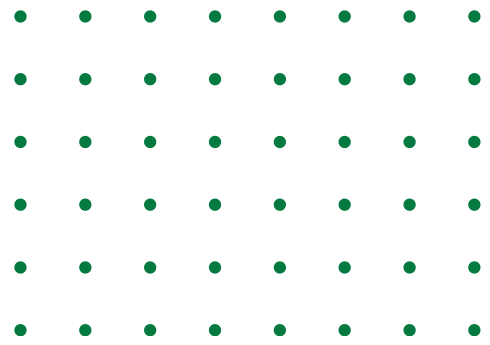




KENNEDALE ISD

District of Innovation

FEBRUARY 1, 2022 - JANUARY 30, 2027



Board of Trustees

Darryl Owens, President
Sean Glover, Vice President
Debbie Villagomez, Secretary
Esteban Cerda
Maria Cruz-Perez
Maria Douglas, PhD
Felicia Moody

Original Local Innovation Plan Adopted
February 16, 2017

Local Innovation Plan Renewed/Adopted
January 27, 2022

Local Innovation Plan Amended
September 19, 2024

Administration

Chad Gee, EdD
Superintendent

Julie Vu, PhD
Assistant Superintendent
Curriculum & Student Services

Jaclyn West
Assistant Superintendent
Finance & Operations



OUR VISION



OUR MISSION

The mission of the Kennedale Independent School District is to provide a diverse, engaging, and safe environment where all stakeholders are responsible and accountable for student success.

OUR GOALS

We will provide an exceptional learning experience to promote high levels of achievement and postsecondary readiness for all students.

Parents and families should be active essential partners who work together with mutual respect and trust for the benefit of students and staff.

We will ensure that all students and staff learn & work in a safe environment that is responsive to the academic, social, and emotional needs of our stakeholders.

The district will establish systemic and systematic operational processes to align resources with its mission, vision, and goals.

I. 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 July 28, 2016 the Kennedale Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the Process of Designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations as well as to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community. The plan was approved unanimously by the Board on February 16, 2017.

II. Term

The district's original Local Innovation Plan was approved by the Kennedale ISD Board of Trustees for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2022. The updated Plan was presented to the Board of Trustees and approved on January 27, 2022 for another five-year term. This new five-year term is from February 1, 2022 and ending on January 30, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The district-level committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications.

If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the district-level committee (TEC § 11.251) will develop and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment for consideration by the Board. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

III. District of Innovation Amendment Timeline

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 09/05/2024 | District Leadership Team cohort met to review and discuss draft of updated DOI plan. |
| 09/11/2024 | District level committee TEC 11.251 held a public meeting to consider and vote on the updated plan as required by TEC 12A.005. The voting members of the District Advisory Committee approved the plan. |
| 09/19/2024 | The board approved the amendments to the Local Innovation Plan. |

IV. Innovations

The District proposes flexibility in the following areas:

1. Certification Required (TEC 21.003 & 21.057) (DBA LEGAL) (DBA LOCAL)

Texas Education Code 21.003 and 21.057 outlines state certification and notification standards for teachers. An exemption from these requirements allows Kennedale ISD 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 (with the exception of special education, bilingual, and ESL). Kennedale ISD prides itself in hiring the highest quality teaching staff for the benefit of all learners. Occasionally, teachers are needed for positions that are difficult to fill because of the lack of certified applicants. 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). This exemption excludes positions that require SBEC certification for teachers of special education, bilingual, and ESL. 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.

Non-certified teachers hired under a local teaching certificate shall receive a non-Chapter 21 contract for the first year of KISD employment in a teaching position. A non-certified teacher will be eligible to receive a probationary contract under TEC Chapter 21 after the completion of one school year or upon receiving his/her teaching certificate, whichever occurs first.

2. Uniform School Calendar (TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL) (EB LOCAL)

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.
- Alignment of calendar with TCC, Advanced Placement Exams, and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- Ensure hour/seat time requirements are met for Certification courses.
- Creates flexibility for the District to pursue year round school of choice for identified populations.

3. Probationary Contracts (TEC 21.102) (DCA LEGAL)

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers, supervisors, counselors, principals, assistant principals, diagnosticians, nurses and other educators entitled to a Chapter 21 contract under state law ("covered educators") who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period of time is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the employee's effectiveness in their current role. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced covered educators who are newly hired in Kennedale ISD.

4. Teacher Mentors (TEC 21.458) (DEAA LEGAL)

TEC 21.458 lays out several requirements for teacher mentors. An exemption from these requirements would allow for any teacher in need of mentor assistance or support to be assigned a mentor. In addition, mentors would be exempt from the qualifications described in Subsection (b), thus increasing the pool of teachers from which the district could draw for these targeted mentoring programs.

5. Transfer Students (TEC 25.036)

TEC 25.036(a) states that any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer. The Commissioner of Education has interpreted this statute to prohibit mid-year student transfer revocation except in the case of failure to pay tuition.

The District seeks exemption from TEC 25.036(a) and the interpretation of the Commissioner of Education. Status as a transfer student in KISD is a privilege and not a right, and the District seeks exemption from this provision, and the related Commissioner interpretation, in order to ensure that transfer students fulfill their responsibilities in order to maintain that privilege. A transfer student shall be notified in the written transfer agreement that he or she must follow all rules and regulations of the District. Non-resident students who have been accepted as a District transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent or designee at any time during the academic year if the student fails to meet and maintain standards of academic, attendance or conduct as outlined in the KISD Transfer form. Additionally, violation of the terms of the transfer agreement may result in a transfer request not being approved the following year.

6. Class Size Waivers (TEC 25.111) (TEC 25.112) (EEB LEGAL)

K-4 classrooms currently must meet a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 according to state law. If a class exceeds this 22:1 ratio, then the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. Waivers are always approved. In addition, a letter must be sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them that the waiver has been submitted.

- Kennedale ISD believes that class size plays a significant role in instruction but also acknowledges that other factors impact the ability of the district to ensure this ratio. It is possible that class sizes may by necessity be slightly larger. District resources can be used more wisely by not having to continually notify TEA each time a class exceeds 22:1. Therefore, the District seeks the following:
 - KISD will make every effort to begin each school year with the 22:1 ratio except for unique and extenuating circumstances.
 - In the event that a class size rises above the required ratio, a waiver will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.
 - In the event that a class size exceeds 22:1, the parents of the classroom affected will be notified.
 - In the event that a K-2 class size exceeds 23:1, or a 3rd or 4th grade class exceeds 24:1, it will be reviewed to determine appropriate outcomes and the school board will be notified by the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee.
 - A teacher will be hired at any point during the school year if the superintendent deems it in the best interest of the students.

7. Minimum Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (TEC 25.092) (FEC LOCAL)

TEC 25.092 states that a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit for a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. Exemption from this code would provide flexibility for students for which one or more of the following apply:

- Are unable to attend the class in the traditional brick and mortar building due to illness or family concerns.
- Would benefit from a different time structure to the school day.
- Would benefit from virtual and online classes in addition or in place of the traditional classroom setting.
- Have excused absences and have completed all makeup work.

Students taking traditional courses not impacted by this exemption would still be required to meet the 90% attendance requirement as it currently stands.

8. Campus Behavior Coordinator (TEC 37.0012) (FO LEGAL)

Legal policy currently states that a person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC). The person may be the campus Principal, or any other campus administrator selected by the principal. The CBC is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Education Code Chapter 37. On large campuses, one individual is designated as CBC to manage discipline, but it may be necessary to have additional administrators provide notice to parents about disciplinary incidents.

The District seeks to change the wording in the Campus Behavior Coordinator Duties, and to allow multiple administrators to act as CBCs for each campus. This will provide campuses the opportunity to allow campus administrators to fully understand and get to know the students in their caseload rather than sourcing all discipline matters to one employee. While it is imperative that all employees work together and be informed as to the discipline occurring on a campus, it is just as critical for students to be able to depend on an administrator that they know and trust in all facets of their education, including discipline. Each campus should have the freedom to designate more than one CBC to best meet the needs of their students and teachers.

9. Three Day Limit on Suspensions (ISS) (TEC 37.005) (FOB LEGAL)

Texas Education Code 37.005 currently states that a suspension may not exceed three school days. The law has been interpreted to apply to both in and out of school suspensions. This limitation minimizes the options a campus has for discipline without sending the student to Disciplinary Alternative Educational Placement (DAEP).

The District seeks exemption from (TEC 37.005) in order to widen the campus staff's choices of discipline that can be applied to students for moderately serious offenses. Exemption from this requirement will provide campuses with the option of keeping students on campus and closer to their regular teachers during a disciplinary placement rather than always opting to send students to DAEP. This provides a range of options for the campus and allows us to more fully meet a student's needs while they are being disciplined.

10. Mandatory DAEP Placement for E-cigarettes/Nicotine (TEC 37.006(a)(2)(C-2))

Texas Education Code 37.006(a)(2)(c-2) specifies that a student shall be removed from class and placed in DAEP if the student (c-2) possesses, uses, sells, gives or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 16.081 Health and Safety Code.

The District seeks exemption from the statutory provisions and will continue to use the discipline matrix in place at the campus level. The campus will partner with parents to provide education on the dangers of e-cigarettes and similar products. Additionally, the District believes that counseling intervention for first time offenders will better support early intervention efforts, maintain academic consistency, and keep students engaged in school activities and experiences. If parents and students agree to participate in district counseling or other programs approved by the district, the campus administration will assign in school suspension or a comparable setting, instead of placement at DAEP that is required by the Texas Education Code. 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.

11. Suspension of Students in Grades Below Third (TEC 37.005) (FOB LEGAL)

Under current guidelines, students below third grade may not be placed in out-of-school suspension unless the student engages in behaviors that include weapons, violent offenses, sexual assault, or being under the influence. There are times when students engage in behaviors that do not necessarily fit into these categories but may warrant removal from the instructional setting. An example might include students who engage in “persistent misbehaviors” that are deemed to be harmful to the student or others. Currently, students in these situations sometimes fail to understand the seriousness of their behaviors due to administrative limitations in responding to those behaviors.

The District will establish a protocol to facilitate appropriate disciplinary steps to address behaviors of students in grade three and below. This protocol might include consideration of student behaviors by campus administrators in collaboration with district support staff. To provide and maintain a high-quality learning environment that is safe and orderly for all students, this flexibility will allow for school-based decision making to more effectively ensure the safety and security of all students and staff. In limited instances it may best serve the student and the campus to briefly suspend the student while they create specially designed plans and assign staff to support the student and their learning environment.

12. Ejection of Individuals from Facilities (TEC 37.105) (GKA LEGAL) (GKA LOCAL) (GF LOCAL) (FNG LOCAL)

Texas Education Code 37.105 allows a school administrator, school resource officer, or school district peace officer to refuse to allow a person to enter onto or may eject a person from district property if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request, or if the person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person, or if the person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and persists in that behavior despite verbal warning. Under current law, the administrator, resource officer, or peace officer must maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from a school facility that is issued, including the person's name and date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from school property, the district shall provide to the person written information explaining the grievance and appeal process. Under the commissioner's rules adopted under the authority granted in the TEC, the individual refused entry or ejected from the facility must be given the opportunity to appeal the decision to the Board of Trustees within 90 calendar days.

The District seeks exemption from maintaining a written log of verbal warnings, providing written notice of the appeal process at the time of ejection, internet posting of the requirements and appeal process, and the ability to appeal the decision to the Board of Trustees within 90 calendar days. These administratively burdensome requirements are impractical and potentially impossible to fulfill when an individual is dealing with an unruly individual. Furthermore, it is reasonable to believe that requiring such information could also escalate a situation that is already proving to be disruptive. It is impractical to provide written notice of an appeal process at many events. Furthermore, the District already has a process for taking grievances to the Board of Trustees and there is not a justified need for a unique process or timeline.

13. Professional Development (TEC 21.451) (DMA LEGAL) (DMA LOCAL)

Under current state guidelines, the district is required to implement numerous annual state-mandated professional development trainings that puts undue stress and time constraints on our faculty and staff.

The District seeks exemption from state-mandated professional development that does not reflect the needs of our teachers and other school personnel. This will allow the district to remain flexible and responsive to newly emerging data and trends within our own student population.

All new to district employees will complete specified compliance training during the first year of employment within the district. Employees may be assigned training to an employee or group of employees as needed within a five year cycle. Works in specified groups, such as coaches and those who handle food or bodily fluids, are not except from annual trainings mandated for their specific job type, roles, responsibilities and duties.

The District will maintain an update professional development list for all employees with a 2024-2025 baseline. Employees will participate in formal Statutory Compliance Training every five years.

14. Bank Depository Bids (TEC 45.205, 45.206, 45.207) (BDAE LEGAL) (BDAE LOCAL)

Under current guidelines the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for two additional two-year terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206(C). The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district's fiscal year.

Kennedale ISD seeks exemption from the contract requirements for a bank depository contract. By gaining exemption from these requirements, the District would be able to allow the District's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 8 year allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking out to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is/are no other banking institutions within district boundaries available to bid on the district's business. In addition, this would further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter their direct deposit instructions and afford district flexibility with response to local banking relationships.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses and departments. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.

2024 District of Innovation Committee Members

Chelsea Allison, PhD | *Assistant Principal KHS*

Angela Bruce | *Principal KJHS*

Frankie Bryson | *Principal DAEP*

Michael Cagle | *Principal KHS*

Cari Clark | *Principal RFP*

Jeff Davis | *Director of School Safety and Discipline*

Stephanie Devlin, PhD | *Director of Counseling Services*

Denell Dickey | *Instructional Programs Coordinator*

Tammy Dwomo | *Director of Student Support Services*

Chad Gee, EdD | *Superintendent*

Wendy Gerstenkorn | *Lead Diagnostician*

Shana Herigon | *Data Analyst*

Janis Howell | *Teacher JFD*

Toya Keas, PhD | *Instructional Programs Coordinator*

Brandy King | *Director of Human Resources*

Brian Franklin | *Director of Information Technology*

Debbie Lavadour | *Teacher RFP*

Linda Medrano | *Teacher KHS*

Jeff Navarez | *Community Member and Parent*

Trisha Poore | *Principal JFD*

Monica Rawls | *Director of Special Student Services*

Regina Reed | *Community Member*

Jacques Robinson, EdD | *Assistant Principal KHS*

Monica Stephens | *Teacher KHS*

Andrea Volding | *Director of Instructional Services*

Julie Vu, PhD | *Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Student Services*

Laura Wells | *Principal JAA*

Jaclyn West | *Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations*

Tanya Widner | *Teacher RFP*

Tracy Williams | *Director of Administrative Services*

