

Belton Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan

Adopted: February 21, 2022



Overview

During the 84th Texas legislative Session, House Bill 1842 was passed providing public school districts the opportunity to seek a District of Innovation(DOI) designation. The designation allows eligible districts the flexibility to exempt certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC) in an effort to allow for additional local oversight for up to five years. On September 19, 2016, the Belton Independent School District's Board of Trustees adopted a resolution initiating the process of becoming a District of Innovation. A final plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on February, February 27, 2017. The plan was approved for a five-year period, and must be renewed if the District plans to continue beyond that period. On February 21, 2022, the Board of Trustees will take action on the proposed renewal of the District of Innovation Plan. The proposed plan was approved by DWEIC on December 7, 2021.

District of Innovation Public Hearings

Date: February 21, 2022
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: Belton ISD Administration Building
400 N. Wall Street
Belton, TX 76513

District of Innovation Committee Members

The District-wide Education Improvement Committee will serve as the renewal committee for the District of Innovation Plan.

Member Name	Role
Deanna Lovesmith	Chair
Mindy Wampler	Teacher
Daina Taylor	Teacher
Sarah Taggart	Teacher
Erica Kinsey	Teacher
Wendy Thibeault	Teacher
Amanda Burch	Teacher
Christina Taitingfong	Teacher
Allison Schiller	Teacher
Brandi Rhymes	Teacher

Shannan Swanson-Bryan	Teacher
Phoebe Duggan	Teacher
Lisa Velazquez	Teacher
Elmer Solis	Teacher
Rebecca Kidder	Teacher
Melissa Clark	Teacher
Timothy Potts	Teacher
Shannon Ulloa	Teacher
Amanda Necessary	Secondary Administrator
Kelly Sanders	Elementary Administrator
Norma Romero Komlofske	District Level Professional
Terri Covington	Business
Christa Ochoa	Community
Chrstine Rahm	Parent

District Vision

Empower each and every learner to pursue their dreams and enrich their communities.
Inspiring Dreams. Empowering Futures.

District Goals

1. Strengthen and support the engagement of all stakeholders in the pursuit of the BISD vision.
2. Ensure exceptional learning experiences for each and every student.
3. Attract, retain and support a world-class team of employees.
4. Develop a district-wide culture of value, support and growth amongst all students and staff.
5. Maximize our use of resources for both current priorities and plans for the future.

Term

As outlined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the Innovation Plan is five years. The original plan was adopted on February 27, 2017, by the Board of Trustees regular meeting. The plan expires on February 27, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Districtwide Educational Improvement Committee (DWEIC) will monitor the effectiveness of the plan.

The DWEIC committee approved a revised plan on December 7, 2021. The plan will be taken to the Board of Trustees for consideration of approval on February 21, 2022. This plan will expire on February 21, 2027.

Innovation Plan

Teacher Certification

TEC 21.003

Current Law

21.003 (a) 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 as provided by Subchapter B.

Plan to Address Comprehensive Educational Program

Belton ISD has struggled to find certified teachers for Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and foresees continued difficulty in filling positions in this area. Requiring teacher certification for candidates in these areas is a financial barrier and a hardship to many applicants who are likely taking a pay cut from the private sector to join the school district. Most come prepared to begin teaching immediately and are discouraged by the hurdles required to obtain certification prior to being awarded a teaching position. Certifications costs can exceed \$5,000 and take months to complete.

Many qualified candidates in the fields have wage-earning experience, certifications, and/or associate's degrees. However, most candidates do not possess a bachelor's degree and teaching certification. While the District has the ability to hire applicants with a bachelor's degree using the School District Teaching permit process, it is difficult to find applicants from these fields with a bachelor's degree. The District requests an exception for CTE teachers to hire candidates with an associate's degree and/or the appropriate work-related professional certification in the particular course of study for the job in which they are applying. Potential applicants would be required to meet current qualifications as required for entry into teacher certification programs according to the Educator Preparation Program, Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Secondary Career and Technical Certification including wage earning experience. However, qualified candidates would not be required to complete a certification program. The District would designate these candidates with a local teaching permit and they would be hired as at-will employees.

In addition, Belton ISD often finds teacher applicants who are entering into certification programs and are interested in an immediate open teaching position. The District seeks to use the Innovation Plan to hire non-certified teachers who are in a teacher certification program or certified teachers who may be teaching outside of their certification area. Through the DOI Plan, the district would be exempt from filing a state waiver or Teacher Classroom Assignment Permit (TCAP) on any non-certified teacher hire. This will save applicants a fee (approximately \$500), allow for immediate filling of a vacancy, and increase recruitability efforts for open teaching positions.

Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

TEC 25.092

Current Law

25.092 (a)... [A] student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

Plan to Address Comprehensive Educational Program

Belton ISD's one-to-one digital learning initiatives began in 2010 with a locally funded innovative grant project awarded to one teacher at Belton High School and all fifth grade classrooms at Joe M. Pirtle Elementary. By the fall of 2011, the District launched its first one-to-one campuses at South Belton Middle School and Belton New Tech High School @ Waskow whereby each student was issued an individual device for learning. By the fall of 2020, all Belton ISD students were in a one-to-one learning environment. District has been able to implement the use of digital library books, digital textbooks, a learning management system, and the use of hundreds of digital learning resources to enhance instruction.

In order to continue to expand educational opportunities for students, the District has identified the following two digital learning initiatives.

- ***Providing students with online dual credit courses scheduled during the school day.***

Students may choose to enroll in online dual credit courses through the University of Texas - Permian Basin through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Students who request to participate must have parental permission. The course would be completed at home if scheduled as a first or last period course. If a student is scheduled to take the course during the school day, the student would be assigned a location at the campus such as the library, a computer lab, or other area as assigned by the principal. Students completing the course off campus must be enrolled separately in other required courses that together meet the TEA's required minutes of instruction for attendance accounting purposes.

- ***Providing a locally developed online/blended learning course in a core content area with flexibility to complete a portion of the coursework from home.*** The District will continue to offer locally developed online courses in identified core content areas for junior or senior level high school students. Students who request to participate must have parental permission and be enrolled separately in other required courses that together meet the TEA's required minutes of instruction for attendance accounting

purposes. Students would be assigned to the course either first or last period. Teachers would develop the course(s) to be delivered in a blended learning model whereby students would meet with the teacher in a face-to-face setting and have the flexibility to allow students to work from home or another location, including independently in the school building in a flexible common space. Students would be required to be in attendance as requested by the teacher for tutorials or enrichment and/or for whole group instruction. Students would be awarded credit based on course mastery.

First Day of Instruction

TEC 25.0811

Current Law

25.00811 (a) ... [A] school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Plan to Address Comprehensive Educational Program

Belton ISD's DOI Committee has determined that a school calendar that provides the option to begin the first day of instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August as currently required by the TEC will provide the District the ability to develop a calendar that effectively meets local community values and supports a comprehensive educational program.

Currently the District serves a population of approximately-13,500 students. Significant to Belton ISD's population is the growing number of military connected families who are moving into the district. This year, 8% of the student population is considered military connected. An increasing number of families working at nearby Fort Hood, the world's largest military installation, are choosing Belton ISD as their home. In collaboration with Fort Hood and Commanding General Sean McFarland, the District wishes to ensure that students are off with their families on federal holidays in collaboration and support of our military. A calendar which begins on the fourth Monday in August does not provide the ability to incorporate the majority of federal holidays for students without compromising other community values including professional development days, parent conference days, and the length of Christmas and spring breaks.

In addition to meeting the needs of students and families, Belton ISD wishes to develop a school calendar that provides options for students to participate in and enter postsecondary opportunities at institutions of higher education. A calendar which ends prior to the beginning of local college and university summer sessions provides for students' educational needs to be effectively served. Students would not be asked to juggle multiple schedules by ending one course early or starting a course late in order to further their education.

Transfer Exemption

Current Law

25.036 Inter-district Transfers Under Texas Education Code 25.036, 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.

Belton ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment. Local Guidelines Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked 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.

Adoption of Original Innovation Plan

Belton ISD has met all of the process requirements outlined by the TEA and the Commissioner of Education to receive the designation as a District of Innovation. The local Innovation Plan was developed and approved by both the DOI Committee and DWEIC. In addition, a public hearing was conducted on January 23, 2017. The plan was then posted on the District's website for the required 30 days following approval by the Board of Trustees.

Approved by the DPO Committee on the 1st day of December, 2016.

Approved by the DWEIC Committee on the 9th day of January, 2017.

Approved by the Belton ISD Board of Trustees on the 27th day of February, 2017.

Renewal of Innovation Plan

Belton ISD has met all of the process requirements outlined by the TEA and the Commissioner of Education to receive the designation as a District of Innovation. The local Innovation Plan was developed and approved by the DWEIC Committee. The plan was then posted on the District's website for the required 30 days following approval by the Board of Trustees.

Approved by the DWEIC Committee on December 7, 2021.

Posted to the District Website on December 17, 2021.

Approved by the Belton ISD Board of Trustees on February 21, 2022.