

**Alto ISD**  
**District of Innovation Plan (HB 1842)**  
**2018-2019**

Alto ISD is utilizing HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session, in order to enhance local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows a traditional public school to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed. We feel this is a great opportunity for Alto Independent School District to explore innovations and tailor plans based on the needs of our students and community. This plan will be in effect for the 2018-2019 school year through the 2022-2023 school year. This plan may be amended at any time by the District of Innovation Committee with the approval of AISD Board of Trustees.

**District of Innovation Committee**

- |                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Kerry Birdwell     | Superintendent               |
| 2. Allison Threadgill | PEIMS Coordinator            |
| 3. Kelley Robertson   | Business Manager             |
| 4. Debra Grimes       | Technology Director          |
| 5. Paula Low          | Academic Director            |
| 6. Dr. Chase Thomas   | Alto High School Principal   |
| 7. Kelly West         | Alto Middle School Principal |
| 8. Martha Gresham     | Alto Elementary Principal    |
| 9. Brittany Comstock  | Alto High School Teacher     |
| 10. LeAnn Jones       | Alto Middle School Teacher   |
| 11. Misty Townsend    | Alto Elementary Teacher      |
| 12. Mollie Watson     | Alto High School Parent      |
| 13. Ronda Mosley      | Alto Middle School Parent    |
| 14. David Heredia     | Alto Elementary Parent       |

## Alto Independent School District District of Innovation Timeline

Thursday, January 11	<p>Initial meeting with administrative team to discuss preliminary thoughts, possible exemptions, and possible members of the District Innovation Committee. The District of Innovation Committee will consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent</li> <li>• Administrative Staff</li> <li>• Principals from each campus</li> <li>• One teacher from each campus</li> <li>• One parent from each campus</li> </ul>
Monday, January 22	<p>6:30 p.m. - Regular Board Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board approved a resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation</li> </ul>
Monday, January 29	<p>12:00 p.m. - Public Hearing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain and discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation.</li> <li>• Adjourn</li> </ul> <p>12:30 p.m. - Regular Board Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved a motion to pursue local "District of Innovation" plan</li> <li>• Approved the members of the District of Innovation Committee</li> <li>• Adjourn</li> </ul>
Thursday, February 8	<p>3:10 p.m. - Meeting of the District Innovation Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate committee about HB 1842 and District of Innovation</li> <li>• Discuss possible exemptions</li> <li>• Decide which exemptions to pursue and include in our plan</li> </ul>
Monday, February 12	<p>12:15 p.m. - District of Innovation Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meeting to consider the final Alto ISD District of Innovation Plan</li> <li>• Plan approved by a unanimous vote by the District of Innovation Committee</li> </ul>
Tuesday, February 13	<p>Post proposed Alto ISD District of Innovation plan on the district website for thirty days. Send Plan and DOI Timeline to the Commissioner's Office.</p>
Monday, March 26	<p>6:30 p.m. - Regular Board Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board voted unanimously (7-0) District of Innovation Plan as presented.</li> </ul>
Tuesday, March 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent notification to the Commissioner of Education of Board's approval of District of Innovation Plan.</li> <li>• Update all policy changes with TASB.</li> </ul>

**If approved, the plan will be in effect for up to five years.**

**Texas Education Code exemptions required for the fulfillment of the goals upon adoption by the District of Innovation Plan.** Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) that “inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan”. Given the comprehensive education program of Alto ISD and the necessity for local control in decision making of the plan elements, Alto ISD seeks exemption for all allowable TEC requirements under the HB 1842 statute. The following exemptions are highlighted as possible examples, but not all inclusive.

#### **1. School Start Date**

*(EB LEGAL)(Ed. Code 25.0811)*

##### Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule, however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday.

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.

##### Proposed

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the earliest mandatory start date back to the second Monday in August, which would better benefit our students.

- a. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the calendar year. This 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.
- b. This will allow the first semester to end before the winter break, which in turn, will allow students to take semester exams before the two+ weeks layoff from school during the break. Many students do poorly on first semester exams after a long lay-off from school.
- c. The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through flexibility in the calendar.

**2. Submitting waivers for Kindergarten - Grade 4 class size**  
(EEB LEGAL)(Ed. Code 25.112)(Ed. Code 25.113)

Currently

Kindergarten - 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 students to 1 teacher ratio accordingly to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

Proposed

- a. Alto ISD has recently seen a growth in our lower elementary classes, making the possibility of surpassing the 22 students: 1 teacher ratio. AISD will attempt to keep all K-4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- b. In the event a K-4th core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

This gives AISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

### **3. Length of School Day**

*(DNA LEGAL, DNA LOCAL)(Ed. Code 25.081)(Ed. Code 25.082)*

#### Currently

Texas Education Code requires that all school days must be 420 minutes long to count for Average Daily Attendance (ADA) calculations and funding purposes, and to accumulate instructional minutes totaling 75,600 minutes per school year.

#### Proposed

- a. Allow Alto ISD the flexibility to alter the school day schedule whenever it is deemed locally necessary or beneficial to the District and its stakeholders
- b. Early release days may be used for additional professional development, unique instructional arrangements, teacher collaboration, teacher/parent conferences, safety purposes due to the weather, extracurricular travel needs, etc.
- c. The district will ensure that campus schedules follow the required operational and/or instructional minutes/days as defined in the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH). This will ensure funding for AISD is secure.

#### **4. Teacher certification**

*(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)(Ed. Code 21.003)*

##### Currently

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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process.

##### Proposed

In order to best serve AISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for dual credit, career and technical/STEAM, and hard to fill content teachers, the district will have the flexibility in providing our students an opportunity they may not have otherwise been afforded.

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- b. The district will have the flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors or university professors in specific content areas in order to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. The campus principal will submit the request to the superintendent to allow the hiring of the credentialed community college instructor or university professor.
- c. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year.
- d. This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.
- e. Exception: Special Education and ESL/Bilingual teachers must be SBEC certified.

## **5. Probationary Contracts**

*(DCA Legal)(Ed. Code 21.102)*

### Currently

A probationary contract may not exceed one year for new teachers to our district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district. Under this circumstance, the district must either give the teacher a term contract or terminate their contract after their first year in the district.

### Proposed

Alto ISD would like to have the ability to renew the probationary contract two additional one-year periods, for a maximum of three school years, for all teachers that are new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of eight preceding employment by the District.

## **6. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Credit**

*(Ed. Code 25.092)*

### Currently

Under current law, to qualify for class credit, students must attend school for a minimum of 90% of the school days. In other words, the law requires the District to award class credit to students based on “seat time” rather than based on content mastery.

### Proposed

Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting active learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing number of qualifying graduates.

One of the overarching goals in the Strategic Plan within the focus area of providing engaging and challenging learning is to implement tools, resources, and training that support blended and personalized learning for both students and teachers. Blended learning, where instruction is delivered through a combination of time in class and time spent learning online, is one example where exemption from Section 25.092 will likely foster greater innovation to promote active learning and improve student outcomes. In addition, exemption from this requirement will allow the District not to penalize students who miss class due to legitimate school activities and will promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities.

It will always be a District goal to have all students attend school at the highest possible rate. However, it is understood that there will be circumstances that may hamper a student’s ability to meet the current 90% attendance rule. We would like to have the ability to develop an innovative plan to work with students to give each one of them the greatest opportunity to succeed while at Alto ISD.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 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, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.



## **7. Length (number of days) of Teacher Contracts**

*(DC Legal)(DEA Legal)(Ed. Code 21.401)*

### Currently

Under current education law, a teacher's contract is 10-months or more specifically, 187 days in length.

### Proposed

Alto ISD would like to have the flexibility to set its teacher contract days from a range of 182 to 187 days with no negative effect on teacher salaries. This reduction in contract days of up to five days would make our salaries more competitive.

- a. This plan will increase the daily rate of district teachers.
- b. This plan should enhance our ability to recruit teachers to our district.
- c. This plan will provide our teachers more flexibility during the summer months to find professional development opportunities that, personally, benefits them.
- d. In each year of the plan, the exact number of days (up to 187) of a 2/8/2018 teacher's contract may be/will be determined by the calendar planning committee. The minimum number of days a 10-month teacher's contract will be is 182 days, and the maximum it will be is 187 days.

**8. Inter-district Transfers**  
*(FDA Legal, Local) (Ed. Code 25.036)*

Currently

A district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in a district. A transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. Alto 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, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, and attendance are also evaluated.

Proposed

Alto ISD 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 cases, Alto ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer.

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. Additionally, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.