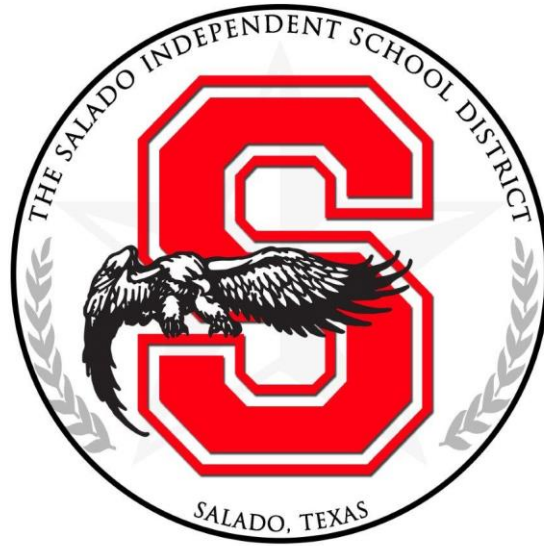




District of Innovation Plan

Developed in cooperation with and approval by the
District Based Decision Making Committee

Salado ISD

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, provides the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to allow more flexibility and local control for innovative programming.

On January 14, 2019, Salado 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.

Local Innovation Committee Members

Superintendent	Dr. Michael Novotny
Assistant Superintendent	Burt Smith
High School Principal	Beth Aycock
Junior High Principal	Ted Smith
Junior High Counselor	Brittany Goodson
Elementary Principal	Katie Mullins
Elementary AP	Lacey Cruddas
Athletic Director	Paul Baird
HS Teacher	Kaleigh Black
HS Teacher	Laura Stanczak
HS Teacher	Terri Seaton
JH Teacher	Kerry Chambliss
ES Teacher	Jennifer Scott
ES Teacher	Jami Smith
ES Teacher	Kelsey Cardenas
ES Teacher	Lainie Hoelscher
Parent	Melanie Kasper
Parent	Lisa Sanchez
Parent	Angela Neas
Community member	Shirley Stephenson
Community member	David McGilvray
Community member	Lynn Persyn
Community member	Barbara Agee
Business	Kenny Kelarek
Business	Deanna Whitson

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 January 14, 2019, Salado 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. The following dates outline the steps that have been taken to begin development of the plan for Salado ISD:

- Background of the District of Innovation presented to Salado ISD Board of Trustees on January 14, 2019.
- Resolution signed for District of Innovation by the Salado ISD Board of Trustees on January 14, 2019.
- District of Innovation Public Hearing held on January 14, 2019.
- District of Innovation Committee created by the Salado ISD Board of Trustees on January 14, 2019.
- District of Innovation Committee members were contacted and made aware of their selection on January 15, 2019.
- DOI Committee met on January 23, 2019 to develop the proposed plan.
- The District Site Based Decision Making Committee met on February 20, 2019 and approved the proposed SISD District of Innovation Plan.
- The proposed SISD District of Innovation plan was posted on the district's website on February 21, 2019.
- Salado ISD notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of their intent to become a District of Innovation on February 21, 2019.
- The Salado ISD Board of Trustees approved the SISD District of Innovation Plan at the regularly scheduled board meeting on April 15, 2019.
- Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Texas Commissioner of Education on April 16, 2019.
- The District Site Based Decision Making Committee met on February 17, 2021 and unanimously approved an amendment to the SISD District of Innovation Plan regarding school district depositories contract.
- The Salado ISD Board of Trustees unanimously approved the amendment to the SISD DOI plan at the regularly scheduled board meeting on April 19, 2021.
- Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Texas Commissioner of Education on April 20, 2021.
- A copy of the amended SISD District of Innovation Plan was posted to the SISD website on April 20, 2021.

- The District Site Based Decision Making Committee met on April 5, 2023 and unanimously approved an amendment to the SISD District of Innovation Plan regarding required professional development.
- The District Site Based Decision Making Committee met on October 23, 2025 and unanimously approved four amendments to the District of Innovation Plan regarding library policies, library materials acquisition, grievances policy, and standardized GPA ranking system.

II. Communication

Communication with all stakeholders is of utmost importance in Salado ISD. The Committee has devised a communication plan, so that accurate and factual information regarding the District of Innovation plan and expectations are clearly communicated to all stakeholders. Each campus in Salado ISD will receive a campus level presentation from DOI Committee Members. The Salado ISD District Site Based Team received a formal presentation on February 20, 2019. A copy of the proposed plan was e-mailed to all district parents and staff on February 28, 2019. Amended and renewed plans were shared with all parents and staff upon final school board approval in 2021, 2023, and 2025.

III. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2023-2024 school year and concluding at the end of the 2027-2028 school year, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Committee will continually monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications to the Plan.

IV. Requirements of the Education Code that the Local Innovation Plan Exempts the District (Upon Adoption of the Plan by the Salado ISD Board of Trustees).

A. First Day of Instruction (TEC §25.0811; TEC§ 25.0812)

Current Requirement:

Texas Education Code Section 25.0811 prohibits the District from beginning instruction before the fourth Monday in August.

Proposal:

Salado ISD would start school before the fourth Monday in August with the following proposed benefits:

- Balanced grading periods for more equity in instruction of scope and sequence.
- Increased number of days in the fall to create a more natural break in semesters.
- Additional flexibility in professional development days strategically placed throughout the school year.
- Decrease in conflict for students enrolling in summer college courses that begin in June.
- Military families PCSing over the summer have more time to transition as the year would end before June.

B. Teacher Certification (TEC §21.003, §21.053, §21.051, and §21.057)

Current Requirement:

Texas Education Code, sections 21.003, 21.053, 21.051, and 21.057 restrict the District's ability to hire educators outside of the SBEC approved certification fields.

Proposal:

Salado ISD would propose the following allowances to the hiring requirements for teacher certification:

- The District is seeking flexibility in hiring professionals in certain vocations such as career and technical courses and hard to recruit/retain areas. This would include, but not be limited to areas such as Science, Technology, and STEM and will enable the district to establish local criteria for such courses when hiring quality personnel.
- Certified educators would be allowed to instruct one section of a core or non-core course/subject outside of the SBEC documented certification with appropriate documentation of sufficient knowledge, skills and background and with the approval of the district superintendent.
- Educators would be allowed to instruct one grade span above and/or below their current certified level in their content area.

C. Teacher Employment Contracts (TEC §21.102)

Current Requirement:

Texas Education Code, sections 21.102 requires 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:

Salado ISD suggests that this amount of time is not always sufficient to evaluate teacher effectiveness and would propose the following:

- Experienced teachers/counselors who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years may be extended a probationary contract for up to two years (to include the initial contract at hiring).

D. Absences for College, University, or Military Visits (TEC §25.087)

Current Requirement:

Texas Education Code Section 25.087 b-2 (1) (2) states that students are excused for a limit of two days for college or university visits.

Proposal:

Salado ISD would propose an increase in these days by number and specificity as follows:

- Students would be allowed four documented college/university/military visits for the junior year and then again their senior year.
- Students would be allowed to include military testing and recruiting visits as part of these four days for the junior and senior years.

E. Transfer Students Full Year Requirement (TEC §25.036)

Current Requirement:

Currently, under TEC 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Proposal:

Salado ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants and would propose the following:

- Under this proposal the District may immediately revoke a student's transfer for any lawful reason and provide reasonable notification to Parent. Lawful reasons include, without limitation, notification by an agency of the state or federal government that the transfer contemplated by this agreement is not authorized by law, or any disciplinary infraction or condition for which this agreement permits revocation.
- Students who transfer into the District must follow all rules and regulations of the District, including those for student conduct and attendance. Failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in revocation of the transfer agreement. Students and parents shall receive notice of this policy upon application for a transfer. At the Superintendent's discretion, in consultation with the campus Principal, any conduct by the Student that could result in a discretionary DAEP removal may also result in revocation of this agreement.
- Because an inter-district transfer is a privilege rather than a right, the agreement may be revoked for any of the following reasons, without limitation:

- The student's attendance has fallen below ninety five percent in any semester.
- The student has earned repeated failing grades in any class.
- The student has engaged in repeated minor violations of the Student Code of Conduct.
- The student has engaged in any gang-related activity.
- The student has engaged repeatedly in behavior that hinders the learning of other students.
- The student has engaged in conduct that is disruptive to the educational process of the District.
- The student's vaccination record becomes out of compliance with state law.
- A District administrator determines that a false statement has been made in any part of this application.
- The student has withdrawn from SISD for any period of time or has enrolled in another public or private school.

F. SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORIES CONTRACT (BDAE Legal & Local) (TEC Subchapter G. §45.206)

Current Requirement:

TERM OF CONTRACT. (A) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. (B) A school district and the district's depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for three 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.

Proposal:

By gaining exemption from these statutes, Salado ISD would be able to allow the district's existing bank contract 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 services out to bid.

This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) and further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter their direct deposit instructions and afford district flexibility with respect to local banking relationships.

G. Required Professional Development (TEC §21.451)

Current Requirement:

TEC states a) The staff development provided by a school district to an educator other than a principal must be: (1) conducted in accordance with standards developed by the district; and (2) designed to improve education in the district.

Salado ISD faculty are well trained to identify social indicators such as sexual harassment, bullying, and suicide. In addition, the faculty/staff clearly understand the requirements of FERPA. Mandating training in these areas annually only serves to add redundancy to back to school work that can be better utilized in preparing for the students to return.

Proposal:

Each year more mandatory training is put into place without the addition of hours or funding to implement them. Salado ISD agrees with the importance of each of these areas of training such as sexual harassment, bullying, suicide prevention, FERPA, etc.). However, the District needs the flexibility to allow our faculty and staff to implement the knowledge they have been given through these repeated training sessions. This will also allow more time for implementation of the training on each campus and allow time for assessing the effectiveness of local plans or preventive programs. It is with that understanding that we seek exemption from annual compliance retraining in the areas listed below. Instead, these trainings will occur during new teacher orientation for new staff to the district as well as a refresher occurring in a preset three-year cycle for all staff, as determined by the district. Future mandatory training sessions that are assigned will be handled in a similar fashion.

Local Guidelines

a) The District will create and maintain a database for all employees. Employees will participate in formal training every three years in the following areas as mandated by law:

1. Sexual harassment
2. Bullying prevention for teachers, administrators, and staff
3. Child abuse, sexual abuse, and other maltreatment of children
4. FERPA (student privacy)
5. Suicide prevention
6. Cybersecurity
7. Blood Borne Pathogens
10. Seizure Response

b) All teachers, faculty, and staff new to the district will complete the compliance training during the first year of employment in the district.

c) District and campus administrators may assign compliance training to an employee or group of employees as needed during the three year cycle

E. Grievance Policy (TEC §26.011)

Current Requirement:

Senate Bill 12 expands the deadline to file a grievance to 60 days. This deadline is extended to 90 days if information resolution is attempted or 30 days from the date the district provided information on how to file a grievance. SB 12 also extends the deadline to file an appeal of a grievance decision to 20 days. Requires appeals to the Board to be held not later than 60 days after the decision from the previous level is issued with a decision date of not later than 30 days after the Board meeting.

Proposal:

Salado ISD would continue to adhere to board policy FNG(LOCAL) previous to the passing of SB12. That policy provides parents 15 school days to file an initial complaint and ten days to appeal a grievance decision. The Superintendent shall inform the student or parent of the date, time and place of the Board meeting at which the complaint will be on the agenda for presentation to the Board.

F. Local School Library Advisory Council (TEC §33.025)

Current Requirement:

Senate Bill 13 provides the option for a District to create a Local School Library Advisory Council unless 10% of the parents in the District or 50 or more parents, whichever is less, requests the LSLAC be established. Once established, the LSLAC cannot be abolished for three years.

Proposal:

Salado ISD allows for parent input into library policies and practices through campus and district site based decision making committees. SISD libraries have a robust policy and procedure for reviewing contested materials. This procedure includes the convening of a book review committee which includes parents alongside school staff.

G. Acquisition of Library Materials (TEC § 33.026)

Current Requirement:

Senate Bill 13 requires the board to adopt a policy regarding the procurement and/or donation of library materials. The Board is entitled to review lists of library materials procured, provide comments, changes to the list, and accept or reject any donated library materials through Board action. Library materials under consideration for adoption must be publically posted to the District website for 30 days prior to adoption.

Proposal:

The Salado ISD Library Handbook outlines a comprehensive review process that our librarians utilize when adding new materials to our collection. That review process is posted to the library

department website and is completely transparent to parents and community members. The process of Board approval for and the waiting period before adopting library materials creates an undue burden for library staff and delays getting new learning materials to students in a timely fashion.

H. Authorization for a Standard GPA/Class Rank (TEC § 28.0252)

Current Requirement:

Senate Bill 1191 requires the Commissioner to develop a standard method of calculating a student's GPA. The District is required to use the calculation created by the Commissioner.

Proposal:

Salado ISD's GPA and class ranking policy was created through significant effort from staff, parents, students and community members. We have an established process that has the confidence of our school stakeholders. A new state-wide process may not suit the needs of our school community in the same way as our independent system.