inappropriate for a school setting and be given, at a minimum, a verbal warning before they are ejected or refused entry, and the person persists in the inappropriate behavior. Upon ejection or refusal of entry, an individual must also be given notice of how they may appeal the ejection.

Proposal: Due to an increase in the prevalence of unruly visitors acting inappropriately for a school setting, this plan exempts the District from the statutory provision above that requires a verbal warning prior to ejection or refusal of entry. This exemption is in the best interests of the District and protects the District's commitment to providing a safe, stable educational environment and allows the District to avoid interruptions or interference with its daily operations. The District will implement this innovation as follows:

- The District will allow designated staff members the authority to remove parents or visitors whose behavior is deemed inappropriate for a school setting without any prior warning or written notice.
- Following a parent or other visitor's ejection or refusal of entry from District property, administration will send written notice to the individual regarding the consequences and their right to appeal.

2. School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Meetings

Exemption from: TEC § 28.004 LOCAL SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL AND HEALTH EDUCATION INSTRUCTION. (a) The board of trustees of each school district shall establish a local school health advisory council to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. (b) A school district must consider the recommendations of the local school health advisory council before changing the district's health education curriculum or instruction.

Texas Education Code Section 28.004 requires the school board of each school district to establish a local school health advisory council to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. Further, the law requires the health advisory council to meet at least four times each year and establishes numerous requirements for curriculum.

Proposal: Because of the size of the District, this plan exempts the District from the entire statutory provision above that requires the Board to establish a local school health advisory council. The District will implement this innovation as follows:

- The District level committee will form a subcommittee of at least five (5) District stakeholders to serve as members of the subcommittee. Stakeholders may include parents, teachers, school nurses, counselors, administrators, and other community members, as needed. The subcommittee may develop regulations governing how meetings are conducted and who will serve as chair and co-chair, if appropriate.
- The subcommittee will be tasked with considering and making recommendations regarding the District's health education curriculum or instruction.
- The subcommittee will meet a minimum of twice per year—once in the Fall and once in the Spring.
- Following each meeting, the subcommittee will inform and make any recommendations to the District level committee.
- The District level committee will include the subcommittee's recommendations in its District Improvement Plan presentation to the Board.
- This exemption directly supports the District's commitment to health education and instruction.

3. Retire/Rehire Minimum Salary

Exemption from: TEC 21.402, Districts must pay a retired teacher a salary based upon the TEA minimum salary pay scale. "Teacher" refers to a classroom teacher, full-time speech pathologist, full-time librarian, full-time counselor, and full-time school nurse.

Texas Education Code Section 21.402 further requires the district to pay a TRS surcharge. Therefore, a retire/rehire employee comes with a great financial burden.

Proposal: The district would like the option of hiring an experienced, well-vetted employee without an extra strain on the budget. The district would like the flexibility to hire eligible retired teachers at a negotiated salary that may be below the TEA minimum pay scale. The District would continue to pay the required surcharge.

4. School Counselor Responsibilities

Exemption from: TEC 33.006 requires school districts to adopt a policy that requires school counselors to allocate at least 80 percent of their total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program. According to this provision, the administration of assessment instruments or providing other assistance in connection with assessment instruments is not considered as time spent on counseling.

Proposal: The district would like to make any decision regarding counselor duties and allocation of work times to be locally determined based on student and staffing needs. This flexibility is needed to accomplish campus and district goals. The district will delegate job duties based on student needs, current staffing, and campus goals.

5. District Alternative Education Program (DAEP)

Exemption from: TEC §37.008(7) states that a DAEP employs only teachers who meet all certification requirements established under Subchapter B, Chapter 21.

Proposal: The district assigns few students to DAEP each year. All academic coursework/resources are provided by his/her teacher of record for each course, negating the need for an additional certified teacher. The campus administrator will ensure that non-certified DAEP staff have the support necessary to properly supervise the students assigned to the program and will lend assistance of teachers with specific certification(s) as needed.

6. Admissions and Enrollment: Resident Grandparent

Exemption from: (TEC) – 25.001(b)(9) requires school districts to admit a person in the district but the grandparent of the person (1) Resides In the district; and (2) provides a substantial amount of after-school care for the person as determined by the board.

Proposal: Given the increase in student enrollment in the district, compliance with this law has the potential to overcrowd classrooms and require the hiring of additional staff when class sizes increase beyond board-approved ratios. The district also is restricted from adding staff and classes due to the lack of available instructional space. Students will not be allowed admission or enrollment in the district if they do not reside in the district and receive after-school care by a grandparent who resides in the district.

7. Transfer of Children of Peace Officers

Exemption from: TEC §25.0344 requires that a district, upon request of a peace officer/ parent, transfer the peace officer's child to another campus within the district.

Proposal: Given the increase in student enrollment in the district, compliance with this law has the potential to overcrowd classrooms and require the hiring of additional staff when class sizes increase beyond board-approved ratios. The district also is restricted from adding staff and classes due to the lack of available instructional space. Students will not be allowed admission or enrollment in the district if they do not reside in the district and the peace officer / parent requests the transfer of their child to a campus within the district. The peace officer / parent will be allowed to apply for a student transfer.

8. Transfer of Children of Service Members

Exemption from: TEC §25.0344 further requires that a district, upon request of a service member/ parent, transfer the service member's child to another campus within the district.

Proposal: Given the increase in student enrollment in the district, compliance with this law has the potential to overcrowd classrooms and require the hiring of additional staff when class sizes increase beyond board-approved ratios. The district also is restricted from adding staff and classes due to the lack of available instructional space. Students will not be allowed admission or enrollment in the district if they do not reside in the district and the service member / parent requests the transfer of their child to a campus within the district. The service member / parent will be allowed to apply for a student transfer.

**ALVORD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
DEIC MEMBERS 2023-24**

Randy Brown – Chair

Jamie Mitchell - Principal
Christi Grimes - Teacher
Michele Hardee - Teacher
Naudia Meador - Teacher

Jessica Bull - Principal
Carrie Walker - Teacher
Cierra Wicks - Teacher

Brandy Mayfield - Principal
Tammy Mathews - Teacher
Laura Rhine - Teacher

Aaron Tefertiller - Principal
Catherine Kelly - Counselor
Rachel Eckerberger- Teacher
Joey Kirkman - Teacher
Shelly Rangel – Teacher

Parent/Community/Business

Kannan Moore - Business Owner
James Kwasny - Business Owner
Elizabeth Cardwell - Community Member
Mariessa Ragan - Community Member
Erin Cornell - Parent
Courtney Archa - Parent
Michelle Rasmussen - Parent