



District of Innovation

Local Innovation Plan Adopted
January 14, 2019

Approved Amendment to the District of Innovation Plan
August 28, 2023

NORTHWEST

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Board of Trustees

President

R. Stephen Sprowls

Vice President

Mark Schluter

Secretary

DeAnne Hatfield

Members

Judy Copp

Jennifer Murphy

Lillian Rauch, Ph.D.

Anne Davis-Simpson, Ph.D.

Administration

Mark Foust, Ed.D, *Superintendent of Schools*

Kim Barker, *Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources*

Cara Carter, *Chief Technology Officer*

Michael Griffin, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction*

Christie Hobbs, *General Counsel*

Tim McClure, *Assistant Superintendent for Facilities*

Jonathan Pastusek, *Chief Financial Officer*

Jennifer Roberts, *Executive Assistant to the Superintendent*

Angela Scott, *Public Affairs Coordinator*

Anthony Tosie, *Executive Director of Communications*

CORE BELIEFS

- Kids come first.
- Continuous learning is essential to prepare for college and career opportunities.
- Each student's success is the shared responsibility of students, families, schools, and communities.
- Learning is influenced by environment.

VISION

Northwest ISD empowers learners and leaders to positively impact the world.

MISSION

Northwest ISD, in collaboration with students, families, communities, and global partners, will engage in a culture of learning that prepares all students to confidently navigate their future.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Northwest ISD will provide personalized learning experiences and cultivate the growth and achievement of every student.

NISD PRIORITIES

Literacy

1.1 Our students will annually increase literacy proficiency to reach or exceed grade-level standards.

Academic Progress

1.02 Our students will achieve individualized academic goals to reach a year's growth or more in all content areas.

College, Career, Military & Life Readiness

1.3 Our students will graduate life ready and prepared for success in career, college, or military service.

Northwest ISD will recruit, value, and retain highly effective staff prepared to meet the individual needs of our students and learning community.

NISD PRIORITIES

Recruit

2.1 Northwest ISD will have an unwavering commitment to attract and welcome high-quality staff.

Value

2.2 Northwest ISD will invest in all staff through a culture of support, development, and empowerment to make a positive impact on the learning community.

Retain

2.3 Northwest ISD will retain highly effective staff through meaningful relationships, ongoing support, and professional growth opportunities.

Northwest ISD will foster a safe environment and a culture of engagement that values the voices of all students, staff, families, and community members.

NISD PRIORITIES

Engagement

3.1 Northwest ISD will foster an environment of engagement with every member of our community through collaborative dialogue and partnership opportunities.

Culture

3.2 Northwest ISD will model and instill a culture of belonging where all students, staff, families, and community voices are heard and valued.

Safety

3.3 Northwest ISD will continuously improve, maintain and communicate systems of support to strengthen the physical and emotional well-being of our students, staff, and community.



PROFILE OF A GRADUATE

As 21st century citizens, Northwest Independent School District (NISD) students must be prepared with high levels of academic strength including literacy, digital skills, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication. The mission of NISD is to provide a premier education, preparing all students to be successful, productive citizens. Embedded in our vision is that our students will be **future ready**: ready for college, ready for the global workplace, and ready for personal success. To accomplish this goal, a student who graduates from NISD *will be*:

Ready for College

*To prepare to be **future ready**, a student who graduates from NISD will:*

- Engage in relevant literacy through proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Employ proficient and responsible use of digital media to effectively communicate, synthesize, and create new knowledge.
- Problem solve and critically analyze with determination to take risks, learn from mistakes, and adapt to new thinking.
- Determine validity and relevance of information resources in the development of research skills.

Ready for the Global Workplace

*To prepare to be **future ready**, a student who graduates from NISD will:*

- Connect and correlate knowledge and skills continuously through real-world applications in reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and enrichment experiences.
- Construct new ideas through original and innovative thinking.
- Exhibit vision for personal learning and forward thinking to prepare for the future.
- Understand and adapt responsibly to a changing global community.

Ready for Personal Success

*To prepare to be **future ready**, a student who graduates from NISD will:*

- Practice ethical behaviors exhibiting integrity, respect, and commitment within a well-balanced lifestyle.
- Show initiative and responsibility through positive actions to express self-motivation, self-discipline, and perseverance.
- Communicate and collaborate by exercising a willingness to help and connect with culturally diverse individuals and groups to make necessary compromises toward accomplishing a common goal.
- Prepare for the unknown by being empowered with tools to face challenges and life-long learning.

Table of Contents:

2018 District of Innovation Committee

2023 District of Innovation Committee

General Information and Background

Timeline

Innovation Exemptions – Approved January 14, 2019

Innovation Exemption Amendment – Approved August 28, 2023

2018 DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Rob Thornell	Deputy Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction
Michael Griffin	Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction
Adam Feind	Chief Technology Officer
CyLynn Braswell	Executive Director of College Career Readiness and Innovation
Carri Eddy	Executive Director of Student Services
Stephanie Espinosa	Executive Director of Curriculum and Professional Development
Logan Faris	Executive Director of Secondary Education
Joel Johnson	Executive Director of Athletics
Kevin Lacefield	Executive Director of Fine Arts
Cara Carter	Director of Instructional Technology
Jason Sanders	Coordinator of Instructional Technology
Bobby Morris	Director of College & Career Readiness
Mike Blankenship	Principal
Lyndsie Smith	Assistant Principal
Ron Gatlin	Assistant Principal
Kristi King	Principal
Amy Donoho	Parent
Jamie Winters-Johnson	Parent
Brittnie Bragg	Coordinator of Secondary ELA
Kelly Suarez	Coordinator of Elementary Science
Jake Browarski	Business and Education Coordinator
Kelley Broughton	Education and Coaching Coordinator

Stacy Fanning	Career Access Coordinator
Casey Helmick	STEM Coordinator
Monica Valenta	Health Sciences Coordinator
Sunni Johnson	Coordinator of Elementary ELA
Melanye Griffin	Coordinator of Secondary Mathematics
Jaime Garcia	Instructional Coach
Audra Rowell	Coordinator of Advanced Academics
Meredith Lee	Instructional Coach
Christie Hobbs	General Counsel
Todd Rogers	Associate Principal
Brian Carter	Chief Financial Officer
Anthony Tosie	Communication Specialist
Kim Barker	Executive Director of Human Resources
Melissa DeSimone	Director of Research, Accountability, and Assessment
Elizabeth Jones	Teacher
Kim Garrett	Teacher
Courtney Baker	Teacher
Liz Smith	Teacher
Patti Hayes	Teacher
Ashley Mooneyham	Teacher
Courtney Reed	Parent
Molly Argo	Campus Instructional Teacher
Angela Scott	Public Affairs Coordinator
Jamie Farber	Director of Guidance and Counseling

2023 DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

First Name	Last Name	Title
Courtney	Baker	Teacher - Remote Math Teacher
Kim	Barker	Asst Supt for Human Resources
Katy	Barrey	Coordinator of Instructional Technology
Kelli	Baugh	Teacher - Daniel ES - Fifth Grade
Brittnie	Bragg	Coordinator of Secondary ELA
Kelley	Broughton	Director of Career and Technical Education
Jake	Browarski	Business and Education Coordinator
Kristy	Butler	Instructional Technologist
Ginear	Campbell	Parent
Cara	Carter	Chief Technology Officer
Meagan	Davis	Instructional Coach - Secondary (ELA)
Melissa	DeSimone	Exec Director of Research, Accountability, and Assessment
Stephanie	Espinosa	Executive Director of Teaching and Learning
Stacy	Fanning	Career Access Coordinator
Jamie	Farber	Director of Guidance and Counseling
Jaime	Garcia	Coordinator of Elementary Mathematics
Kim	Garrett	Teacher - NHS - Science
Micah	Gierkey	Executive Director of Student Services
Melanye	Griffin	Coordinator of Secondary Mathematics
Michael	Griffin	Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction
Patti	Hayes	CTE Data & Certification Coordinator
Casey	Helmick	STEM Coordinator
Chris	Hill	Dir of Secondary HR / Interim Exec Dir of Secondary Education
Christie	Hobbs	General Counsel
David	James	Assistant Principal - NHS
Joel	Johnson	Executive Director of Athletics
Sunni	Johnson	Director of Curriculum
Elizabeth	Jones	Teacher - Curtis ES - 3rd
Dawn	Kelley	Teacher - CTMS - Social Studies
Kevin	Lacefield	Executive Director of Fine Arts

Dolores	Laughlin	Teacher - Worthington MS - Spanish
Tricia	Lutkenhaus	Principal
Ron	Mendoza	Assistant Principal - BNHS
Bobby	Morris	Director of College & Career Readiness
Jonathan	Pastusek	Chief Financial Officer
Raine	Radicke	Education and Coaching Coordinator
Courtney	Reed	Parent
Todd	Rogers	Principal
Audra	Rowell	Coordinator of Advanced Academics
Jason	Sanders	Director of Instructional Technology
Angela	Scott	Public Affairs Coordinator
Ed	Shelstead	Associate Principal - EHS
Liz	Smith	Teacher - Schluter ES - Gifted and Talented
Lyndsie	Smith	Principal
Kelly	Suarez	Coordinator of Elementary Science
Anthony	Tosie	Exec Dir of Communications
Monica	Valenta	Health Sciences Coordinator

GENERAL INFORMATION and BACKGROUND

District of Innovation is a concept passed during the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842. HB 1842 gives traditional independent school districts the opportunity to gain flexibility through a variety of available exemptions to the Texas Education Code. A school district must adopt an innovation plan in order to access these exemptions and districts may amend/change/extend an innovation plan through the same process utilized to adopt a plan. A school district’s most recent academic performance rating must be at least acceptable in order to be eligible for designation as a District of Innovation.

TIMELINE

Action	Responsibility	Date
Presentation to NISD School Board for consideration of the DOI designation	Administration	9/24/2017
Vote to adopt a resolution to consider DOI designation	Board	9/24/2017
Hold public hearing	Board	10/25/2017
Decision to postpone process pending NISD Strategic Framework development	Administration	12/11/2017

Presentation to NISD School Board for consideration of the DOI designation	Administration	8/13/2018
Appoint a Committee to develop local innovation plan	Administration	9/1/2018
DOI Committee shares initial information and timeline proposal to DEIC	Administration	9/17/2018
DOI Committee Meeting	Committee	9/27/2018
DOI Committee Meeting	Committee	10/9/2018
Presentation to NISD Faculty Council to seek input	Committee	10/15/2018
Presentation to District Leadership Team to seek input	Committee	10/18/2018
DOI Committee Meeting	Committee	10/29/2018
DOI committee shares possible recommendations to DEIC and seeks additional input	Committee	10/30/2018
Presentation to NISD Board with draft DOI plan	Administration	11/12/2018
Board Approval; Posted local innovation plan on website for public comment	Board	12/10/2018
Send notification to Commissioner of intention to vote on local innovation plan	Administration	1/11/2019
DEIC holds public meeting to consider final version of the proposed plan; DEIC votes on final plan	Committee	1/14/2019
NISD Board votes on final approval of plan	Board	1/14/2019
Notification to Commissioner of approval of plan	Administration	1/15/2019
DOI Committee Meeting: Approval of DOI Amendment	Committee	8/22/2023
Board Approval: Approval of DOI Amendment	Board	8/28/2023
Notification to Commissioner of Approval of Amendment	Administration	9/1/2023

INNOVATION EXEMPTIONS

Approved January 14, 2019

Innovative Plan Exemption
<p>Uniform Start Date for Academic Calendar</p> <p>Texas Education Code §25.0811(a) does not allow school districts to begin school before the fourth Monday of August. This requirement restricts the local community from designing a calendar that best meets the needs of students and families. This requirement also limits the amount of instructional time available before state and Advanced Placement testing as well as inhibits true alignment with local community colleges providing dual credit courses. Exemption from this requirement allows NISD to collaboratively design an academic calendar based on the needs of and input from the community.</p>
<p>Minutes of Instruction</p> <p>Texas Education Code §25.081 replaces the requirement of 180 days of instruction with the requirement of at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recesses). The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction, within the required 75,600 minutes, allows NISD the possibility to adjust the length of school day, early release days, and professional learning days.</p>

Educator Certification Requirement for Teachers and Other Educators

Texas Education Code §21.003 and §21.053 outlines state certification standards for teachers. An exemption from these requirements allows NISD to issue a school district teaching permit to individuals who do not hold a teaching certificate, but whom the district deems best to teach in a particular area. NISD is committed to hiring the best staff available and lists “recruit, value, and retain exceptional staff to create a rewarding learning environment” as one of its district strategic goals. Occasionally, teachers are needed for positions that are difficult to fill. This exemption relates only to those positions the District identifies as difficult to fill and would be assessed on an individual basis. Staff hired under a school district teaching permit will benefit from the same rights and responsibilities as certified teachers within the district. After the required posting period and candidate interviews, the principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what specific credentials (i.e. experiences and expertise) the prospective teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach that subject(s). The superintendent must approve the selection and report the action to the Board at the first board meeting following the assignment. The District and local campus will assess appropriate training needs for any teacher hired under this exemption. Finally, this is a local certification only and does not transfer to another school district.

Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code §37.0012 constrains campus governance by requiring one person at each campus to be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. NISD utilizes a collaborative approach to discipline to foster the social and emotional learning of the student. This collaborative approach includes the parent, student, school administrator and counselor. Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.0012 allows NISD campus principals to divide and/or delegate campus behavior coordinator duties to assistant principals as needed and appropriate.

Removal of Unwanted Visitors

Texas Education Code §37.105, applies to rejecting unruly guests from campuses and school events. In 2017, the Texas Legislature changed the law on how school administrators can eject unruly guests from school events. This applies to parents and community members, not students. Under the law, the guest must be given a warning before he or she is ejected. Upon ejection, the guest must also be given notice of how he can appeal the ejection. NISD would allow designated staff members the authority to remove parents or visitors whose behavior is deemed inappropriate without warning or written notice.

Credit by Examination (CBE)

The Texas Education Code §28.023, allows students in primary grades to accelerate a grade level and students in secondary academic courses to earn credit for a course on the basis credit by examination. Credit-by-examination assessments (CBEs) must be approved by each local board of trustees. A student in grades 6-12 may be awarded credit based on performance on a CBE taken either with no prior instruction or with prior instruction. Students may not attempt to earn credit by exam for the same high school subject more than two times. This exemption would allow NISD the flexibility to create its own CBE process to meet the personalized learning of its students.

Minimum Days of Attendance

Texas Education Code §25.092 requires that students be in attendance a minimum of 90% of the school days to receive credit. While NISD believes strongly in student attendance, there may be a variety of ways to allow students to show mastery of a given course despite unforeseen circumstances that caused their attendance to fall below the 90% barrier. With a strategic goal that included personalized learning, instruction and learning platforms may be developed to allow NISD students a variety of options including those for non-traditional students.

Probationary Contracts for Experienced Teachers

Texas Education Code §21.102(b) states that a probationary contract 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 with the district. This period of time may not be sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians or nurses new to NISD who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a second probationary contract may be offered when needed to benefit the teacher and students served. This action requires principal recommendation, in collaboration with the appropriate human resources administrator, and consideration and approval by the superintendent.

Teacher Mentors

Texas Education Code §21.458 requires that teacher mentors have three or more years of experience in the field. This 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. This is a need for NISD because of the rapid growth of the district.

AMENDED INNOVATION EXEMPTION

Amendment approved August 28, 2023

Innovative Plan Exemption

Mandatory DAEP Placement for E-Cigarettes

Texas Education Code §37.006 was amended to require a mandatory placement at the District Alternative Education Program (DAEP) for any student who “possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette” as defined by Texas Health & Safety Code § 161.081. This law applies to students possessing any part of a vaping device, whether or not the offense involves THC, marijuana, a controlled substance, or a dangerous drug (“prohibited drugs”). Strict adherence to this law would (1) provide disproportionate consequences for students not in possession of prohibited drugs; (2) overcrowd the DAEP; and (3) impair the DAEP’s ability to serve students engaging in more serious conduct. For students not in possession of prohibited drugs, the District plans to assign a 3-day suspension for a first e-cigarette offense or a 5-day suspension for a second offense, plus a counseling intervention to support early intervention efforts, maintain academic consistency, and keep students engaged in school activities.

This exemption will only apply to e-cigarette offenses that do not involve prohibited drugs. E-cigarette offenses involving prohibited drugs will continue to be subject to mandatory DAEP or JJAEP placements, consistent with the Texas Education Code and the Student Code of Conduct.