Liberty Hill ISD
District of Innovation Plan
2022 - 2027

Re-Adoption May 16, 2022
Amended May 20,2024
Amended April 21, 2025
Amended December 15, 2025

In accordance with Texas HB 1842 and Chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code

Liberty Hill ISD
District of Innovation Plan

District Educational Improvement Committee

Heather Stoner	Assistant Superintendent
Susan Cole	District Representative
Jessica Solis	District Representative
Megan Garner	District Representative
Kimberly De La Houssaye	District Representative
Chico Portillo	District Representative
Alisia Lucas	Classroom Teacher
Alissa Powell	Classroom Teacher
Angie Teeler	Classroom Teacher
Audrye Glosson	Classroom Teacher
Cacie Gates	Classroom Teacher
Christina Tucker	Classroom Teacher
Daisy Mccain	Classroom Teacher
Denise Scully	Classroom Teacher
Haika Karr	Classroom Teacher
Jennifer Skonnord	Classroom Teacher
Jorden Tisor	Classroom Teacher
Joshua Geisinger	Classroom Teacher
Kaitlyn Guzman	Classroom Teacher
Katy Koepl	Classroom Teacher
Kelsey Valdez	Classroom Teacher
Lauren Carlson	Classroom Teacher
Melissa Mortensen	Classroom Teacher
Patricia Rojas	Classroom Teacher
Ryan Little	Classroom Teacher
Sandra Skains	Classroom Teacher
Stephen Walker	Classroom Teacher
Angie de los Santos	Other Professional Staff
Cassidy Ness	Other Professional Staff
Colleen Hawkins	Other Professional Staff

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Deysi Hernandez	Other Professional Staff
Joyce Milam	Other Professional Staff
Kristi Romero	Other Professional Staff
Laurie Kent	Other Professional Staff
Mandi Burkett	Other Professional Staff
Mark Koller	Other Professional Staff
Megan Sauber	Other Professional Staff
Nayeli Gonzalez	Other Professional Staff
Travis Avery	Business Representative
Dustin Smith	Business Representative
Randy Hodges	Community Representative
Ashley Kubiszyn	Parent Representative
Itzel Cantu-Rios	Parent Representative
Kristina Boren	Parent Representative
Lisa Messana	Parent Representative
Rachel Irwin	Parent Representative

Overview

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and obtain an exemption from specific provisions of the Texas Education Code. According to the Texas Education Code, an eligible school district must adopt a five-year innovation plan to qualify.

Liberty Hill ISD is utilizing HB 1842 of the 84th Legislative Session to have more local control in certain areas. HB 1842 allows traditional public schools to have some of the same local flexibility that public charter schools have always been allowed. We feel this is an opportunity for our district to modify certain areas based on the needs of our students and community.

Once approved by the Commissioner of Education, the Board of Trustees, and the District of Innovation Committee, this readopted plan will be effective for the 2022-23 school year. The District of Innovation Plan may be amended at any time by the committee with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Liberty Hill ISD
District of Innovation Plan

Areas Addressed in Plan

- First and Last Day of Instruction
- Attendance Rule
- Teacher Certification and Field-Based Experience Requirement
- Counselors Without School District Certification
- Revision of Certification Requirements for School Librarians
- Teacher Appraisal System
- Student/Teacher Ratios
- Inter-District Transfers
- Teacher Contract Days
- Probationary Contract Extension
- Library Book Purchase Process (Same Content)

First and Last Day of Instruction

Statute:

- TEC §25.0811 and §25.0812, EB(Legal), EB(Local) First Day of Instruction (Starting before the 4th Monday in August), and Last Day of Instruction (Ending before May 15th).

Plan:

- The current statute prevents the district from designing calendars that best meet the needs of our staff and students. This plan provision provides the district with the flexibility of a start date and end date, allowing the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community.

Benefit:

- This provision will allow the first and second semesters to be somewhat equal in the number of days of instruction.
- Adjusting the start date creates opportunities for more flexible professional development opportunities for staff.
- This flexibility in the calendar provides increased instructional time before fall administration of End of Course exams and spring STAAR exams.
- Students participating in dual enrollment opportunities will work with a balanced semester, aligning with our local colleges.

Attendance Rule

Statute:

- TEC §25.092 Requires a student to attend school for at least 90 percent of the school days the class is offered to receive course credit.

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Plan:

- The current statute requires the district to award class credit based on seat time (90% rule) and does not provide the district with any flexibility to grant credit based on mastery of learning. This plan would enable the district to consider student mastery of content, acceleration, and individual pacing considerations. This exemption from minimal attendance would not alter the compulsory attendance requirements or limit the teacher's rights to determine the finality of the grade under Texas Education Code §28.0214.

Benefit:

- High School students may advance in coursework as measured by mastery; rather than seat time.
- Explore Innovative approaches for students to demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways. (Online platforms, blended learning, assessment-based learning)

Teacher Certification and Field-Based Experience Requirements

Statute:

- Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.003, §21.051, §21.053, §21.055 and §21.057 Teacher Employment Contracts and Certification Required (DK Legal, Local)

Plan:

- Liberty Hill ISD seeks the flexibility to hire teachers who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of hard-to-fill teaching positions.
- LHISD is committed to providing an outstanding learning experience for students by seeking out highly qualified and certified teachers and course offerings for students can be impacted if a quality candidate cannot be found to teach due to lack of certification.
- Flexibility in this area will assist the district in finding quality candidates to avoid the disruption of an instructional path for students.
- The exemption from TEC §21.055 (D-1) will enable the district to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students.
- The district is pursuing this exemption to provide greater flexibility to fill these positions. All special education and bilingual/ESL teachers will continue to be State Board of Education Committee (SBEC) certified.
- The district will establish its own local qualification requirements in lieu of the requirements set forth in Texas Education Code §21.003.
- Criminal History requirements, including fingerprinting, and all applicable Board policies will still apply. Individuals hired under this exemption will be provided with district-identified or developed training, resources and support.

Benefit:

- This innovation provides more flexibility in hiring individuals who have content-specific knowledge but do not have a teaching certification will allow the district to hire individuals who best meet the needs of the students and who are able to provide the content knowledge students need to enter an increasingly innovative world.
- Additionally, it will allow the district to utilize a certified teacher to provide instruction in classes outside of their content area or grade span.

Counselors Without School District Certification

Statute:

- Texas Education Code TEC §33.002 - School Counselor Certification

Plan:

- Liberty Hill ISD's strategic plan is built on a foundation of beliefs that prioritize high-quality education, commitment to the whole child, and high expectations for both student achievement and staff effectiveness.
- This amendment is rooted in our goals to enhance and support a culture of high expectations and to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all members of our district.
- Liberty Hill ISD is committed to fostering an educational environment that supports every aspect of student development, which necessitates addressing mental health needs as part of our holistic approach to education. Recognizing the vital role that qualified mental health professionals play in this ecosystem, it has become clear that the current requirement for school counselor certification is limiting our ability to hire the most effective professionals in this field.
- The demand for certified school counselors has outstripped supply, creating significant recruitment challenges. By exempting this certification requirement, Liberty Hill ISD will gain the flexibility needed to attract highly qualified mental health professionals who may not be traditionally certified as school counselors but hold equivalent or superior qualifications in related fields.
- Liberty Hill ISD will establish its own stringent local qualification requirements for mental health counselors to ensure that all personnel hired under this exemption are exceptionally qualified. Candidates for these positions will be required to hold at least a Master's degree in a relevant mental health field and be licensed by appropriate Texas state boards, such as:
    - Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners (Licensed Master Social Worker, Licensed Clinical Social Worker)
      Texas State Board of Professional Counselors (Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor Associate)

- These professionals will align their work with the Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling and will be restricted to the roles and responsibilities traditionally held by certified school counselors. Liberty Hill ISD will provide targeted training and resources to ensure that these professionals meet our district's high standards for student support.

Benefit:

- This amendment will allow Liberty Hill ISD to utilize highly skilled mental health professionals to enhance our students' educational experiences and support our community's mental health needs more effectively.
- By adopting this innovative approach, we will continue to uphold our commitment to being good stewards of taxpayer dollars while expanding our capacity to support the well-being and academic success of our students.

Revision of Certification Requirements for School Librarians

Statute:

- Texas Education Code §21.003 Librarian Certification.

Plan:

- Liberty Hill Independent School District is committed to fostering a culture of innovation and excellence in education. As part of our ongoing efforts to adapt to the evolving educational landscape and to better meet the needs of our students and community, we propose an amendment to our District of Innovation (DOI) plan.
- This amendment will allow for flexibility in the hiring requirements for librarians, enabling our district to utilize highly qualified professionals who may not meet traditional state certification requirements but who possess equivalent skills and experience.
- Our district's vision of building champions in academics, character, and community is supported by a strong foundation of resources, including our libraries. The strategic goals of enhancing and supporting a culture of high expectations and ensuring a safe and healthy environment are facilitated by access to high-quality library services, which enrich the learning environment and support student achievement.
- The current state requirement under Texas Education Code §21.003 mandates that librarians hold specific certifications to be employed in public schools. While these standards aim to ensure quality, they can also limit our district's ability to fill librarian positions with talented individuals who have equivalent academic

credentials and professional experience in a public school library but who do not hold traditional librarian certification.

- Liberty Hill ISD seeks to maintain the highest standards of educational support services while also embracing flexibility to innovate and improve. By amending our DOI plan to include flexibility in librarian certification requirements:
  - We can address staffing challenges by widening our pool of candidates, especially in the face of librarian shortages or when candidates with specialized skills are needed.
  - We enhance our ability to innovate by incorporating professionals with diverse backgrounds and skills in digital resource management, and pedagogy, educational technology integration, and community engagement into our libraries.
  - We uphold our commitment to quality by establishing rigorous local criteria for librarian qualifications that align with or exceed current standards, focusing on practical experience and specialized expertise.
  - To ensure that all librarians employed under this exemption meet our high standards:
  - Professional experience in library management, digital literacy, and student engagement will be considered.
  - Candidates will undergo a rigorous vetting process designed by our district to assess their expertise and fit with our educational objectives.

Benefit:

- This amendment to our DOI plan represents a strategic adaptation to the dynamic needs of our educational environment.
- It allows Liberty Hill ISD the flexibility to staff our libraries with highly skilled professionals who can contribute to our mission of building future-ready graduates.
- By approving this amendment, we reinforce our commitment to innovation, inclusion, and excellence in every aspect of our students' education.

Teacher Appraisal System

Statute:

- The State issued a new teacher appraisal system in the 2016-2017 school year, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal and Support System (T-PESS). (TEC §21.203, §21.352, 21.3541)

Plan:

- Liberty Hill ISD will use a modified version of the T-TESS/T-PESS appraisal system with the exception of the provisions of the Texas Education Code §21.351 and §21.352, as they relate to student growth within the teacher and principal appraisal system. The T-TESS/T-PESS instrument is robust enough without the addition of student

achievement to the evaluation.

- All teachers who are meeting accomplished or distinguished on the overall summative will be formally evaluated once every two years.
    - *Teachers who are in an assignment that is part of the Teacher Incentive ALlotment program must be formally evaluated using the T-TESS appraisal system each year as part of the state TIA requirement.*
- Probationary teachers will be evaluated annually.
- All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and set classroom goals.
- Principals will be evaluated annually.

Benefit:

- Allows the district the option to utilize local control of decisions regarding teacher and administration evaluations.
- Allow the district the option to improve teacher morale by using evaluations that are the best practices for the district.

. Student/Teacher Ratios

Statute:

- TEC 25.112 A district may not enroll more than 22 students in prekindergarten through fourth-grade class, except as allowed by the commissioner of education.

Plan:

- The current statute requires districts to maintain 22 students or less in prekindergarten through 4th-grade classes. A school district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for each class that exceeds this limit. TEA rarely rejected these waivers, making the process primarily for awareness purposes and to preserve a more personal instructional environment.
- Liberty Hill ISD will continue to staff based on the recommended 22 students in a class, prekindergarten to 4th-grade. However, the district is exempt from state law requiring a district not to enroll more than 22 students in a prekindergarten-grade 4 class.
- If enrollment in a prekindergarten-grade 4 class exceeds 22 students, the Superintendent shall notify the Board and parents.

Benefit:

- Allows Liberty Hill ISD the flexibility to go above the 22 student ratio if needed to accommodate for the fast growth in our student population.

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Inter-District Transfers

Statute:

- TEC §25.036 District transfers are for an entire school year. (FDA Local).

Plan:

- Liberty Hill ISD would follow FDA Local policy requiring nonresident students to file a transfer application each school year.
- In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, programs, and services, the student's disciplinary history, work habits, and attendance records will be evaluated.
- Transfer students must follow the district's attendance requirements, rules, and regulations.
- The Superintendent may revoke transfer status during the school year if the student is assigned a disciplinary consequence such as suspension (in school or out of school), placement at the disciplinary alternative campus, or expulsion. Students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the student's transfer status.

Benefit:

- Allows Liberty Hill ISD the flexibility to revoke transfer students at any point during the school year.

Teacher Contract Days

Statute:

- TEC §21.401, DC(Legal)

Plan:

- Current law states that educators employed on a 10-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of 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). The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employment contract should be a local decision. Teacher contracts should be able to be reduced with no decrease in pay, meaning the daily rate will still be based on 187 contract days.
- This proposal will allow teacher contract days to be reduced from 187 days with no effect on teacher salaries, resulting in a pay neutral status. Teacher contracts will remain as a 10 month service contract.
- The District Leadership Team will evaluate the number of contract days needed for certified staff in that school year and shall set the number of calendar work days. The administrative staff will also, annually, determine the number of professional

development days required to meet the needs of all students and when they will be fulfilled during the academic year.

Benefit:

- This flexibility in determining the number of teachers contracted days will increase the daily rate of teachers, improve teacher morale, enhance teacher recruitment, and provide flexibility in teacher professional development.

Probationary Contract Extension

Statute:

- TEC §21.102, §21.102(b), (c), Probationary Contract. (DCA Legal).

Plan:

- The district is seeking an exemption from the requirement that probationary contracts may not exceed one year for an employee new to the district but who has been employed for at least five of the previous eight years in public education.
- This will allow the district to completely evaluate the teacher's performance before offering a term contract.
- The district will be able to extend a teacher's probationary contract to a second year with documentation and a plan for measurable improvement. The district receives several important benefits with this flexibility:
    - The new LHISD teacher has access to meaningful professional development.
    - Extended support for teachers to ensure professional growth and retention.
- Campus administrators have more time to observe the teacher, make recommendations for improvement, provide support, and more fully determine the individual's effectiveness.
- The district is adding the flexibility to exempt out of the 3 year maximum limitation for the number of years a teacher can be on a probationary contract.

Benefit:

- Allows the district greater flexibility to determine teacher effectiveness and professional growth for teachers prior to issuing a term contract.
- Provides the teacher with the opportunity to grow and enhance their teaching skills while gaining additional classroom experience

Library Book Purchase Process

Statute:

- TEC § 33.026, EIE (Local)

Plan:

- Liberty Hill ISD seeks an exception to the board-approval plus public-review requirement in the following cases:

(1) Replacing a damaged copy of a book, if the replacement is for a book already existing in the district library catalog (for the same or younger grade levels).
(2) Ordering additional copies of a book, if the copy is of a book already existing in the district library catalog (for the same or younger grade levels).
(3) Adding a book that has already been approved (for the same or younger grade levels) by the board in a previous approval process.

Benefit:

- Allows the district a more efficient method to reorder and replace library books that are already existing in school libraries in the district.