



District of Innovation Designation

Board Approval:

October 11, 2022

Revision: September 8, 2026

Term of Designation:

October 11, 2022- October 11, 2027

Waxahachie ISD's Vision

Our vision is to be a district where innovation thrives and growth is limitless

Waxahachie ISD's Core Values

- We value choices because they make us unique and are critical to learning.
- We value a collaborative culture that honors and supports all who positively impact the lives of our students.
- We value an environment of belonging that respects individual differences and ensures equality for all.
- We value relationships that broaden learning experiences and enrich our community.

Beginning a Time of Choice

In the summer of 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature passed HB 1842, allowing public school districts to become Districts of Innovation in order to gain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code that apply to Texas public schools. To be eligible for the District of Innovation designation, a district must have a "met standard" rating or higher for the current school year. As a district that has continuously maintained an accountability rating at or above state expectation, Waxahachie ISD qualifies for this designation.

Waxahachie ISD (WISD) first became a District of Innovation on March 20, 2017. Amendments to the original plan were added May 13, 2019, August 31, 2020, and August 9, 2021. WISD began the process of becoming a District of Innovation for a second time on August 8, 2022.

Waxahachie ISD Timeline for Seeking District of Innovation Status

- *August 8, 2022, Waxahachie ISD Boardroom*
 - Board of Trustees received information related to District of Innovation process
- *August 8, 2022, Waxahachie ISD Boardroom*
 - Regular Board Meeting
 - Board of Trustees approves a resolution to hold public hearing for District of Innovation
 - Public hearing held for District of Innovation
 - Board of Trustees unanimously approved appointment of local District of Innovation committee
- *August 24, 2022, 4:30 - 6:00 PM, Waxahachie ISD Teaching, Learning & Innovation Building*
 - Initial meeting of the District Innovation Committee
 - Review plan options and determine areas for research

- *August 31, 2022, 4:30 - 6:00 PM, Waxahachie ISD Teaching, Learning & Innovation Building*
 - Second meeting of the District of Innovation Committee
 - Develop district plan focused on innovation needed to provide high quality education
- *September 9, 2022, Waxahachie ISD Website*
 - Posted the District of Innovation plan on the district website for 30 days for public commentary and review
- *September 9 - October 11, 2022, Waxahachie, Texas*
 - Presented plan to district and community stakeholders
 - Promoted plan and encourage review of resources by all stakeholders
- *October 11, 2022, Waxahachie ISD Boardroom*
 - Public Meeting held to present Waxahachie ISD District of Innovation Plan by Innovation committee members
 - Regular Board of Trustees Meeting
 - School Board approved District of Innovation Plan

Span of Local Plan

This Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan shall remain in effect for a period of five years, to include a span of years from October 11, 2022- October 11, 2027 unless terminated by the commissioner pursuant to TEC §12. A.008.

2022 Committee Members

Name

Relationship to District

Melanie Anderson	Teacher
David Averett	Assistant Superintendent
Noel Baskin	Teacher
Dustin Binnicker	Executive Director of Learning
Sean Cagle	Director of Fine Arts
Julia Carrillo	Teacher
Jessica Chambliss	Teacher
Perri Colas	Teacher
Debbie Davis	Teacher
Paige Davis	Assistant Principal
Courtney De La Cruz	Teacher
Shanna Dunn	Community Member
Amy Eckert	Teacher
Valerie Fell	Teacher
Gina Freels	Teacher
Kris Garrison	Teacher
Rolando Gomez	Director of Facilities
Jennifer Gonzalez	Teacher
Brittany Griffith	Principal
Clarissa Hanson	Teacher
Rainey Hicks	Community Member
Tammy Hill	Librarian
Deke Jones	Teacher

Leeon Juarez
Gina Kosa
Robert Lester
Ken Lynch
Leslie Moon
Lisa Mott
Jennifer Mudd
Joshua Perry
Jimmy Poarch
Ginger Robinson
Stephanie Rodriguez
Tabitha Russell
Judith Schuster
Laura Schweizer
Morgan Smith
Melissa Starnater
Vanessa Vasquez
Amberly Walker
Ashley Williams
Hope Winter
Derek Zandt
Alex Zurfas

Teacher
Teacher
Teacher
Principal
Teacher
Assistant Superintendent
Teacher
Teacher
Parent
Director Educational Support
Dyslexia Therapist
Teacher
Community Member
Teacher
Teacher
Trustee
Teacher
Administrative Intern
Teacher
Teacher
Principal
Parent

2026 Committee Members for Amendments

Name

Melanie Anderson
Jacob Perry
Georgie Swize
Jennifer Foley-Burkhalter
Julia Carrillo
Jessica Chambliss
Debbie Davis
Paige Davis
Shanna Dunn
Kris Garrison
Andy Reeves
Brittany Griffith
Rainey Hicks
Deke Jones
Leeon Juarez
Gina Kosa
Ken Lynch
Rusty East
Joshua Perry
Jimmy Poarch
Ginger Robinson
Stephanie Rodriguez
Tabitha Russell
Judith Schuster

Relationship to District

Teacher
Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Leadership
Assistant Superintendent of TLI
Director of Fine Arts
Dyslexia Therapist
Teacher
Teacher
Assistant Principal
Community Member
Teacher
Director of Facilities
Director of TIA
Community Member
Teacher
Teacher
Assistant Principal
Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Leadership
Associate Principal
Parent
Director Educational Support
Dyslexia Therapist
Counselor
Community Member

Morgan Smith
Melissa Starnater
Vanessa Vasquez
Amberly Walker
Hope Winter
Derek Zandt

Teacher
Community Member
Teacher
TLI Coordinator
Teacher
Director of Human Resource

Areas of Innovation

The following statutes were found to be of benefit to the students and staff of the district by enhancing the local decision-making process and maintaining a focus on the community:

- Uniform School Calendar TEC 25.0811, TEC 25.0812
- Teacher Appraisal Process TEC 21.352
- Uniform Group Coverage TEC 22.004
- Teacher Certification TEC 21.003, TEC 21.0031, TEC 21.051
- Probationary Contract TEC 21.102
- Campus Behavior Coordinator TEC 37.0012
- Out of School Suspension below grade 3 TEC 37.005

Uniform School Calendar TEC 25.0811, TEC 25.0812

Current: TEC 25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the fourth Monday in August. TEC 25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Proposed: Local control of the instructional calendar affords the district the following advantages:

- Elimination of imbalanced 6 weeks and semester schedules while still ending the first semester prior to the holiday break.
- Alignment of calendar with Navarro College, Advanced Placement Exams, and STAAR/EOC timelines.
- Ensure hour/seat time requirements are met for Certification courses

Teacher Appraisal Process TEC 21.352

Current: Texas Education Code requires the commissioner to adopt a recommended appraisal process and criteria on which to appraise the performance of teachers. The criteria must be based on observable, job-related behavior, including: (1) teachers' implementation of discipline management procedures; and (2) the performance of teachers' students. In appraising teachers, each school district shall use the appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner.

Proposed: The district is seeking flexibility within the recommended appraisal process and performance criteria for teachers and staff evaluated using the appraisal system Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). The district seeks to continue to utilize T-TESS as the teacher appraisal instrument, while seeking exemption from the Student Growth Measure. Data provided from district and campus local assessments will continue to be utilized following the current district assessment model.

Preclusion from Providing Alternative Uniform Group Coverage TEC 22.004

Current: Texas Education Code precludes the District from providing alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program once the program of coverages under Chapter 1579, Insurance Code is implemented.

Proposed: By seeking the exception from TEC 22.004, the district would have increased local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the District to be responsive to employee needs.

Teacher Certification TEC 21.003, TEC 21.0031 and TEC 21.051

Current: TEC 21.003 mandates that districts that wish to hire an uncertified staff member must submit a request to TEA and wait on approval or denial. Section 21.0031 provides that an employee's probationary, continuing, or term Chapter 21 contract is void for the failure to maintain certification in certain circumstances. Section 21.051 provides that before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or education activities

Proposed: The district fully intends to maintain its commitment to hire certified professionals and will continue to seek employees with appropriate certifications. However, the flexibility in allowing WISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill positions and high demand dual credit courses. The district will not apply this exemption to Special Education Teachers and Bilingual

Probationary Contracts TEC 21.102

Current: Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed: This exemption will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired to Waxahachie ISD. This will allow Waxahachie ISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

Campus Behavior Coordinator Provisions TEC 37.0012

Current: Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

Proposed: The proposal is for the District to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. Waxahachie ISD's approach to discipline is more

collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person through our efforts with PBIS and restorative discipline. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline.

Out-of-School Suspension for Students Below Grade 3 TEC 37.005

Current: A student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade 3 may not be placed in out-of-school suspension, unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, the student engages in: 1. Conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Penal Code 46.02 or 46.05; 2. Conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense related under Penal Code 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, 22.021 3. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of an amount of: a. Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 481, or by 21 USC Section 801 et seq.; b. A dangerous drug, as defined by Health and Safety Code Chapter 483; or c. An alcoholic beverage, as defined by Alcoholic Beverage Code 1.04.

Proposed: To best serve the students of Waxahachie ISD and provide a high quality learning environment for all students, the District proposes that school administrators be able to exercise professional judgment and place students of any grade level in out-of-school suspension when they deem it necessary for safety and in order to maintain an orderly learning environment for all students. Specifically, the District seeks the flexibility to authorize school administrators to suspend students out-of-school below grade 3 when necessary. The District currently monitors the suspensions of all students, regardless of grade level, to ensure that District policy and the Student Code of Conduct are applied appropriately across the district. Should an exemption from TEC §37.005 be granted, the District would continue to monitor the suspensions of all students, which would now include students in grades below 3, to ensure that suspensions are appropriate. The benefits of the proposed innovation are to allow for school-based decision making, assist in maintaining an orderly learning environment for all students, and allow school administrators to more effectively ensure the safety and security of all students.

Inter-District Transfer Students *New (TEC 25.036) (FDA LEGAL) (FDA LOCAL)

Current: a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, and is interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Waxahachie ISD maintains a transfer policy requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer into the district file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, threat assessment, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the district.

Proposed: The district is seeking exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants by allowing the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year. The superintendent is authorized to accept or reject any transfer requests, provided that such action is

without regard to race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, or ancestral language. A resident student who becomes a nonresident during the course of a semester may, at the superintendent's discretion, be permitted to continue in attendance for the remainder of the semester. A non-resident student wishing to transfer into the District shall file an application for transfer each school year with the Superintendent or designee. In approving transfers, the Superintendent or designee shall consider available space, instructional staff, the student's disciplinary history, threat assessment, work habits, performance, attendance records, and special considerations. A transfer student shall be notified in the written transfer agreement that he/she must follow all rules and regulations of the District.

The district may rescind a transfer student **at any time during the school year** and is not required to fulfill a one-year commitment. Therefore, violation of the terms of the agreement may result in **revocation of the transfer agreement during the school year** and/or may result in a transfer request not being approved the following school year.

Additionally, the district may, at the discretion of the Board, charge tuition, within statutory limits. The Board may waive tuition for a student based on financial hardship upon written application by the student, parent or legal guardian. The District may initiate withdrawal of students whose tuition payments are delinquent. Appeals may be made in accordance with local policy.