

A DISTRICT PLAN FOR
INNOVATION
AND
LOCAL CONTROL
2022 – 2027

Approved by the
TISD Board of Trustees

August 25, 2025

TISD Plan for Local Control

Districts of Innovation may be exempt from state statutes to:

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the spring of 2015, providing public school districts the opportunity to become Districts of Innovation. To qualify, an eligible school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan according to the Texas Education Code.

- Take greater local control in decision-making about the educational and instructional model for students;
- Have increased autonomy from state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Be empowered to innovate and plan differently to think and dream outside the box

Why is Tatum ISD seeking the state's official designation as a District of Innovation?

The Tatum ISD Board of Trustees resolved in April 2017 to seek designation as a District of Innovation.

- This plan supports exemplary practices and local decision-making processes to improve student learning.
- The board approved a District of Innovation Committee to represent teachers, parents and campus administrators.

This plan will:

- Determine a flexible start date

Timeline

February 10, 2022	DOI Committee Meeting
February 10, 2022	DOI Committee held a public meeting to consider the plan
February 10, 2022	DOI Committee approved the plan by a majority vote
May 16, 2022	Board of Trustees unanimously approved final DOI Plan

September 5, 2024	DIT Committee approved the amendments by a majority vote
September 9, 2024	All Board of Trustees present voted to approve the DOI Amendments
August 21, 2025	DIT Committee approved the amendments by a majority vote
August 25, 2025	All Board of Trustees present voted to approve the DOI Amendments

District of Innovation Plan

1. **Start Date of School Year** (TEC §25.0811)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Tatum ISD emphasizes the importance of an innovative learning environment, college and career readiness, along with leadership and social and emotional development. TEC 25.0811 inhibits these goals by prohibiting the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year will enable the District to improve active learning by balancing the amount of instructional time in the semesters, which will allow teachers to better pace and deliver instruction before and after the winter break. In addition, by having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.

Proposed Plan

Tatum ISD will use this flexibility to begin the school year with students arriving no sooner than the second Monday in August. This will allow local flexibility in scheduling a calendar that meets the needs of the community and the students we serve.

2. **ALLOW ALTERNATIVES TO EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION** (TEC §21.003a) (TEC §21.057a-e)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Codes state a person may not be employed as an educator by a school district unless the individual holds an appropriate certification 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 her or his certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or the 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, especially for innovative classes where certification may not exist or educators with those credentials may not be readily available.

Local Innovation Strategies:

- A. In exceptional circumstances, when a certified educator cannot be found for a class, 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, a certified educator to teach a subject in a related field for which she or he is not credentialed by the state, or allow an educator to teach who is certified in a state other than Texas.
- B. The principal must specify in writing 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.
- C. Whenever possible, lesson plans or curriculum guides to support an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional will be developed or provided by the district.
- D. In the event an uncertified yet highly qualified educator or professional is assigned to a course, the superintendent will inform the board of trustees and will notify parents of students who benefit from this decision.
- E. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

3. Teacher Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.102(b))

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Texas Education Code currently states that a probationary contract period 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 by the district.

Under the current statute, when a teacher or administrator is new to the district who qualifies under the 5 of 8 rule, after the first year, the district must either offer them a term contract or terminate their contract. Tatum ISD feels that this one year period is not long enough to adequately assess if the teacher or administrator is a good fit in their position and in the district.

Local Innovation Strategy:

Tatum ISD would like to have the flexibility to renew the probationary contract of a teacher or administrator employed under the 5 of 8 rule for one additional year period, for a maximum of two school years for teachers and administrators who are new to the District.

This will give the principal and/or district more time to effectively evaluate and assess the teaching, interpersonal, and/or management skills of the incoming teacher or administrator to make sure they are a good fit for the District.

4. Inter-District Transfers
(Texas Education Code §25.036)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Tatum ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, the student's disciplinary history records and attendance records are also evaluated by the Superintendent or designee. Transfer students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. 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 occasions, Tatum ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

Local Innovation Strategy:

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district 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. In addition, students not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation.

5. TIME ALLOCATED TO COUNSELING DUTIES
(Texas Education Code § 33.006)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Senate Bill 179 places restrictions on duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, requires policy adoption and annual review by the school board, and limits contracting options with counselors in the district.

Local Innovation Strategy:

The amendment to the Tatum ISD District of Innovation Plan allows the district to claim exemption from Texas Education Code § 33.006 (d) – (h) regarding the restrictions on duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, including a policy adoption with annual review. Tatum ISD wishes to maintain flexibility in its school counseling and guidance program by waiving compliance with TEC § 33.006 (d) that a counselor spends 80 percent of total work time identified by statute, as well as removing burdens imposed by subsections (e) – (h) related to policy adoption, annual review, and counselor employment contracts. The requirements of TEC § 33.006 (d) – (h) impede the district's ability to meet the ever-changing needs of its students and school operations by restricting the ability of TISD counselors to fulfill other important roles throughout the district, including but not limited to, special education and 504 monitoring, scheduling, student assessment, etc. While it is still the intent and goal of TISD that its certified counselors focus on the school counseling program, temporal restrictions, and time logging/tracking requirements, which would be necessary to confirm strict adherence to an 80/20 duty allocation, are an ineffective use of employee time and impedes the district's ability to use its counseling staff in a variety of roles to best serve the needs of TISD students and the community. TISD will exercise local discretion in determining the additional duties fulfilled by certified counselors in the district, by taking into account each individual counselor's professional education, certifications, experience, and knowledge, and will also consider the specific needs of the students and staff on each campus.

6. INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN POSTING

(Senate Bill 12 – Texas Education Code § 26.0062)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

Senate Bill 12 requires school districts to publicly post each semester an instructional plan or course syllabus for every class offered and mandates that teachers submit these materials in advance. The statute also requires districts to post a homepage notice informing parents of their rights to review instructional materials and submit requests for access.

These requirements present a number of challenges to Tatum ISD's instructional operations, including the rigid expectation of posting exhaustive and potentially fluid instructional materials in advance, the risk of compromising teacher-created intellectual property, and the additional administrative burden placed on both educators and district staff. The uniform approach mandated by the statute limits the district's flexibility to engage with parents and support instructional transparency in a more efficient and meaningful way tailored to our local context.

Local Innovation Strategy

The amendment to the Tatum ISD District of Innovation Plan allows the district to claim an exemption from Texas Education Code §26.0062 regarding the mandatory online posting of instructional plans and homepage notifications.

Tatum ISD seeks to promote meaningful parental involvement while maintaining flexibility in how instructional materials are shared. The district will:

- Continue to provide parents access to instructional materials, reading lists, lesson plans, and library content **upon request**, rather than through mandatory online posting.
- Utilize established communication channels such as teacher email and campus administrative offices to respond to parent inquiries and requests.
- Protect teacher intellectual property by avoiding the unnecessary publication of proprietary instructional content.
- Focus on real-time instructional adjustments and differentiated instruction, which may not align with rigid pre-submitted semester-long plans.

7. GRIEVANCE POLICY

TEC §26A.001 TEC §26.011 TEC §26A.002

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan:

The Texas Education Code and the Texas Constitution requires school boards to establish procedures for parents to file complaints if they believe their student's rights have been denied.

Under current law, each board of trustees must develop grievance procedures in accordance with Section 26A.001 of the Texas Education Code. Section 26A.001(g) requires each school district to adopt a standardized complaint policy and to annually submit a report to the Texas Education Agency on grievances filed in the district. The report must include the resolution and corrective action of each grievance filed.

Current law further requires a policy allowing 60 calendar days for a parent to file a grievance from the date on which the parent or person knew or had reason to know of the facts giving rise to the grievance. If the parent engaged in informal attempts to resolve the grievance, the parent could have 90 calendar days to file a grievance. State law further requires that such complaints be heard within ten calendar days of the complaint being filed. Moreover, in contradiction of existing law in the Texas Government Code, the recently adopted provisions in the Education Code would allow the person bringing the complaint to decide if it is heard in open or closed session, rather than the person against whom the complaint is brought.

Local Innovation Strategy

Tatum ISD has always and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines outlined in Board policy. Such policies ensure thorough documentation of each step in the grievance process and provide adequate time for complaints to be filed and for complaints to be heard. All records related to grievances—including submitted forms, communications, investigations, findings, resolutions, and any corrective actions—are systematically maintained at the district level to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal and policy standards.

The District is committed to monitoring the legality and appropriateness of every decision and action taken.

The District is further committed to hearing, reviewing, and attempting to resolve all parent complaints, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. Tatum ISD's long-standing grievance policy will ensure that all such complaints are carefully reviewed and that district responses are in alignment with state and federal regulations, as well as all other local board policies.

Tatum ISD follows established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy, specifically in relation to the timelines for filing an appeal prior to Texas Education Code §26.002 and for hearing such complaints. The district believes that a requirement for complaints to be submitted within 15 school business days from the date the student or parent either knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action that is the subject of the grievance ensures prompt attention and resolution of parent concerns. In cases where the student or parent does not receive the requested relief at the prior grievance level, or if the response deadline has passed without a reply, the parent may proceed by requesting a conference with the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee to appeal the previous decision. This appeal must be submitted in writing, using the district-provided form, within ten school business days of receiving the written response from Level One or Level Two. If no written response is provided, the appeal must be submitted within ten days following the deadline for the response at the applicable level. Accuracy of information and access to individuals that are needed to provide necessary information surrounding an issue could be compromised after 60 to 90 days. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response.