

## **Princeton ISD 2022-2027 District of Innovation Plan**

**Introduction:** House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session provides public school districts the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Board of Trustees, after a public hearing, adopted a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation. That same evening they appointed our local District Improvement Committee to be the Local Innovation Committee appointed to draft the Princeton ISD local innovation plan.

On February 6, 2017, the District Improvement Committee/Local Innovation Committee met for the purpose of educating the committee about HB 1842 and Districts of Innovation. The committee discussed possible exemptions and decided which exemptions to pursue and include in the Local Innovation Plan for Princeton ISD. On February 13, 2017, the committee met and based on direction provided by the Board and input from a public meeting of stakeholders, the Committee voted unanimously to propose this plan to the Board of Trustees for final approval at the March 20, 2017, regular Board Meeting. Final approval by the Board came after the plan was posted on the District Website for no less than 30 days for further public input.

### **Timeline for Renewal**

On February 16, 2022, senior administration staff met to review the district's current innovation plan and research additional exemptions that might be beneficial.

On February 28, 2022, recommendations for renewal were presented to a public meeting of the District Improvement Committee. The committee discussed the recommendations, proposed changes, and voted to adopt the resulting plan. The adopted plan adds an additional exemption to TEC 21.202 (b) which would allow the district to extend the probationary contract period of an employee covered by this section to two years and expands the exemption from TEC 21.003 to include TEC 21.044, 21.053, 21.056, 21.053 and 19 TAC 231. This exemption will allow the district to continue to hire Career and Technical Education instructors with field experience, experienced community college instructors to serve as dual credit teachers, and certified teachers to teach one subject out of their certification field with annual approval from the superintendent. The exemption from TEC 25.0811 (a) relating to beginning instruction prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday in August was left unchanged.

On February 28, 2022, the proposed renewal plan was presented to the Board of Trustees in a regularly scheduled meeting. Upon review of the proposal, the board voted unanimously to begin the process of renewing the district's innovation plan.

On March 3, 2022, the final version of the proposed renewal plan was posted to the district's website at <https://www.princetonisd.net/our-district/required-postings>

On March 14, 2022, Commissioner of Education was notified of the board's intent to renew.

On June 20, 2022, the board approved the plan for implementation.

### **Timeline for Amendments:**

#### 2023-2024 School Year

- The proposed amendments to the District's DOI plan were presented to the Princeton ISD District Improvement Plan Committee for consideration on September 27, 2023. The committee discussed the recommendations, proposed changes, and voted unanimously to adopt the resulting plan.
- The PISD Board of Trustees reviewed and adopted the amended DOI Plan at the meeting held on October 15, 2023.
- The Commissioner of Education was notified that the board approved amendments for the District's DOI plan on October 25, 2023. The amended plan retains the expiration date of June 20, 2027.

#### 2025-2026 School Year

- HB 2 of the 89th Regular Legislative session prohibits DOI districts from bypassing requirements to employ certified teachers for courses in the foundation curriculum. TEC §21.0032 (a-1), authorized the commissioner of education to approve PISD's request to delay implementation until 2029-2030. To be in compliance with HB2, PISD's DOI plan shall be amended to reflect the approval for the delay of implementation.
- The proposed amendments to the District's DOI plan were presented to the Princeton ISD District Improvement Plan Committee for consideration on February 2, 2026. The committee discussed the recommendations, proposed changes, and voted unanimously to adopt the resulting plan.
- The PISD Board of Trustees reviewed and adopted the amended DOI Plan at the meeting held on March 23, 2026.
- The Commissioner of Education was notified that the board approved amendments for the District's DOI plan on March 30, 2026. The amended plan retains the expiration date of June 20, 2027.

**Prerequisite:** A district must receive a "met standard" rating to be eligible to become a District of Innovation. Princeton ISD meets this standard.

**Term:** The term of the District of Innovation Plan, as outlined by the Texas Education Agency, is five years; therefore, the plan commenced with the 2022-2023 academic year and will conclude at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees or the Commissioner of Education in accordance with the law. The Local Innovation Team will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications as needed.

**Mission Statement:** The mission of Princeton Independent School District is to inspire and enable each student to achieve his or her full potential.

## **District Goals:**

- Provide child-centered campuses that encourage all students to experience success
- Recruit, challenge, develop and retain qualified and productive staff that is supportive in all areas
- Foster Community Involvement
- Provide for the growth and ever-changing demographics of Princeton ISD

## **AREAS OF EXEMPTION**

It has been determined that the following requirements of the Texas Education Code currently inhibit the pursuit of the mission and goals of Princeton Independent School District in meeting the needs of students:

### **First Day of Instruction**

**Innovation Plan Exemption from TEC §25.0811 (a)** Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August.

**Benefit of Exemption:** To best serve the students of Princeton ISD, we propose to create a school calendar which serves the needs of our local community. We propose moving the mandatory start date earlier than the fourth Monday in August. Waiting to start classes until the fourth Monday in August forces semesters to be significantly unequal in length. Flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable our district to better balance instruction time in each semester as well as making an effort to end our first semester prior to Winter Break.

### **Teacher Certification**

**Innovation Plan Exemption from TEC §21.003, TEC §21.0031, TEC §21.051, TEC §21.053, TEC §21.057 and Policy DBA(Legal), DK(Local):** Collectively, these sections of the Texas Education Code represent the general provisions of the certification of educators. These codes limit the District's ability to hire instructors in highly specialized and hard to fill positions when high quality, State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) certified teachers are not available.

**Benefit of Exemption:** Due to the national teacher shortage, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for school districts to staff all critical teaching positions, particularly in historically hard-to-fill areas of certification. In these limited circumstances, the District wants decisions regarding certification to be handled locally and approved by the Superintendent and/or designee. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in the hiring process to best serve Princeton ISD students. As a rule, the District will continue to seek certified educators for teaching positions and maintain expectations for employee certification. When efforts have been reasonably exhausted, the district seeks flexibility to hire in the following instances:

- The teacher applicant is a **SBEC certified teacher** in a subject area or grade level outside of a posted vacancy. This exemption allows the District to utilize certified teachers to

teach one subject out of their field or a different grade level within their field with annual approval of the superintendent;

- The teacher applicant is a **degreed, certified teacher in another state/country**. This exemption allows the district to consider these teachers for positions upon a local review of experience, education, and credentials and negates the need for a TEA Review;
- The teacher applicant is a **degreed, non-certified, enrolled in a certification program** through a university or an educator preparation program (EPP). This allows more time for completing program requirements to be eligible for an SBEC issued certificate and negates the need to apply to TEA for an Emergency Permit or Waiver;
- The teacher applicant is **degreed, non-certified, NOT enrolled in a certification program** but is deemed qualified by the district to serve as a teacher based on college coursework or work-related expertise with annual approval of the superintendent. This exemption negates the need to request approval from the Commissioner of Education for a School District Teaching Permit (SDTP);
- The teacher applicant is **non-degreed, non-certified** but has industry experience from the field in the subject matter, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experience. This exemption would allow the district to consider qualified individuals for Career and Technical Education (CTE) as well as academic core and other teaching assignments whose work experience and expertise have been deemed sufficient to provide the instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the courses.
- The district shall establish local criteria for training and locally certifying teachers rather than adhere strictly to mandates outlined in TEC §21.053 requiring “presentation and recording of certificates.” Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, observations and feedback, professional development, instructional resources, and other supports. In doing so, parental notification of “inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers” under TEC §21.057 is no longer be necessary;
- These exemptions exclude:
  - teaching assignments in special education, bilingual education, and ESL education
  - teaching assignments in the foundation courses beginning in the 2029-2030 school year
- For a teacher applicant who does not hold a valid SBEC issued certificate, they may be hired in a “non-contracted, at will” capacity and paid on the teacher salary scale until the effective date of the issuance of a valid certificate.

### **Extension of Probationary Contracts**

**Innovation Plan Exemption from §TEC 21.102 (b).** ...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.

**Benefit of Exemption:** Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired contract employees who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the employee's effectiveness in the position. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a second-year probationary contract for a total probationary period of up to two years for experienced administrators, teachers, counselors, or nurses newly hired in Princeton ISD. A change in contract type also constitutes newly hired.

### **Staff Development**

**Innovation Plan Exemption from TEC §21.451; Policy DMA (Legal & Local):** These sections and policies outline required annual training for all educators. The district is required to implement state-mandated professional development that may not be beneficial to our diverse population and staff needs.

**Benefit of Exemption:** The District believes that the district and campus level improvement committees are better equipped to determine professional development that will best meet the needs of local staff so that staff development can remain flexible and responsive to newly emerging data. The District will provide opportunities for professional learning requirements through regular and ongoing sessions, some of which may be less than annual dependent upon the employee's years of service and demonstration of mastery knowledge.

### **Class Size - Grades Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 4**

**Innovation plan exemption from TEC §25.112; TEC §25.113; Policy EEB (Legal):** A school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a Pre-Kindergarten - 4th grade class. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency and notify parents.

**Benefit of Exemption:** The District will attempt to keep all PK-Grade 4 classrooms to a 22.1 ratio; however, there are times when adding another teacher is not feasible such as mid-year due to increased enrollment, classroom availability, teacher shortage, etc. In the event a specific class exceeds the 22: 1 ratio, the District will work diligently to reduce the ratio as soon as possible. With this exemption, the District will have the flexibility to adjust student/teacher ratios and class size as needed for all campuses and classrooms and would not be required to notify parents or seek waivers from TEA annually.

### **Transfer of Student**

**Innovation plan exemption from TEC §25.036 and Policy FDA (Local):** A district may choose to accept students who are not entitled to enroll in the district through the student transfer process. The transfer time frame is interpreted to be a period of one school year.

**Benefit of Exemption:** The District will be able to revoke a student's transfer during the academic year based on disciplinary infractions, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) placements, expulsions, academic standing, and/or attendance. If any information is misrepresented in the transfer application or any transfer documentation, the student transfer may also be revoked.

**Evaluation of Local Plan:** It is noted that through the annual review process, further innovations and exemptions may be needed to advance the work of the District in meeting the needs of students, and amendments may be necessary. As other districts across the state pursue this process and implement plans through this provision for additional flexibilities and more local control, new ideas for innovation may emerge that have great applicability for PISD. It is fully understood that the renewal process or amendment process must be in compliance with all sections of the adoption process. The District also shall notify the Commissioner of any actions taken to amend, rescind, or renew the Plan along with the associated TEC exemption and local approval dates. It is further understood the Board may convene the Local Innovation Plan Committee prior to the annual review process if deemed necessary.