Frankston ISD District of Innovation Plan

Adopted by the

Frankston ISD Board of Trustees

January 22, 2018

Amendment Added:
May 17, 2021

Proposed Renewal:
October 17, 2022 (to be approved by the Board)



Every Child Matters

2022-2023 Board of Trustees

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Options for Council Consideration

I. Introduction

The option to become a District of Innovation (DOI), became a reality during the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842. This statute gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools. The district's ability to exempt itself from burdensome state mandates will support our Vision of ensuring that each child learns, grows, and achieves to their potential. Our Board of Trustees has been the guiding force behind our effort to become a District of Innovation so that the district Vision may be realized by achieving each of our district goals.

II. Timeline

On March 20, 2017, the process to adopt an innovation plan was initiated by a resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees. After the required 30-day period, a public hearing was held to get public input on whether the district should develop a local innovation plan for designation as a District of Innovation. This hearing was held April 17, 2017. At the conclusion of that hearing, the Board moved forward with the planning process and appointed a District of Innovation Council, comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-TEC Section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, campus professionals, parents, and administrators, to develop a proposed District of Innovation Plan.

The plan was developed over the months following the appointment of the DOI Council. Council members were presented with multiple drafts as the planning unfolded, giving their feedback and guidance on the key plan components, meeting in August, October, and December of 2017. Following the December vote, the District of Innovation Plan was posted online for 30 days and sent to the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency (TEA). On January 22, 2018, following the required posting, the Board voted on the final proposed Innovation plan, approving it by the required a two- thirds majority.

With the required Board approval, the district became a District of Innovation and will begin operating in accordance with the approved exemptions from the Texas Education Code (TEC). The Frankston ISD District of innovation Plan will serve as a foundation for supporting our journey to achieve the District's Vision and to support our work to achieve the goals established by the Board of Trustees.

III. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning January 1, 2023, and ending December 31, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the FISD Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operation are to be considered for flexibility as part of Texas Education Code (TEC), Subchapter 12A, the FISD Board of Trustees will nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The district will not implement two separate plans at any one time.

IV. A Comprehensive Educational Program

Frankston ISD has implemented a continuous improvement planning process which results in a comprehensive educational program reflected in the District Improvement Plan (DIP). The DIP includes the district's vision, goals, priorities, objectives, and strategies. The District of Innovation Plan is a component of this process and is appropriately reflected in the District Improvement Plan.

V. Mission Statement

Frankston Independent School District fosters a community of life-long learners by providing an environment that builds self-worth, integrity, and respect for diversity while striving for academic and social excellence.

VI. Our Vision

The Frankston Independent School District will provide all students a comprehensive educational experience and a culture of excellence with world class standards, ensuring that each child learns, grows, and achieves to their potential.

VII. Our Core Beliefs and Commitments

A. Core Belief One

We believe that all students must graduate with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to successfully engage in college, career, or the military. We commit ourselves to:

1. *Creating and maintaining a Culture of Excellence, ensuring that every child receives a comprehensive, high-quality education.*
2. *Ensuring that every student has the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to make informed decisions about college, career, and life choices and to be successful in achieving those decisions.*
3. *Closing the gaps in levels of achievement among all students so that there is no discernable difference between students by race, gender, or economic level*
4. *Measuring student achievement through authentic measures that go beyond mandated state assessments.*

B. Core Belief Two

We believe that our students must have effective and meaningful instruction in every classroom, every day, so that each child achieves to their potential. We commit ourselves to:

1. *Recruiting, developing, and retaining human talent who are committed to their own professional growth, to student achievement, and who embrace the district's mission, vision, values, and goals.*

2. *Supporting high quality professional development and learning experiences for our teachers and leaders that are aligned with school and district goals.*

3. *Supporting a culture of effective instructional practice based on trusting relationships, classroom observation, strategic coaching, and actionable feedback.*

4. *Providing a relevant, rigorous, and engaging curriculum for all subjects and grade levels.*

5. *Fostering a well-rounded education that includes experiences in the arts, athletics, and a variety of extra-curricular activities, with minimal distractions and more time for both academics and extracurriculars, so our students love school and maximize their learning.*

C. Core Belief Three

We believe that it is the collective responsibility of our school district, our students, our families, and our community to nurture each of our children, academically, physically, socially, and emotionally, creating a foundation for healthy and fulfilling lives. We commit ourselves to:

1. ***Providing a safe and secure learning environment.***
2. ***Supporting an organizational culture in which all members of our school community actively promote and uphold the District's Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals.***
3. ***Empowering our students, parents/guardians, teachers, and community, to create the meaningful and vibrant relationships critical for successful students and schools.***
4. ***Developing and maintaining community and business partnerships.***
5. ***Communicating with all stakeholders in a transparent, honest, and accurate manner.***

VIII. Our Strategic Goals: Board & District Improvement Plan

1. ***Increase on-grade-level performance in all subject areas***
2. ***Every student will graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in college, career, or the military***
3. ***Provide a school culture & climate that promotes participation in extracurricular activities and the development of positive character traits***
4. ***Attract, develop, and retain world class educators dedicated to serving each student in Frankston ISD***
5. ***Strengthen strategic communication with students, families, employees, and community members to foster engagement and increase transparency, support, and confidence in FISD***

IX. Requirements of the education Code (TEC) that inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district will be exempt upon adoption of the plan:

A. First Day of Instruction

Requirement: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.

Rationale: The flexibility of start date will allow Frankston ISD to determine on an annual basis what best meets the needs of the students and our local community. Having the flexible start date will allow us to balance the amount of instructional time in each semester, which will improve our ability to end the fall semester prior to winter break and end the school year earlier, creating a more favorable schedule for summer enrichment programs.

B. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

Requirement: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 25.092 requires that students attend class 90% of the school days the class is offered in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the district to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on demonstrated mastery of the learning. The law also provides an opportunity for students to regain credit if they are in attendance at least 75 percent of the days a class is offered by completing a plan approved by the principal and an attendance committee as long as the student has met the instructional requirements of the class.

Rationale: We believe that the FISD Innovation Plan could maintain a minimum attendance percentage for traditional classes, while allowing for flexibility in students demonstrating mastery of content through an innovative system and a more flexible pace. We believe that awarding a student credit or a final grade for a class should be based on content-based mastery and that there are unique situations where student seat time should not be a barrier to receiving course credit. In these unique situations, credit by mastery will improve student achievement, student test scores, and overall college and career readiness. Relief from TEC Section 25.092 will not change or impact TEC Section 25.085 about compulsory attendance; TEC Section 28.0214 regarding the finality of a grade by a teacher; and TEC Section 28.0216 regarding the district's grading policy.

C. Student/Teacher Ratios and Class Size

Requirement: **The** Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 25.112 states that districts must maintain a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 or less for kindergarten through fourth grade classes, and districts must complete and file a waiver with the agency if a class exceeds this limit. TEC Section 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than 1 teacher for each twenty students in average daily attendance. Based on current state law, classes in grades Kindergarten through fourth may not exceed a ratio of twenty-two students to 1 teacher. When an individual class exceeds this ratio, the district must either add a new teacher, reassign teachers from other schools with lower student enrollment, or submit a waiver request to the Texas Education Agency. These waiver requests have not traditionally been rejected by TEA. In addition to the waiver request, it is required that a letter be sent to each parent in the class that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted and the class exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

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Rationale: FISD continues to grow each year. With this growth in student enrollment, FISD remains committed to meeting the needs of each student. Because of the nature of student enrollment growth, it is sometimes necessary to apply for class size. We believe that class size plays a positive role in the classroom, but this must be balanced with the timing of adding the best qualified teaching candidates.

As part of the FISD Innovation Plan, the District would work to maintain the 22:1 student to teacher ratio in kindergarten through 4th grades and continue to follow the process of thoughtful planning, assignment of teachers to the schools with growing student enrollment, reviewing staffing ratios, and making decisions in the best interests of students while taking into consideration the financial capacity of the District. In the event that class sizes exceed the 22:1 ratio, in kindergarten – fourth grade, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the Superintendent will instead submit a request to the Board of Trustees for approval. Additionally, parents would be informed of all efforts relative to class size if the request becomes necessary. This exemption provides FISD local control over class size ratios, without the unnecessary step of seeking a waiver from the Texas Education Agency.

D. Campus and District-Level Planning and Decision-Making

Requirement: The Texas Education Code (TEC) requires District-Level and Campus Level Planning and Decision-Making as described in TEC Sections 11.251, 11.252, and 11.253. Under these statutes, each school district must have separate district and campus committees with make-up and responsibilities being nearly identical. This statute requires a committee of stakeholders to engage in a very prescriptive process of developing, evaluating, and revising campus and district improvement plans annually, in accordance with district policy and as established under TEC Sections 11.252 and 11.253.

Rationale: This site-based decision-making requirement has existed in Texas for over 30 years. The original intent of including classroom teachers in the campus and district planning process has been replaced with a list of compliance measures that have removed meaning and relevance from the school and district decision-making process. The bureaucratic requirements for developing the campus and district level improvement plans have shifted an otherwise important planning initiative and turned it into a compliance item that detracts from what should be thoughtful planning and meaningful implementation. FISD has a strong history of involving teachers, administrators, parents, community members and students in the decision-making process. Under the Local Innovation Plan, the prescriptive list of requirements in the campus and district improvement plans will be replaced by a Strategic Planning process at the district level with robust representation from each of our schools. Those items listed in TEC Section 11.251 detailing the selection of representatives for the Campus and District Advisory Teams will continue to be implemented, though manifest in a single District Level Committee that includes equitable representation across all three schools and the district level. Those items listed in TEC Sections 11.252, and 11.253 of a compliance nature will no longer be implemented and be replaced by relevant strategic plan components, including action steps, resources, and metrics that are aligned with District and Campus goals and objectives.

E. Teacher Certification Requirements

Requirement: The Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 21.003 mandates that districts that wish to hire an uncertified staff member must submit a request to TEA and wait on approval or denial. TEC Section 21.0031 provides that an employee's probationary, continuing, or term Chapter 21 contract is void for failure to maintain certification in certain circumstances. TEC Section 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.

Rationale:

The flexibility in allowing FISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill, high-demand academic and dual credit courses. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the district will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, experts in a profession or industry, or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. This Innovation Plan component will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take CTE, dual credit, and some unique academic courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

F. Probationary Contracts

Requirement: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 21.102 governs probationary teacher contract period. Under that statute, probationary contracts for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Rationale: Relief from Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 21.102 will permit the district to exercise the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in Frankston ISD. This will allow FISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

G. Student Discipline

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 37.0012 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Rationale: An exemption from TEC Section 37.0012 would allow our schools to utilize a multi-school level administrative team decision making process for student discipline which would include the campus principals and other personnel who are essential to the decision-making process for promoting a positive culture and climate through appropriate student behavior. This approach would allow administrators and key team members to be part of a multi-level discipline team, promoting consistency among schools and with expectations and understanding among parents, students, teachers, etc.

H. Professional Development

Requirement: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 21.404 states that teachers are entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for preparation for teaching, conferencing with parents, and evaluating student work.

Rationale: Frankston ISD's educators must be well-equipped to meet the unique academic and social-emotional needs of each student. Relief from Texas Education Code (TEC) TEC Section 21. will allow for the district's teachers to participate in differentiated and strategic professional development so that staff training can remain flexible and responsive to newly emerging practices and real-time performance data. The flexible scheduling components of FISD's plan include flexibility in a teacher's schedule where select teachers can extend their reach to have more planning time and to collaborate with teacher teams for vertical and horizontal content/skills alignment.

I. Mentors

Requirement: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 21.458 lays out several requirements for teacher mentors. This statute requires that mentors have three or more years of experience. This requirement limits the number of teachers who are allowed to serve as mentors and restricts teachers with exceptional skill or experience in the subject matter from sharing their knowledge with novice teachers.

Rationale:

The teacher mentor requirements in Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 21.458 are a huge barrier to identifying and providing high quality mentors to teachers, especially in small school districts. An exemption from these requirements would allow for effective teachers with more than two years of experience to be assigned as a mentor, better utilizing our most effective teachers as peer coaches, even if they have fewer than three years teaching experience.

J. School District Depositories Contract (Amendment added May 17, 2021)

Requirement: Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 45.205 states that a school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for two additional two-year terms.

Rationale:

By gaining exemption to this statute, FISD would be able to allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total six-year allowable term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there are no other banking institutions within district boundaries available to bid on the district's business. In addition, this would further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter their direct deposit instructions and afford district flexibility to respect to local banking relationships.