

Northwest ISD District of Innovation Plan



DECEMBER 11, 2023 - DECEMBER 11, 2028

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Original Local Innovation Plan Adopted
January 14, 2019

Approved Amendment
August 28, 2023

Local Innovation Plan Renewed/Adopted
December 11, 2023

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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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

District of Innovation Introduction

District of Innovation is a concept passed during the 84th Legislative Session (House Bill 1842). Texas Education Code Chapter 12A gives traditional independent school districts the opportunity to gain flexibility through a variety of available exemptions to the Texas Education Code. The designation does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic or financial accountability.

A school district must adopt an innovation plan in order to access these exemptions and districts may amend, change, or 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.

Background

The Northwest ISD Board of Trustees adopted a Resolution for DOI Designation on September 24, 2017. A public hearing to consider whether the district should pursue a District of Innovation designation and develop a District of Innovation Plan was held on October 25, 2017. The DOI process was postponed pending the development of Northwest ISD's core beliefs, vision, mission, and goals, as ensuring alignment to those foundational elements was important.

The DOI process resumed in August 2018. After multiple meetings discussing the district's needs and various exemptions, a final plan was developed and the NISD Board of Trustees approved the plan on January 14, 2019, for the term January 14, 2019 through January 14, 2024.

The plan was amended with one additional exemption on August 28, 2023.

Renewal Process

The designation as a District of Innovation may not exceed five years and Northwest ISD began the renewal process in 2023. Input on the renewal of the DOI plan and possible exemptions was received from Cabinet, District Leadership Team (campus and district administrators), and the District Education Improvement Council. The District of Innovation Committee met on October 12, 2023, to review the existing DOI Plan and to discuss additional exemption considerations. A public meeting of the DOI Committee was held on November 1, 2023, and the committee unanimously approved the District of Innovation Plan.

The District of Innovation plan was presented to the NISD Board of Trustees on November 13 and unanimously approved on December 11 for a designation term of December 11, 2023 through December 11, 2028.

2023 District of Innovation Committee

First Name	Last Name	Role / 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 - 3 rd
Dawn	Kelley	Teacher - CTMS - Social Studies
Kevin	Lacefield	Executive Director of Fine Arts
Dolores	Laughlin	Teacher - Worthington MS - Spanish
Tricia	Lutkenhaus	Principal – Gene Pike MS
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 – Steele ECHS
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 – Nance ES
Kelly	Suarez	Coordinator of Elementary Science
Anthony	Tosie	Exec Dir of Communications
Monica	Valenta	Health Sciences Coordinator

Timeline

Action	Responsibility	Date
Adoption of Board Resolution for DOI Designation	Board	9/24/2017
Public Hearing	Board	10/25/2017
Committee approval of original DOI Plan	Committee	1/14/2019
NISD School Board Adoption of original DOI Plan	Board	1/14/2019
NISD School Board Adoption of Amendment	Board	8/28/2023

Renewal Process	Responsibility	Date
Superintendent Cabinet discussion	Cabinet	10/9/2023
District Leadership Team presentation and feedback	DLT	10/12/2023
DOI Committee Meeting – Review of existing DOI Plan and exemptions, introduction and discussion of additional exemption considerations	Committee	10/12/2023
DEIC presentation and feedback	Committee	10/24/2023
Public committee meeting to consider final exemptions; committee vote on final proposed DOI Plan	Committee	11/1/2023
DOI Plan posted on website	Administration	11/4/2023
NISD School Board presentation and discussion of proposed DOI Plan	Board	11/13/2023
NISD School Board consideration and approval of DOI Plan	Board	12/11/2023
Notification to Commissioner of Approval	Administration	12/13/2023
Anticipated development and consideration of DOI local policies	Board	2024

Innovation Exemptions

Educator Certification Requirement for Teachers and Other Educators **Statute: Texas Education Code §21.003 and §21.053**

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.

Probationary Contracts for Experienced Teachers **Statute: Texas Education Code §21.102(b)**

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

Statute: Texas Education Code §21.458

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.

Transfer of Children of Peace Officers

Statute: Texas Education Code §25.0344

Texas Education Code §25.0344 requires that a district, upon request of a peace officer/parent, transfer the peace officer's child to another campus within the district. Given the fast growth of the district, compliance with this law has the potential to overcrowd classrooms and require the hiring of additional staff when class sizes increase beyond board-approved ratios. Although existing administrative regulations would arguably apply to limit the application of this statute to open campuses only, this change is recommended to provide clarity to the community and administration.

Transfer of Children of Service Members

Statute: Texas Education Code §25.0344

Texas Education Code §25.0344 further requires that a district, upon request of a service member/parent, transfer the service member's child to another campus within the district. Given the fast growth of the district, compliance with this law has the potential to overcrowd classrooms and require the hiring of additional staff when class sizes increase beyond board-approved ratios. Although existing administrative regulations would arguably apply to limit the application of this statute to open campuses only, this change is recommended to provide clarity to the community and administration.

Minutes of Instruction

Statute: Texas Education Code §25.081

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.

Uniform Start Date for Academic Calendar

Statute: Texas Education Code §25.0811(a)

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.

Minimum Days of Attendance

Statute: Texas Education Code §25.092

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.

Credit by Examination (CBE)

Statute: Texas Education Code §28.023

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.

Campus Behavior Coordinator

Statute: Texas Education Code §37.0012

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.

Three-Day Limit on Suspensions

Statute: Texas Education Code §37.005

Texas Education Code §37.005 states that suspensions “may not exceed three school days.” This law has been interpreted to apply to both in and out of school suspensions. Relief from this law would allow more options for providing appropriate disciplinary consequences for student misconduct in situations where a 3-day suspension is not sufficient, but a 45-day DAEP placement is too severe.

Mandatory DAEP Placement for E-Cigarettes

Statute: Texas Education Code §37.006

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.

Removal of Unwanted Visitors

Statute: Texas Education Code §37.105

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.