

District of Innovation

Local Innovation Plan Renewal



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DRAFT

Executive Summary

In order to maximize opportunities for all FBISD students, the FBISD School Board of Trustees initiated the process to become a District of Innovation (DOI) in October 2016. The district was awarded the DOI status for the 2017-2018 school year. The DOI status has allowed FBISD to have more local control and flexibility for the last 5 years to ensure staff was better equipped to make decisions that are in the best interest of the students as well as allow the flexibility to provide an exceptional learning experience to all students.

The effort was managed by a Local Innovation Committee comprised of district and community stakeholders. The committee, after months of work, proposed exemptions in the following areas:

- School Calendar
- Teacher Certification
- Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade – 90 Percent Rule

Original Local Innovation Committee Members who served during 2016-17 and developed the initial plan are as follows:

Original Local Innovation Committee Members	
NAME	POSITION
Kristen Adams	FBISD Elkins HS, Teacher
Mandy Antolini	FBISD Clements HS, Campus Assessment Coordinator
Walter Benavides	FBISD Christa McAuliffe MS, Teacher
Sonal Buchar	Community Member
Monique Brown	Community Member
Stacy Bynes	Community Member
Mike Chan	Community Member
Tramaine Chatman	(Ad Hoc Member) Community Member
Chetan Dave	Community Member
JJ Clemence	Community Member
Dolores Collins	FBISD Campus Parent Educator
Jill Curtis	Community Member
Christopher Hill	Fort Bend Education Foundation Board Member
Cathy Hunter	Community Member
Q Imam	Community Member
Nicole Jackson	FBISD Madden ES, Teacher
Vanesia Johnson	Community Member
Cynthia Knox	Community Member
Dee Koch	Community Member
Allie Lam	Community Member
Glenda Macal	FBISD, Heritage Rose ES, Teacher
Marc Muscarello	FBISD, Baines MS, Assistant Principal
Jay Neal	University of Houston, Assistant Provost
Chuckwudalu Ononenyi	FBISD Student
Queen Onyehialam	FBISD Student

Original Local Innovation Committee Members	
NAME	POSITION
Joe Rodriguez	FBISD, Assistant Superintendent
Michael Schiff	Community Member
Mike Schofield	Community Member
Terri Wang	Fort Bend Education Foundation Board Member
Karrie Washenfelder	Fort Bend Employee Federation
Lavanta Williams	FBISD, Heritage Rose ES, Principal
Original Local Innovation Committee Support	
Meeting Facilitator: Dr. Shelby McIntosh K12 Insight, Managing Director	
Legal Counsel: Debra Esterak Rogers, Morris & Grover, LLP, Attorney	
District Support: Beth Martinez FBISD, Chief of Staff and Strategic Planning	
District Support: Ginger Carrabine FBISD, Executive Director of Strategic Planning	
Writing Development Team members: Kristen Adams, Mandy Antolini, Chris Hill, Nicole Jackson, Glenda Macal, and Karrie Washenfelder	
Alternates: Walter Benavides, Q Imam	

Currently, FBISD is in the process of renewing the DOI status to make sure that the district continues to employ the same opportunities until 2027. To renew the District of Innovation status, FBISD is following the process established by the Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 12A. FBISD is proposing renewing all but one of the exemptions sought in the initial District of Innovation Plan. The suggested nonrenewal is noted in [Blue](#).

Renewal Timeline

Date	Required Actions – Texas Education Agency
January 3, 2021	Superintendent notifies the Commissioner of Education of the Board of Trustees’ (BOT) intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan
January 3 - February 1, 2022	Final Draft Local Innovation Plan posted for 30 days for community feedback
February 2, 2022	District Planning Advisory Council (DPAC) public meeting - considers public feedback and hosts vote to approve District of Innovation plan
February 7, 2022	BOT Agenda review
February 14, 2022	BOT considers adoption of proposed Local Innovation Plan by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Board
February 21, 2022	Superintendent notifies the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of approved TEC exemptions

The committee responsible for the review, feedback, and approval of the renewal plan are members of the District Planning Advisory Council (DPAC). This Council includes stakeholders from the district and community. The current Local Innovation Plan was reviewed at the October 20th and November 17th meetings in which present DPAC members provided specific feedback on the components of the plan.

The 2021 – 22 DPAC members and District support team:

2021 – 22 DPAC Members and District Support	
Name	Position
Erika Andrews	FBISD, Patterson ES, Counselor
Tracey Arana	Community Member
Nana Baffour	FBISD Crockett MS, Teacher
Tyenise Blackmon	Community Member
Courtney Border	FBISD, Sartartia MS, Assistant Principal
Reba Brown	FBISD, Assistant Director, Special Education
Laurie Caldwell	FBISD, Oakland ES, Teacher
Kellie Clay	FBISD, Palmer ES, Principal
Kathleen Collins	FBISD, HR Senior Consultant
Holly Durham	FBISD, Interim Director, District Strategic Transformation
German Enamorado	Community Member
Sarah Erschabek	FBISD, Austin Parkway ES, Teacher
LaKeitha Ford	FBISD, Jones ES, Teacher
Summer Frasier	Community Member
Rick Garcia	Community Member
Jacqueline Gooden	Community Member
Reaeanna Hall	FBISD Student
Kendra Hayes	FBISD, Lexington Creek ES, Teacher
Maria Hernandez	Community Member
Melissa Hubbard	FBISD, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning
Natasha Jobbagy	Community Member
Grace Lacy	FBISD Student
Cameron Lathan	FBISD, Missouri City MD, Teacher
Cynthia Lauer	FBISD, Sullivan ES, Teacher
Paula Leehan	FBISD, Holley ES, Teacher
Ira Lynn Lewis	FBISD, Hightower HS, Counselor
Orjanel Lewis	Community Member
Robin Lewis	FBISD, Lantern Lane ES, Teacher
Elizabeth Martin	FBISD, Elkins HS, Teacher
Abraham Martinez	FBISD, Holley ES, Interventionist
Beth Martinez	FBISD, Chief Academic Officer
Rolanda McKyer	FBISD, Garcia MS, Counselor

2021 – 22 DPAC Members and District Support

Name	Position
Hamid Mehrdad	Community Member
Sambit Mirsa	Community Member
Carla Morton	FBISD, Cornerstone ES, Teacher
Hannah Nguyen	FBISD Student
Leyna Nguyen	FBISD Student
Phuong Nguyen	Community Member
Sydney Olszewski	FBISD Student
Abigail Pagnotti	FBISD, Ridge Point HS, Teacher
John Portier	FBISD, Brazos Bend ES, Teacher
Aleida Ramos	FBISD Student
Guerin Riffel	FBISD Student
Annette Sanford	FBISD, Hightower HS, Teacher
Jeremy Sapp	FBISD, Travis HS, Teacher
Jessica Singh	FBISD, Willowridge HS, Teacher
April Spicer	Community Member
Natalie Sylvester	FBISD, Dulles HS, Teacher
Lynnette Tucker	FBISD, Reese Ctr, Teacher
Imelda Valencia-Guitierrez	FBISD, Quail Valley MS, Teacher
Tracy VanWright	FBISD, Coordinator of Research and Program Evaluation
Lisa Washington	FBISD, Mission West ES, Teacher
Pilar Westbrook	FBISD, Executive Director, SEL and Comprehensive Health
Stephanie Williams	FBISD, Executive Director of Organizational Transformation
Aisha Winfrey	FBISD, Parks ES, Teacher
Marian Zaki	FBISD Community Member

CORE BELIEFS AND COMMITMENTS

Core Belief 1: All students can reach their full potential.

Commitment: Fort Bend ISD will provide an educational system that will enable all students to reach their full potential.

Core Belief 2: We believe student success is best achieved...

...through effective teachers that inspire learning.

Commitment: Fort Bend ISD will recruit, develop and retain effective teachers.

...in a supportive climate and safe environment.

Commitment: Fort Bend ISD will provide a supportive climate and a safe learning/working environment.

...by empowered and effective leaders throughout the system.

Commitment: Fort Bend ISD will provide and promote leadership development at all levels.

...in a well-functioning, high-performing community of learners.

Commitment: Fort Bend ISD will be a collaborative, efficient and effective learning community.

MISSION AND VISION

MISSION

Fort Bend ISD exists to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.

VISION

Fort Bend ISD will graduate students who exhibit the attributes of the District's Profile of a Graduate.

PROFILE OF A GRADUATE

A Fort Bend ISD Graduate has a rigorous academic foundation, strong character, and is...



equipped with skills for life.

Fort Bend ISD graduates exhibit grit and determination in all aspects of life; respect self and others; engage in healthy life choices; are literate and articulate; proficient with technology; and meaningfully and practically apply knowledge in productive ways.



a compassionate citizen.

Fort Bend ISD graduates are empathetic to their fellow citizens, exhibiting care and concern for others; are inclusive and embrace differences; are culturally aware; actively engage in improving our diverse community; exercise their right to vote; and are dependable, respectful, trustworthy, and self-disciplined.



a servant leader.

Fort Bend ISD graduates demonstrate confidence while maintaining a humble and kind demeanor; prioritizing the needs of others while accepting responsibility for themselves and are accountable for their own actions; are optimistic; and strive to bring out the best in others.



a collaborative team member.

Fort Bend ISD graduates work effectively with others to achieve group goals; take actions that respect the needs and contributions of others; yield their own objectives to the goals of the team; and positively facilitate and contribute to teamwork.



an effective communicator.

Fort Bend ISD graduates communicate clearly both orally and in writing; respectfully and actively listen to others; appropriately engage in courageous conversations; and appropriately adapt their communication style to the audience.



a life-long learner.

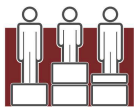
Fort Bend ISD graduates approach life with wonder and curiosity; seek opportunities to be creative; possess a thirst for knowledge and the ability to adapt to change; and are academically prepared to pursue and attain futures beyond what they can imagine!



a critical thinker.

Fort Bend ISD graduates are visionary and solutions-oriented problem solvers; are inquisitive and innovative; and have the courage to actively challenge conventional methods in order to improve themselves and the world around them.

DISTRICT GOALS



District Goal 1

Fort Bend ISD will provide an equitable learning environment that provides all students access to the FBISD curriculum.



District Goal 2

Fort Bend ISD will ensure students own and are responsible for their learning, behavior, and progress through the FBISD curriculum.



District Goal 3

Fort Bend ISD will provide an inclusive, collaborative, and fluid learning environment with opportunities for both risk-taking and success.



District Goal 4

Fort Bend ISD will develop students' social-emotional, academic, literacy, language, and life skills in a safe and secure Collaborative Community at every school.



District Goal 5

Fort Bend ISD will develop an organizational culture that embraces care, respect, safety, and inclusion.

Background

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation (DOI) and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC). In Fall 2016, the Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustees passed a resolution to Initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation. To support the design of a Local Innovation Plan, the Board of Trustees appointed a thirty-member local committee comprised of students, teachers, principals, administrators, and community members. On March 27, 2017, the Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustees approved the Local Innovation Plan, designating FBISD as a District of Innovation.

The current Fort Bend ISD Local Innovation Plan, adopted in March 2017, provides for flexibility and exemption from the related Texas Education Code sections for the following areas:

- School Calendar – allows for flexibility of the first and last day of student instruction,
- Teacher Certification – supports hiring in hard to fill areas such as CTE and World Languages,
- Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade – 90 Percent Rule – allows flexibility for instructional delivery methods including virtual learning models and flexibility to support students unable to attend class due to extenuating circumstances

The current Local Innovation plan is effective for five years, from the start of the 2017 – 18 school year through the end of the 2021 – 22 school year.

Renewal Requirements

Local innovation plans must be renewed every five years. In Fall 2021, the Administration reviewed the requirements for renewal of the Local innovation Plan and developed a timeline towards Board of Trustees consideration and renewal.

The Texas Education Code outlines parameters for District's to renew the Local Innovation Plan that include:

- Communication to Commissioner of Education of Fort Bend ISD's intent to vote on adoption of the Local Innovation Plan
- Draft Plan posted for 30 days on the public website
- Public Meeting/Hearing for members of the public to hear details of the plan
- Approval of the District Planning Advisory Council
- Board of Trustees Adoption of Local Innovation Plan
- Communication to the Commissioner of Education with final Local Innovation Plan link posted to the website

In December 2021, the Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustees approved communication to the commissioner of the Board's intent to vote on adoption of the local innovation plan.

Term

The Local Innovation Plan's term is five years, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with statute. The initial Local Innovation Plan started at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year and ends at the end of the 2021-22 school year. Following approval by the Board of Trustees, the Local Innovation Plan renewal will extend the term until the end of the 2026 – 27 school year.

Innovations

Fort Bend ISD proposes to maintain flexibility in the following areas of innovation related to:

- A. School Calendar,
- B. Teacher Certification
- C. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (90 Percent Rule)

A. School Calendar

Statutory Requirement: TEC Section Requiring Exemption: §25.0811 and §25.0812

Texas Education Code §25.0811: FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION. (a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Texas Education Code §25.0812: LAST DAY OF SCHOOL (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Exemption*

RENEW exemptions relating to the first and last day of student instruction in order to provide local control and flexibility with calendar start and end dates.

Rationale and Benefits

The Fort Bend ISD goal states that FBISD will provide an educational system to enable all students to reach their full potential. By eliminating the calendar restrictions imposed by §25.0811 and §25.0812, the District will improve student learning by providing flexibility to balance the days between the first and second semesters of school. With more balanced semesters, teachers can pace instruction to provide more adequate time for students who take a one semester course in either the Fall or Spring semester. In addition, having the flexibility to start and end the school year earlier allows high school seniors the opportunity to enroll in college summer school classes, thereby supporting the District's goal of promoting College and Career readiness. The ability for students to begin the school year earlier also allows the District to offer transitioning grades (PreK/Kinder, 6th, and 9th) an earlier start time for an orientation. Orientation provide an opportunity for students to acclimate, socially and emotionally, to their new campus environments. This reinforces the District's goal of establishing an active learning community.

Flexibility in the calendar allows professional development days to be distributed throughout the school year, rather than grouped together at the beginning or end of the school year. This supports the District goal of student success by ensuring that teachers can learn, collaborate, and grow throughout the school year and in real time. This flexibility also allows for the possibility of teacher workdays near the end of each grading period to be utilized for tasks such as finalizing grades, analyzing class data, completing report cards, conferencing with parents, and planning for improvements in teaching and learning. This ultimately allows our teachers to be better prepared to support students and ensure each student has an effective learning experience.

Implementation Guidance

When planning student and staff calendars the District shall ensure the following actions:

- Convene an annual District Calendar Committee for the purpose of recommending a calendar to the Board of Trustees for consideration
- Establish priority guidelines for development of draft calendars that maximize student instructional days while applying defined innovations
- Publish draft calendars for community feedback prior to BOT consideration and adoption
- Ensure the draft calendar meets the required 75,600 minutes and bank of minute requirements
- Ensure alignment of systems to support the implementation of the instructional calendar

***Adjustment to Original Local Innovation Plan Exemptions**

REMOVE the exemptions below from the local innovation plan:

- TEC Section §25.081(e) related to the minimum minutes requirement and definition of a school day as “at least seven hours” and “420 minutes of instruction.”
- TEC Section §25.082(a) related to the school day.

FBISD is not seeking to renew exemptions relating to the current statute §25.081(e) which was adjusted to address only the exemption of minimum minutes of operation for certain programs or the definition of the school day as TEC Statutory Requirement §25.082(a), has been repealed.

B. Teacher Certification

Statutory Requirement: TEC Section Requiring Exemption: §21.003

Texas Education Code §21.003: CERTIFICATION REQUIRED (a) A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Exemption

RENEW exemptions relating to teacher certification in order to have flexibility in recruiting teachers for hard to fill areas.

Rationale and Benefits:

Fort Bend ISD strives to recruit, develop and retain effective teachers. The District experienced difficulty finding teachers certified to teach certain high school courses, especially in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and World Languages (e.g., Spanish, American Sign Language, and French). History has shown that these courses are difficult to staff and face teacher shortages on a regular basis. This exemption allows for expansion of the current certified teacher pool to include skilled and experienced industry professionals.

The District benefits from an innovative approach to recruiting and staffing hard to fill positions. Allowing the District to take a creative approach to obtaining qualified, enthusiastic teachers greatly supports the community and children. The committee recognizes that there are several pathways to becoming a qualified, effective, and dynamic teacher. Yet, the current law inhibits the District's ability to recruit and employ highly qualified professionals with only industry and field experience who are not fully certified to teach. Considering this, the District seeks to continue its exemption from TEC 21.003(a) in order to use its own avenues to credential highly qualified individuals who wish to teach in hard to staff areas. The process builds upon the District's current partnership with independent alternative certification programs in order to better meet our staffing needs.

A District Credentialing Committee has defined the process, including qualifications, necessary steps, mentoring programs, and available positions. Candidate qualifications will include professional work experience; formal training and education; relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentials related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching. Potential areas for a local credential will include engineering health science, culinary, automotive/diesel technology, veterinary science, manufacturing, and world languages.

This locally defined and developed credentialing process capitalizes on the many qualified business and industry representatives in the community by allowing them an alternative avenue into the teaching profession where they share their real-world experience and knowledge with our students. These individuals often hold specialized certifications in their areas of expertise that are extremely beneficial to preparing students in these industries. Allowing Fort Bend ISD to hire nontraditional candidates who bring authentic field and industry knowledge and skills to the position provides students with connections to the industry that make these programs stronger and the students more likely candidates.

In addition to traditional classroom instruction, these instructors can teach remotely or through other multi-media devices appropriate for the classroom. This option is conducive to part-time teaching assignments, especially for classes that may not require full-time employment.

Implementation Guidance

When hiring teachers, the District shall ensure the following actions:

- Qualified candidates with a Texas Certification will be given priority.
- All candidates are required to complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board for Education Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC §22.0833 for a non-certified employee.
- Candidates are thoroughly vetted to ensure they have not surrendered any teaching certificates in the past or been terminated from a teaching position for reasons unacceptable to the District.
- Candidates attend new teacher orientation and are supported by a mentor. In addition, candidates receive pedagogy and classroom management training to ensure they can reach students and scaffold information appropriately.
- The District of Innovation Teacher Certification credentialing process will launch when vacancies remain after no qualified certified teachers are available.
- The use of this exemption shall be limited to identified hard to fill vacancies as articulated in Policy DBA LOCAL.

C. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (90 Percent Rule)

Statutory Requirement: TEC Section Requiring Exemption: §25.092

Texas Education Code §25.092: MINIMUM ATTENDANCE FOR CLASS CREDIT OR FINAL GRADE. (a) Except as provided by this section, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

Exemption

RENEW exemption requiring students to be present in the classroom 90 percent of the time in order to earn credit and to provide flexibility for instructional delivery methods and to support students unable to attend class due to extenuating circumstances.

Rationale and Benefits:

As FBISD's mission is to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine, we must also consider that all students have different needs and abilities. The 90 percent attendance requirement locks students into learning only during traditional class times and in a more traditional class setting. Even with the proliferation of online courses and learning, this rule still dictates that students must be either physically present or logged in during specific times. FBISD recognizes that some students learn at different paces as well as have extenuating circumstances that could keep them from learning opportunities requiring 90% of their learning during specified times during the school day.

This exemption allows for greater flexibility in FBISD's educational offerings as well as ways to ensure that all students are provided a learning plan that allows them to demonstrate mastery and receive course credit. The flexibility will shift based on the needs of our diverse student population. Examples of this flexibility for students are:

- the opportunity for students to differentiate the pace of their learning and move forward with courses at a pace that is appropriate for them,
- project-based learning to demonstrate mastery, or
- expansion of learning modalities that give students control over time and place of learning.

In addition, this flexibility will offer specialized pathways for students who need abbreviated daily schedules because of work, medical issues, or family obligations to have options to gain credit with working on class outside of the traditional school day. This also can support students who thrive in an online environment or use hybrid situations to accelerate their learning. Under this exemption, the District will continue to investigate the abundant opportunities for active learning outside the classroom in order to receive course credit for content mastery, that does not bind a student to a traditional school schedule. Overall, the exemption allows the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime, anyplace.

Implementation Guidance:

When utilizing this exemption, the District shall ensure the following:

- This exemption does not impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules,
- This exemption in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214,
- This exemption does not restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.

Implementation

Following Board of Trustees consideration and approval, administration will develop a project team to review Board policy, current District of Innovation procedures, and create a project plan to support FBISD's application of the defined exemptions over the five-year renewal period from 2022-27.