

# NEDERLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



## Local Innovation Plan (Renewal) 2022-2027

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.

# TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Monday, April 18, 2022

- Report given to NISD Board of Trustees over renewing District of Innovation Plan

Tuesday, May 10, 2022

- NISD District of Innovation (Renewal) Committee holds its' first meeting and reviews other district's innovation plans and discuss NISD's current District of Innovation Plan.

Monday, May 23, 2022

- NISD District of Innovation Committee holds its' second meeting and further develops and finalizes recommendations for the renewal NISD Innovation Plan

Friday, June 3, 2022

- NISD District of Innovation Renewal Plan presented to the and reviewed by the District Educational Improvement Council (DEIC)

Monday, June 20, 2022

- NISD Board of Education adopts a resolution of intent to renew Nederland ISD District of innovation Plan.

Wednesday, June 29, 2022

- NISD notifies Texas Commissioner of Education of intent to renew Nederland ISD as a District of Innovation

Wednesday, June 29, 2022

- The draft version of the proposed renewal plan will be posted on the District's website. The plan must remain posted for at least 30 days prior to Board adoption.

Thursday, July 28, 2022

- District-level committee held a public meeting to consider the final version of the renewal plan. The committee approved the plan by a unanimous vote.

## **DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE**

| <b><u>NAME</u></b>    | <b><u>COMMITTEE POSITION</u></b>   |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Dr. Stuart Kieschnick | Superintendent                     |
| Dr. Steven Beagle     | Assistant Superintendent           |
| Bill Jardell          | Assistant Superintendent           |
| Natalie Gomez         | Principal, Nederland High School   |
| Erica Gauthier        | Principal, Central Middle School   |
| Dr. Kevin Morrison    | Principal, Hillcrest Elementary    |
| Heather Barrow        | Parent                             |
| Erin Resch            | Parent                             |
| Stephanie Garsea      | Parent                             |
| Jamie Coker           | SHAC Representative                |
| John Wagner           | Community Member                   |
| Shonda Weaver         | Community Member                   |
| Nathan Huckaby        | Teacher, Nederland High School     |
| Traci Bieber          | Teacher, C.O. Wilson Middle School |
| Jenna Dean            | Teacher, Helena Park Elementary    |
| Dr. Darrell Evans     | Secondary Curriculum Coordinator   |
| Ashlyn Junot          | NHS Student Representative         |
| Lori Bell             | Parent                             |

# NISD Innovation Plan

## INTRODUCTION

House Bill (HB) 1842 passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative System permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement exemptions from certain mandates and the power to innovate and think differently.
- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a District of Innovation Plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.

On June 20, 2022, the Nederland Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to notify the Commissioner of Education of the board's intent to renew the District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The renewal of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community. An 18 member District of Innovation Committee including teachers, principals, parents, community members, student and administrators met to review and discuss the draft of the renewal and revisions of the current DOI Plan.

## TERM

The term of the Plan is for 5 years, beginning August 10, 2022 and ending August 9, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, others areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, a district will follow the process outlined in 19 TAC 102.1313.

## AREAS OF INNOVATION

With regard to each area of innovation, the District declares exemption from the listed statutory provisions, as well as any implementing rules or regulations promulgated pursuant to those statutory provisions 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.

### 1. School Start and End Date

*Exemption from: TEC 25.0811; TEC 25.0812*

*Related Board Policies: EB Legal*

#### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan**

*TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of the annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.*

#### **Innovation Strategies**

- a. Relief from that statute will allow NISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focus professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days.
- b. Alignment of the district calendar with local universities, advanced placement exams, and STAAR timelines.
- c. Provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

### 2. Instructional Minutes/Length of Instructional Day/Early Release Days

*Exemption from: TEC 25.081*

*Relevant Board Policies: EB Legal, EC Legal*

#### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan**

*TEC 25.081 requires that a school district provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction each school year, including intermission and recess. School districts must seek a waiver of this requirement from TEA in order to provide fewer than the required number of instructional minutes in the case of natural disaster or calamity.*

*This requirement restricts the District in the development of the academic calendar, including the scheduling of early release days and staff development days.*

*TEC 25.081 (e) references a day of instruction as 420 minutes*

**Innovation Strategies**

- a. The district seeks relief from this section in order to provide staff development days throughout the school year. These non-instructional days have been purposefully placed throughout the calendar to allow the teachers to plan instruction based on student instructional data in addition to engaging in relevant, targeted professional development.
- b. The district seeks additional flexibility to schedule early release days in the calendar in order to provide for student and district needs.

**3. Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size Reporting Requirement**

*Exemption from: TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113*

*Related Board Policies: EEB Legal*

**Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan:**

*TEC 25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA and is a burdensome process for school districts.*

*TEC 25.113 requires school districts to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved negating the need for this notice.*

**Innovation Strategies:**

- a. NISD believes in a low student to teacher ratio in all of its classrooms. In the event, that any class grade K-4 exceeds the 22:1 ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees. Decisions regarding appropriate student to teacher ratios will be made at the local level, taking into consideration the age and grade level of the students, the subject matter of the class, the needs of individual teachers and student groups, and the availability of additional instructional staff members. NISD fully intends to follow current class size requirements. This strategy is for reporting requirements only.
- b. The requirement to notify TEA of larger class sizes will be eliminated.
- c. Parents of students in K-4 classrooms that exceed a ratio of 22:1 will continue to be notified as per TEC 25.113.

#### **4. Teacher Certification**

*Exemption from: TEC 21.003; TEC 21.053*

*Relevant Board Policies: DBA Legal, DBA Local, DK Legal, DK Local*

##### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan**

*TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or 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 appropriate state agency.*

*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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board for Educator Certification. .*

*TEC 21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.*

##### **Innovation Strategies**

- a. The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certifications. This exemption will afford the district the flexibility to hire professionals in trade, vocational, and other hard to find positions, if certified teachers are not available or equipped to teach those courses. However, all SPED, bilingual/ESL, and Pre-K teachers will be certified.
- b. The district will allow certified secondary **and elementary** teachers to teach ONE subject out of their certified area for individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request for local certification that will allow certified teachers to teach a course for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for this request and document the credentials or life experiences the teacher possesses that would qualify the individual to teach the proposed subject. Paperwork, will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency, but will be filed locally. The district will ensure that all individuals have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.

- c. Instructional planning for the uncertified teacher’s course will be created in partnership with certified teachers, Curriculum Coordinators or other qualified personnel. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.
- d. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first Board meeting following the assignment.
- e. Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.
- f. Parents of students enrolled in a class where the teacher lacks appropriate certification will continue to be notified as per TEC 21.057.

**5. Grievance Policy**

*Exemption from: TEC 26A.001(a)-(c), (e); TEC 26A.002; TEC 26A.003*

*Related Board Policies: DGBA LEGAL/LOCAL; FNG LEGAL/LOCAL; GF LEGAL/LOCAL*

**Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan**

*TEC 26A.001(a)-(c), (e), 26A.002, and 26A.003 requires the school district to adopt a grievance policy. This policy, among other things, significantly extends the timelines currently provided for under the district grievance policies.*

**Innovation Strategies:**

- a. NISD seeks to resolve issues equitably, timely and at the lowest level possible. The district believes its current grievance policies are effective and achieve the goals of resolving complaints. NISD will not adopt a new policy contemplated under TEC 26A but will continue to process complaints pursuant to its currently adopted grievance policies.

**6. Instructional Plans and Course Syllabus**

*Exemption from: TEC 26.0062*

*Related Board Policies: FA LEGAL*

### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan**

*TEC 26.062 requires the school district to adopt a policy that mandates the posting of instructional plans and course syllabus on the district's website each semester. The policy must also require teachers to provide the instructional plan or syllabus to district administration and the parent of each student enrolled in the class prior to the beginning of the semester.*

### **Innovation Strategies:**

- a. NISD believes in effective and timely parent communication, especially regarding the instruction provided to students. As the district offers a range of classes at various levels, maintaining and providing each instructional plan or syllabus on the district's website prior to the semester beginning an administrative burden is created. This practice will further restrict the district's flexibility in the instruction offered to district students. Further, the district's teachers provide instructional information to parents and issue syllabi to students, depending on campus, within the first few days of the school year, typically covering the topics and expectations for the entire year. Under this law, the district would be required to provide the same information to its parents multiple times throughout the year, unnecessarily duplicating these communications.
  
- b. NISD will not adopt a policy that requires the district to post instructional plans or syllabi on its website or provide such documents to parents prior to the beginning of the semester. However, the district maintains it will ensure that parents are informed of the instruction being provided to their students and will provide additional information, as necessary, if parents request.

## **7. Library Materials**

*Exemption from: TEC 33.026; TEC 33.027(b), (d), (f), (g), and (h)*

*Related Board Policies: EFB LEGAL/LOCAL*

### **Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan**

*TEC 33.026 requires the school district to adopt a policy for the acquisition of library materials, which includes procurement or acceptance of donated library materials. The policy, among other things, requires the Board to approve all such library materials, allows the public to review a list of prospective library materials 30 days prior to final approval, and sets timelines by which the list of prospective library materials must be considered at a Board meeting.*

*TEC 33.027(b), (d), (f), (g), and (h) requires the school district to respond to challenges to library materials under certain timelines and to conduct reviews of the challenged library materials in specific ways.*

**Innovation Strategies:**

- a. NISD is committed to ensuring that students of all ages have access to library materials that are appropriate and academically relevant. Further, NISD is confident in the campus librarians, in conjunction with campus administration, to review and select such library materials.
- b. The Board of Trustees will not adopt a policy requiring Board approval of library materials. Board review can be utilized when necessary and any donated library materials will be received in compliance with Board Policy CDC (Legal) and (Local).
- c. The Board of Trustees will not adopt a policy consistent with TEC 33.027, as the district already has procedures in place to process and timely respond to any library material challenge. The district will continue to operate under those procedures.