

# Big Spring ISD



## District of Innovation Plan

**2022-2027**

*Amended September 2025*

## INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas public schools with sufficient academic ratings to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The allowable exemptions are for those sections of code that do not apply to charter or private schools in an attempt to reduce the extra administrative or operational burdens placed on public schools.

To obtain exemptions, the District must create a Local Innovation Plan detailing the code requirements that inhibit the goals of the District and the benefits to the District expected from the exemption.

## PLAN TERM

The term of the plan will begin December 8, 2022 and terminate on December 8, 2027, unless amended, rescinded, or renewed by the Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees. The Innovation Committee will review the plan annually to confirm consistent alignment with the needs of the District. Any recommended plan changes will be posted to the District website for 30 days and require the approval of the Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees. Refer to BSISD policy AF.

## INNOVATION ORIGINAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jay McWilliams	Superintendent
Jeff Perez	Assistant Superintendent of Operations
Dana Scott	Assistant Superintendent of Academics
Susan Bryan	Chief Financial Officer
Debbie Park	Director of Federal Programs
Tyler Sheppard	Director of Special Education
Rebecca Otto	Director of Curriculum
Jamie Scott	Director of Technology
James Wommack	Director of Security
Mike Ritchey	Big Spring High School Principal
Burt Otto	Big Spring Junior High Principal
Patsy Sanchez	Big Spring Intermediate Principal
Stacie Del Angel	Goliad Elementary Principal
Kristin Tubb	Washington Elementary Principal
Treena Foster	Marcy Elementary Principal
Carman Wommack	Moss Elementary Principal
Samantha Hyatt	Kentwood EC Principal
Sharon Chancy	BSISD Teacher
Jennifer Adams	BSISD Teacher
Lisa Brunelli	BSISD Teacher
George Bancroft	Community Member

## TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity/Task	Due date
<b>September</b>	Board Meeting- BSISD Board of Trustees discusses rules and process for being an Innovation District	September 8, 2022
	Board Meeting- Board votes to adopt Resolution to initiate consideration for being designated as an Innovation District	September 8, 2022
	Board Meeting- Board holds public hearing, appoints the District Innovation Team (DIT), the current BSISD District Leadership Team, to develop a Local Innovation Plan (LIP).	September 8, 2022
<b>October</b>	DIT/DAC meets to discuss innovative ideas for the school district.	October 13, 2022
	DIT/DAC holds public hearing regarding the DOI Plan and then votes to approve plan with a majority vote.	October 27, 2022
	Post plan on website for 30 days	October 28, 2022
	Notify Commissioner of Intent to Adopt	November 3, 2022
<b>November</b>	Board adopts with 2/3 majority vote.	December 8, 2022
	District Notifies Commissioner after Board adoption.	December 9, 2022
<b>December</b>	Update all local policies.	December 31, 2022
<b>August</b>	Committee meets and approves amendments to the current DOI.	August 25, 2025
<b>September</b>	Board approves amended DOI.	September 16, 2025
	District notifies Commissioner after Board adoption.	September 18, 2025

## COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

BSISD Vision Statement:

Big Spring ISD will instill respect and pride in all stakeholders by empowering our community of learners to unite and commit to educational excellence.

BSISD Core Principles:

- Recruit and retain highly qualified staff.
- Always maintain integrity and professionalism.

- Provide a caring and safe environment.
- Ensure instructional time is valued.
- Use data to guide instructional practices and decisions.
- Provide ongoing meaningful professional development.
- Design and deliver relevant and engaging instruction.

BSISD System-wide Practices to Support Learners:

- Multi-tiered systems of support
- Specific district-wide educational programs
- Professional learning communities
- Strong literacy foundation
- High yield instructional strategies
- Vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum
- Data driven decision making procedures through local data management system for formative and summative assessments
- Inclusion
- Differentiated instruction
- Sheltered instruction
- Digital learning opportunities
- College and career readiness opportunities
- Diverse credit opportunities
- Modified instructional calendar
- Modified instructional day
- Texas Instructional Leadership

## EXEMPTIONS SOUGHT

### **Uniform Start Date (TEC §25.0811)**

A school district may not begin instruction for the school year before the fourth Monday in August. (EB LEGAL/LOCAL)

- ❖ Innovation Strategy
  - *Flexible Calendar*: BSISD will no longer be required to delay the start of school to the fourth Friday in August as currently required by TEC § 25.0811. Upon implementation of the DOI Plan, the District will determine an appropriate start date annually. BSISD will continue to consider stakeholder input as required by Board policy EB (Local) in its determination of the first day of instruction.

- Rationale: The increasingly later start date for instruction has presented numerous challenges and obstacles to District academic operations. Fall and Spring semesters are significantly unequal in length; opportunities for collaborative teacher planning and preparation time are reduced, the last day of instruction gets pushed farther into June which negatively affects summer programming and some students and staff who wish to attend universities and colleges in the summer miss the first days of college classes. Unequal semesters also negatively affect one-semester classes because the same curriculum still must be taught in fewer instructional days. In addition, teachers and campus administrators place value on strategically scheduled professional development days in each semester to assist campuses in analyzing student performance and planning. The late school start date interferes with developing an academic calendar that meets stakeholder desires and prohibits balancing the Fall and Spring semesters. Unbalanced semesters negatively affect student learning, cause low staff morale in the spring due to a later ending date, and reduce teacher preparation time.

### **Class Size (TEC §25.112)**

Requires districts to maintain a class size of twenty-two students or less for kindergarten-fourth grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the agency. TEC §25.113 Notice of Class Size- Requires districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. (BF and EEB LEGAL/LOCAL)

#### ❖ Innovation Strategy

- Flexible Class Sizes: The district will have the ability to enroll more than 22 students in grades kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade without filing a class-size waiver with TEA.
- Rationale: Staffing shortages, due to geographical limitations, result in recruiting staff and retaining certified teachers. The district would be able to support instruction with certified teachers better by having the ability to raise the class size ratio to support students and ensuring students were in a classroom with a certified teacher. In most instances, BSISD will not utilize this approach, however this innovation allows flexibility. Additionally, the district will not file a waiver to the TEA when class sized in kindergarten-fourth classrooms exceed the 22:1 ratio.

### **Probationary Contract (TEC §21.102)**

State law currently states that a teacher who has been employed as a teacher in public education for five to eight years preceding employment by a district may only be placed on a probationary contract for one year. (DFAB LEGAL) (DCA LOCAL) (DFFA LEGAL) (DCB LEGAL)

#### ❖ Innovation Strategy

- *Probationary Contracts*: Experienced teachers and counselors new to BSISD that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, may be placed on a probationary contract for up to two years from the last date of district employment. This will allow the district more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.
- *Rationale*: This exemption would give the district the ability to add a second year of probation to teachers new to the district. This exemption allows the additional years of probationary status which provide campus administrators and hiring officials the time needed to fully assess and support a teacher that is hired under the five of eight rule before making decision regarding moving the employee from a probationary contract to a term contract.

### **Length of School Day (TEC §25.082)**

State law requires that a school day shall be at least seven hours (420 minutes) each day including intermissions and recesses. While there is currently a waiver process in place to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum for a school year. (EB LEGAL/LOCAL)

#### ❖ Innovative Strategy

- *Length of School Day*: Exemption from the 420-minute school day.
- *Rationale*: The district will have a significant amount of local control over scheduling and including the flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction which can assist with providing teachers with a professional learning community and collaboration opportunities. This would also allow the district to incorporate half days each semester for professional development as needed.

### **Planning and Preparation Time (TEC §21.404)**

Currently, teachers are entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for preparing to teach, conducting parent conferences, and evaluating students' work. (DL LOCAL)

#### ❖ Innovation Strategy:

- *Planning and Preparation Time*: All teachers will have planning and learning time each month, but flexibility is requested.
- *Rationale*: Having flexibility in planning and preparation time helps in creating schedules where select teachers can reach more students and have more planning time on teacher teams.

## **Teacher Contract Days (TEC §21.401)**

States that educators employed on a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days service. The passage of TEC 25.081 changed the required days of instruction to minutes but did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. (DC LEGAL)

### ❖ Innovative Strategy

- Flexible Staff Contract Days: This proposal will reduce teacher contract days from a minimum of 187 days to a minimum of 182 days with no effect on teacher salaries, resulting in a pay neutral status.
- Rationale: This will better align the teacher days of service to the 75,600 minutes required of students, and it will enhance teacher recruitment/retention thus improving teacher morale.

## **Inter District Transfers---TEC 25.036**

Districts transfers are for an entire school year. (FDA Local)

### ❖ Innovative Strategy

- One Year Transfer Exemption: Under Texas Education Code, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants.
- Rationale: On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Big Spring ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment. Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

## **Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003)(TEC §21.053)**

Pursuant to TEC 21.003, a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern, teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician or school counselor by a school

district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the State Board for Educator Certification. This law requires a person who desires to be a teacher in a public school to present the person's certificate to the District before a contract with the District is binding, and before the person may be paid for teaching. (DBA LEGAL/LOCAL) (DK LEGAL/LEGAL) (DK EXHIBIT)

❖ Innovation Strategy

- Certification requirements: To best serve BSISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to fill, high need teaching assignments. This would include, but not be limited to, areas such as Career Technical Education (CTE), Language Other Than English (LOTE), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and areas of advanced academics. This flexibility would relate only to those positions the district identifies as difficult to fill and would be assessed individually. In addition, campus administrators will have the ability to consider out-of-state or out-of-country educator certifications. The district will establish local criteria, such as years of experience, formal education/training, and industry certifications, to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate. Principals, along with corresponding curriculum departments, will submit candidates to the Superintendent with credentials for approval. Parent notification will not be required for these employees. BSISD will continue to maintain high standards for certified and non-certified employees. Employees who are employed through DOI must provide evidence of pursuing full certification (monthly and annual reviews).
- Rationale: Teacher certification requirements make it difficult, if not impossible to find qualified candidates. In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position, or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency, TEA then approves or denies this request. The process of seeking certification waivers or permits from TEA is time consuming and exhausts limited District resources.

## **Chapter 26A**

In the 89<sup>th</sup> regular legislative session, TEC 26.011 was amended to require the board of trustees to adopt a grievance procedure that complies with Chapter 26A under which the board shall hear each grievance the board receives concerning violation of a right guaranteed by chapter 26, of a board of trustees policy, or of a provision of Title 2 of the Texas Education Code. (FNG Local, DGBA Local, GF Local).

❖ Innovative Strategy

The District acknowledges and respects parental rights in public education. The District's existing grievance policy provides parents and stakeholders in public education with a fair process to submit grievances and seek applicable remedies. Accordingly, the District will not be required to comply with the following requirements of TEC 26A.001:

- TEC 26A.001(e)(2). A person involved in reviewing a grievance may (but is not required to) recuse himself or herself from reviewing the grievance if the person is the subject of the grievance.
  - Rationale: The person reviewing a grievance is often in the best position to investigate and provide information relevant to the grievance. An individual's ability to appeal a decision at any level of the grievance process allows for the grievance to be reviewed by a person or persons who are not the subject of the grievance.
- TEC 26A.001(e)(3). Except as otherwise required by the District's grievance policy, a higher level of review will not be required if the person who reviews the grievance is the subject of the grievance.
  - Rationale: Beginning a grievance at the appropriate level allows for the appropriate development of a record for review and promotes resolution at lower levels of the grievance process.
- TEC 26A.001(e)(4). The District will not require an indication of each document that supports the decision.
  - Rationale: This requirement is administratively burdensome because information regarding the decision is already included in the record.
- TEC 26A.001(e)(5). The District will not allow a person who files a grievance to add additional claims to the grievance after the first hearing of the grievance. Additional claims made after the first grievance hearing must be filed separately.
  - Rationale: The District encourages all claims related to an incident or issue to be brought forward within the same grievance. This requirement promotes efficiency in the grievance process by ensuring an appropriate record is developed for each claim and avoiding the conflation of issues.
- TEC 26A.001(e)(9). The District may (but is not required to) issue a decision on the merits of the concern raised in the grievance.
  - Rationale: The requirement to issue a decision on the merits regardless of any procedural errors or the type of relief requested is administratively burdensome when the grievant has clearly failed to comply with grievance timelines or is seeking relief the District is unable to provide.
- TEC 26A.001(e)(10). The District is not required to allow a meeting to be open or closed at the request of the person who filed the grievance. The Board may hold a grievance hearing or deliberate a grievance in closed session only in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
  - Rationale: The Board is in the best position to protect confidential student and employee information when it has the discretion to enter closed session as permitted by the Texas Open Meetings Act. The Board will honor requests for a closed meeting when it is permissible under the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- TEC 26A.001(e)(11). The Board will not be required to provide a description of information the Board intends to rely on that is not already contained in the record.

- Rationale: The Board will only consider the information in the Level Three Record and the information presented in the Level Three Hearing in reaching its determination. The District's administration is already required to provide notice to the complainant of the nature of information on which it intends to rely at least three days before a Level Three Hearing if the information was not included in the Level Two Record.
- TEC 26A.001(g). The District shall not be required to submit to TEA a report on grievances filed in the District during the preceding year.
  - Rationale: This requirement is administratively burdensome and creates unnecessary paperwork documenting grievances that have already been resolved.

### **Timelines for Filing and Appeal---TEC 26A.002**

In the 89th regular legislative session, the legislature section 26A.002 to the Texas Education Code. Section TEC 26A.002 provides requirements for timelines related to the grievance process.

#### **❖ Innovative Strategy**

The District will not be required to follow the timelines specified under Chapter 26A

- A parent or person standing in parental relation to a student shall file a grievance within 15 business days from the date on which the parent or person knew or had reason to know of facts giving rise to the grievance.
  - Rationale: Delays in filing a grievance may negatively impact the District's ability to investigate the issue. Delays in filing a grievance may also negatively impact the District's ability to provide the relief requested.
- Attempts at informal resolution shall not extend the deadline to file a grievance.
  - Rationale: Allowing extended deadlines based upon engagement in informal resolution is administratively burdensome and creates uncertainty as to the deadline to file a grievance. The District and the person filing the complaint may extend the timelines in the grievance policy by mutual written agreement. Further, extending the deadline to file a grievance may negatively impact on the District's ability to grant the requested relief.
- Appeals must be filed within 10 business days after the date on which a decision on the grievance was made.
  - Rationale: Extending the amount of time a person may appeal a decision unnecessarily delays the grievance process.
- Written decisions on hearings that are not before the board must be provided within 10 business days.
  - Rationale: Permitting the District's administration 20 days to provide a response unnecessarily delays the grievance process

### **Posting of Procedures and Forms---TEC 26A.003**

In the 89th regular legislative session, the legislature section 26A.003 to the Texas Education Code. Section TEC 26A.003 provides requirements related to the posting of procedures and forms for the District's grievance policy.

❖ Innovative Strategy

The District will not be required to meet the requirements of section 26A.003.

- The District will not be required to meet the requirements of section 26.003(a). The District shall make its forms for filing a grievance available upon request. District grievance policies are made available online.
  - Rationale: The requirements of section 26A.003 are administratively burdensome and may have the effect of discouraging informal resolution of issues. The District's grievance policies and procedures are already published online.
- The District shall not be required to permit grievances to be submitted electronically through the District website:
  - Rationale: Permitting grievances to be submitted electronically through the website may have the effect of discouraging informal resolution of issues and is administratively burdensome.
- The District shall not be required to submit to the agency the location on the district's website at which the information required by subsection (a) is available. The District shall submit to TEA a link to the District's Policy online.
  - Rationale: The District has excepted itself from the requirements of section 26A.003(a) under this DOI Plan.