

# BARTLETT

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



### **Local Innovation Plan 2024-2029**

HB 1842, of the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation. Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.

## RESOLUTION

### RESOLUTION TO RENEW DESIGNATION OF BARTLETT INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT AS A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

**Whereas,** the 84<sup>th</sup> legislature passed House Bill 11842 which provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation; and

**Whereas,** Texas school districts designated as District of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state requirements which affords traditional public schools with many of the same freedoms that apply to open-enrollment charter schools; and

**Whereas,** the vision of Bartlett Independent School District is to see that every student is achieving at his or her maximum potential in an engaging, inspiring, and challenging learning environment; and this legislation empowers local communities to be creative and innovative, while also providing greater local control in the decision-making process; and

**Whereas,** the Board of Trustees believes that decisions affecting the students of Bartlett Independent School District are best made at the local level by those who know our students, district, and community; and

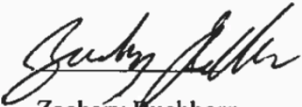

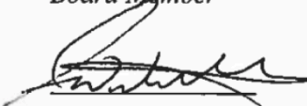
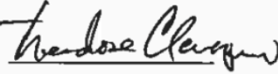
**Whereas,** the Bartlett Independent School District has adopted strategic plan that supports customization and innovation; and

**Whereas,** HB 1842 requires districts seeking to be designated as a District of Innovation to develop a local innovation plan that allows for increased freedom from certain state mandates; and

**Whereas,** the Bartlett Independent School District Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing and receive feedback from stakeholders to consider the development of a local innovation plan; following the public hearing, the Board of Trustees may decline to pursue the designation or may appoint a committee to develop a plan in accordance with chapter I 2A of the Texas Education Code; now therefore, be it

**Resolved** that the Bartlett Independent School District Board of Trustees initiated the process of exploring and considering the option of renewing the designation of BISD as a District of Innovation under HB 842.

**Witness** these signatures of the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of January, 2024.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <br>Jessica Belcher<br>Board President | <br>Zachary Buchhorn<br>Board Vice President | <br>Sheri Braun<br>Board Secretary |
| <br>Meg Bernstein<br>Board Member      | <br>Tammie Hunt<br>Board Member              | <br>Pablo Solorio<br>Board Member  |
| <br>Steven Wentreck<br>Board Member    | <br>Dr. Teddy Clevenger<br>Superintendent    |   |

On January 22, 2024, Bartlett Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation (DOI) in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve the educational opportunities for the benefit of students, staff, and the community.

**District of Innovation Committee Members**

| <u>NAME</u>         | <u>COMMITTEE POSITION</u>      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dr. Teddy Clevenger | Superintendent                 |
| Austin Crawley      | Secondary Principal            |
| Lacey Cruddas       | Elementary Principal           |
| Rachel Fahrig       | Special Program / ACE Director |
| Cynthia Guerrero    | Counselor                      |
| Ursula Fuentes      | Instructional Coach            |
| Jeff Wright         | Secondary Teacher              |
| Sharon Kurtin       | Secondary Teacher              |
| Laura Bender        | Elementary Teacher             |
| Jessica Luna        | Elementary Teacher             |
| Emily Ramirez       | Parent                         |
| Erin Biels          | Parent                         |
| Linda Huebner       | Parent                         |

## **BARTLETT ISD INNOVATION PLAN**

### **Introduction**

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On October 22, 2018, Bartlett Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation (DOI). The purpose of passing the Resolution was to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve the educational opportunities for the benefit of students, staff, and the community.

- Background of the District of Innovation presented to Bartlett ISD Board of Trustees on August 20, 2018.
- Discussion of the District of Innovation possibilities with Bartlett ISD Board of Trustees on September 17, 2018.
- District of Innovation Public Hearing held on October 22, 2018.
- Resolution and District of Innovation Committee appointed and signed by the Bartlett ISD Board of on October 22, 2018.
- Bartlett ISD Faculty and Staff were notified of the intent of the District to pursue DOI status on November 14, 2018.
- Specific District of Innovation possibilities were discussed with Bartlett ISD Faculty and Staff on December 19, 2018.
- Specific District of Innovation possibilities were discussed in detail with Bartlett ISD Faculty and Staff on January 7, 2019.
- The District of Innovation Committee reviewed and approved the DOI Plan with a unanimous vote on January 14, 2019.
- The District Leadership Team met on January 15, 2019 and approved the BISD District of Innovation Plan.
- The District of Innovation (DOI) Plan was reviewed and discussed with Bartlett ISD Faculty and Staff and later that evening on January 16, 2019, the Bartlett ISD Board of Trustees unanimously adopted the DOI Plan at the regularly scheduled board meeting.
- The BISD District of Innovation plan was posted on the district's website on January 18, 2019.

- On February 18, 2019, the Bartlett ISD Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve and adopt the District of Innovation Plan and notify the Commissioner of Education.
- On Monday, January 22, 2024 the board of trustees held a public hearing on whether or not to initiate the process to renew the BISD DOI. Later that board meeting, the board of trustees adopted and signed a resolution to initiate the DOI process of renewal and appointed a committee.
- February 5th, 2024 the final version of the proposed DOI plan was posted and available on the district's website to meet the 30 day requirement.
- March 25th, 2024 the district-level committee established under the Texas Education Code (TEC), held a public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and was approved by a unanimous vote of the committee members.
- March 25th, the board of trustees adopted the proposed renewal of the local innovation plan by an affirmative vote that was unanimous.
- March 28th, 2024 the district notified the commissioner of approval of the plan along with a list of the approved TEC exemptions by completing the agency form via email to [commissioner@tea.texas.gov](mailto:commissioner@tea.texas.gov)
- March 28th, 2024 the district provided a copy of the local innovation plan on the district website in accordance with the TEC, for the term of the designation as an innovation district.
- March 28th, 2024 the district provided a copy of the link to the current local innovation plan to the Texas Education Agency for posting on the agency website.

## **Term**

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2024-2025 school year and concluding at the end of the 2028-2029 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Board of Trustees will review the DOI Plan annually and the DOI Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

## **AREAS OF INNOVATION**

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemptions from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provision by any state agency or entity, including but not limited to the Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification, and State Board of Education.

### **First Day of Instruction**

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.

Proposal: The flexibility of start date will allow the district to determine on an annual basis what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Having the flexible start date will allow the district to balance the amount of instructional time in each semester. A flexible start will also allow the district to go back to the tradition of starting the school year with a short week, which has previously proven to foster a smoother, less tiring transition back to the school year.

### **Class Size for Grades K-4**

Requirement: (TEC 25.112-13) Currently Kindergarten - 4th grade classes are to be kept at a 22:1 student-teacher ratio. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Along with the waiver, a letter is required to be sent home to each parent in each class/section exceeding the 22:1 ratio, informing them a waiver has been submitted. In many instances, soon after the waiver process is complete, the class size drops below the maximum 22:1 ratio due to students withdrawing from the district and/or school.

Proposal: While Bartlett ISD believes small class size plays a positive role in student learning, this must be balanced with the logistics and timing of adding staff. We do not believe there is a negative impact to student achievement when a few additional students are added to a class. Most importantly, research demonstrates it is the teacher in the classroom, not absolute class size, which has the greatest impact on student learning. A TEA waiver request will not be necessary when a K-4th grade classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

To best serve the needs of the students and staff of Bartlett ISD, the District will attempt to maintain the 22:1 ratio in all K-4th core classrooms. However, if class size exceeds this ratio, the Superintendent will report the circumstance to the Board of Trustees. In the event a K-4th grade classroom exceeds 22:1, the campus will send a letter home to inform the parents of the students in the classroom. When feasible, the District will provide relief by placing an instructional aide in the classroom for the duration of time it remains at or above the 22:1 ratio.

## **Teacher Certification**

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 21.003 mandates that districts that wish to hire an uncertified staff member must submit a request to TEA and wait on approval or denial. Section 21.0031 provides that an employee's probationary, continuing, or term Chapter 21 contract is void for failure to maintain certification in certain circumstances. Section 21.051 provides that before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities.

Proposal: The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification. The district will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, when that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. To adequately supply programs with qualified candidates, the district requires the flexibility to hire staff members who would qualify for placement in assignments outside of their traditional certification areas and to retain them. The district will establish local qualification and training requirements for professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of state requirements. Teachers that qualify for the local district certification will be employed on an At-Will basis. The district will make decisions on certification needs for the various special programs. These exemptions are of particular importance for hard-to-fill and high-demand courses. The district will ensure that professional development plans are in place to train non-certified personnel in pedagogy and to provide needed support.

An individual with experience in a Career and Technical Education field could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request in writing to the superintendent with all of the individual's credentials. The superintendent, after consultation with the campus principal and Human Resources, will examine: (1) the candidate's professional work experience; (2) formal training and education; (3) relevant licensure, certification or registration; and/or (4) any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentials related to the subject matter he or she will be teaching. The superintendent will then approve the request if he or she believes the individual is qualified to perform the duties of the assignment. The superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees any teaching assignment under this provision.

An individual with a college degree or certification in a trade could be eligible to teach a course related to his or her expertise or experience through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request in writing to the superintendent with all of the individual's credentials. The superintendent, after consultation with the campus principal and Human Resources, will examine the candidate's professional work experience, formal training and education, relevant licensure, certification or registration, and/or any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentials related to the subject matter he or she will be teaching. The superintendent will then approve the request if he or she believes that the individual is qualified to perform the duties of the assignment. The superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees any teaching assignment under this provision.

### **Teacher Probationary Contracts**

Requirement: Texas Education Code Section 21.102 mandates that experienced teachers new to the district, have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Proposal: The current review 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 the end of the school year. For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to Bartlett ISD that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract will be issued for each of the first two years of employment with the district.

### **Minimum Service Requirement**

Requirement: Texas Education Code 21.40I(b): MINIMUM SERVICE REQUIRED. (b) An educator employed on a 10-month employment agreement must provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

Proposal: Bartlett ISD would like to have the freedom and flexibility to align our minimum days of service closer to the state's requirement of 75,600 minutes for students. The potential reduction in days of service would have no effect on teacher salaries, thus increasing the teacher's daily rate. The determination of reduced days would be recommended to the Board of Trustees annually and adopted during the calendar adoption process for the upcoming school year. These reduction of days would be a recruitment and retention tool for Bartlett ISD and would only apply to those staff members that provide 187 days of service.

### **TEACHER APPRAISAL SYSTEM & ADMINISTRATOR/PRINCIPAL**

Requirement: Texas Education Code 21.352, 21.353, 21.354, 21.3541 – DNA (LEGAL) and DNA (LOCAL). The state implemented a new teacher appraisal system called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). The



domains within these systems were developed by the state to meet the needs of the entire state of Texas.

Proposal: Bartlett ISD would like the flexibility to make decisions in the evaluation process that they believe will make the biggest impact on student success without spending unnecessary time on compliance pieces that do not provide a significant impact on teacher effectiveness. After two years of an employee being evaluated with the T-TESS evaluation system, and rated at a minimum of proficient in all domains, the employee can be evaluated every other year. If a change in campus administration takes place, all employees must be evaluated for two consecutive years before being allowed to move to an alternating T-TESS appraisal frequency.

### **Three-Day Limitations on ISS Suspensions**

Requirement: Texas Education Code §37.005 – FOB (LEGAL). The principal or other appropriate administrator may suspend a student who engages in conduct identified in the student code of conduct and under Texas Education Code Section 37.01 as conduct for which the student may be suspended. A suspension may not exceed three school days suspensions.

Proposal: Bartlett ISD believes this limitation minimizes a campus's options for discipline without sending a student to DAEP. Because of the law's three-day limit for suspensions, campus staff is limited in the choices of discipline that can be applied to students for moderately serious offenses. Providing for additional days of in school suspensions (ISS), beyond the three days, allows the campus new and innovative ways of thinking about discipline and more fully meeting a student's needs while they are being disciplined, prior to being sent to a DAEP.

### **Suspension limitation for students below 3rd grade**

Requirement: Texas Education Code §37.005 – FOB (LEGAL). Under the law, a student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off of school property:

1. Conduct contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Penal Code 46.02 or 46.05;
2. Conduct contains the elements of a violence-related offense under Penal Code 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, 22.021; or
3. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of any amount of:
  - Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et seq.;
  - A dangerous drug, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 483; or
  - An alcoholic beverage, as defined by Alcoholic Beverage Code 1.04.

Proposal: It is foreseeable that elementary campuses and students could be adversely affected by the strict limitation on suspensions. If a student's behavior reaches a level of such disruption that

the school cannot function properly, immediate action should be taken to maintain the effectiveness and safety of the educational environment for all students. There are instances in which a student needs specially designed plans and support in order to be successful in his or her learning environment. At those times, the student's needs can be met if the staff has even a day or two to prepare a plan for the child's needs. If additional staff is needed to help control behavior, for example, the central office may need a day to find and place staff for that purpose. In these limited instances, it serves the student's best interest and the campus to briefly suspend the student.