

Ballinger ISD
District of Innovation Plan
2017-2022



Drafted May 11, 2017

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations, in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. As a District of Innovation, Ballinger ISD wishes to implement an Innovation Plan with increased flexibility and freedom necessary to personalize learning experiences. As a District of Innovation, Ballinger ISD intends to use this opportunity to develop a plan that focuses on the District's vision of "...meeting the challenge of a global society", and utilize the opportunity to enact maximum local control and design local policies as needed to best meet the needs of our students, employees, and community.

TERM

Ballinger ISD's Innovation Plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless the plan is terminated or amended by the Ballinger ISD Board in accordance with HB1842. To ensure success of Ballinger ISD students, the Ballinger District of Innovation Committee is committed to constantly monitoring and making necessary amendments to be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Jeff Butts	Ballinger ISD Superintendent
Caroline Toliver	Ballinger ISD Programs & Curriculum Director
Robert Webb	Ballinger High School Principal
Stacy Tucker	Ballinger Junior High Principal
Jamie Dudley	Ballinger Elementary Principal
Julie Hagey	Ballinger ISD Assistant Principal
Kim Castleberry	Ballinger Junior High Counselor
Crystal Clinton	Ballinger Elementary Counselor
Chris Thomas	Ballinger ISD Teacher
Jennifer Cullen	Ballinger ISD Teacher
Shelly Holden	Ballinger ISD Teacher
D'Ann Hatler	Ballinger ISD Teacher
Deidra Dallas	Ballinger ISD Teacher
Lisa Gibbs	Ballinger ISD Teacher
Courtney Harrison	Ballinger ISD Teacher
Nathan Pruett	Ballinger Community Member/Parent
Toby Virden	Ballinger Community Member/Parent
Dana Travis	Ballinger Community Member
Michelle Aguilera	Ballinger Community Member/Parent
Betty Arp	Ballinger Community Member/Parent

School Board of Directors

Dale Halfmann, President
Manual Galvan, Vice-President
Scott King, Secretary
Jason Battle
Jason Strube
Diane Michalewicz
Cheryl Buchanan

TIMELINE

A resolution was adopted at the March 28, 2017 board meeting, which initiates the District of Innovation process.

A public hearing took place at the April 17, 2017 board meeting on District of Innovation.

At the April 17, 2017 board meeting, the school board approved the formation of a District of Innovation Committee.

The District of Innovation Committee met on May 2, 2017 and May 11, 2017. Minutes were taken.

District of Innovation Plan drafted on May 11, 2017 and will be made available on the Ballinger ISD Website for public review and comment for a period of 30 days.

Ballinger ISD Superintendent will notify the Commissioner of Education of its intent to vote on the District of Innovation Plan.

A Public meeting by the District Education Improvement Committee on the proposed plan will be held in June 16, 2017 at 12 Noon.

The School Board Members can vote in June 2017 on the proposed final District of Innovation Plan after the public hearing.

INNOVATIONS

1. Teacher Certification

Exemption from TEC 21.003; TEC 21.053;

Relevant Board Policies: DBA LEGAL & LOCAL; DK LEGAL, LOCAL & EXHIBIT

Manner in which the statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC 21.003 requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician or school counselor 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 qualified and 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 for Educator Certification and in worst case scenarios not offer a course. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instruction needs of a rural 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 for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

For certified teachers teaching a subject outside of their certification area, this exemption will not prevent payment.

Innovative Strategies

1. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification, especially in core subjects, for the position in question; however, where that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who have college credit and are qualified in the area or related areas and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed subject.
 - a. A one-year local teaching certificate will be provided to teachers receiving approval in this area that must be renewed yearly with approval.
 - b. The District will provide notification to parents of the area where teachers are not certified but are qualified.
2. For grades 6-12, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience that teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.
 - a. A one-year local teaching certificate will be provided to teachers receiving approval in this area that must be renewed yearly with approval.

- b. The District will provide notification to parents of the area where teachers are not certified but are qualified.
3. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question. An individual with experience in the content of an elective or Career and Technical Education (CTE) course could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or elective course through a local teaching certificate. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed subject. Examples: experienced homebuilder teaching a building trades course; a licensed corrections officer teaching a criminal justice course; a retired CPA teaching an entry-level accounting course.
 - a. Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same fields.
 - b. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports as needed.
 - c. Uncertified positions will be on an at-will basis.
 - d. The District will provide notification to parents of the area where teachers are not certified.

The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first Board meeting following the assignment.

Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

2. School Calendar

Exemption from TEC 25.0811, 25.0812

Relevant Board Policies: EB LEGAL & LOCAL

Manner in which the statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC 25.0811 requires that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

Previously, districts had the option of applying to TEA for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Innovative Strategies

1. Relief from the statute to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days.
2. Alignment of the district calendar with local schools, universities, advanced placement exams, and STAAR timelines.
3. Provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs, including the starting date, ending date, the number of days in each semester, 6-week reporting period and the dates of preparation days.
4. Students will not begin before the 2nd Monday of August

3. Probationary Contracts

Exemption from TEC 21.102

Relevant Board Policies: DK LEGAL, LOCAL & EXHIBIT

Manner in which the statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC 21.102 requires that a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary 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. (TEC 21.102)

In the event the District hires a 5 of 8 year experienced teacher and determines that the teacher is struggling, the district must decide to take a chance and offer a term contract or not extend a contract for the next year.

Innovative Strategies

1. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to state assessment results and end of year progress testing and final teacher evaluations.
2. Experienced teachers and counselors new to the District that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the last date of district employment. This allows Ballinger ISD more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.

4. Early Release Day

Exemption from TEC §25.082(a)

Manner in which the statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC 25.082(a) requires that a school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow the District the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum number for the school year.

Innovative Strategies

1. The District does not have any intentions to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time, published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the early release and continuously published using school and local media.
2. Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. The District will still meet the requirements of HB 2610 - 75,600 instruction minutes.
 - a. This would allow the District the flexibility to schedule non-instructional early release days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.
 - b. This would allow the District the flexibility to schedule early release days for student and staff to attend and support the District’s students in extra-curricular activities.