



Alvord Independent School District  
District of Innovation Plan

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# 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 for Renewal with Amendment:**

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.

## 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.

### District of Innovation Committee Members

Name	Relationship to AISD
Dr. Randy Brown	Superintendent
Courtney Archa	Elementary Parent
Rebecca Berend	Middle School Teacher
Darla Cole	Elementary Teacher
Kaysi Hamilton	Middle School Teacher
Sandra Kostelecky	High School Teacher
Kelly Martin	High School Parent
Karen Moore	Elementary Teacher
Kathy Jo Nance	High School Teacher
Tracy Parker	Middle & High School Parent
Michelle Rasmussen	Elementary Parent
Jessica Sands	Middle School Parent
Carrie Walker	Elementary Teacher
Bridget Williams	Elementary Principal
Shana Worthington	Elementary Parent
Mechelle Wright	High School Teacher