



Wylie Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan
2022 - 2027

I. Introduction

The District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemptions from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code.

As a District of Innovation, Wylie ISD will have:

- greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming;
- power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability.

II. Our Process

On November 17, 2016, the Wylie Independent School District's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to explore the development of a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

On December 8, 2016, the Superintendent appointed a 22-member District of Innovation Committee ("Committee") composed of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on December 14, 2016 and January 25, 2017 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation Plan ("Plan"). The District-Wide Educational Improvement Committee met on January 26, 2017 to review and approve the proposed District of Innovation Plan. The WISD Board of Trustees approved the Plan at its meeting on March 20, 2017.

The term of the Plan was for five years, beginning March 20, 2017 and ending March 20, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations were to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board would appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the



Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board would not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

On October 29, 2021, a notification was provided to the Board to review the Plan and notify the board that the Plan would expire on March 20, 2022. The Plan was then presented to the District Wide Educational Improvement Committee (DWEIC) on December 2, 2021 for study and review.

Wylie ISD's DWEIC Members are as follows:

Amanda Cooper	Kathryn Ozols	Jordan Lee
Andie Doty	Angela Waters	Rich Frei
Tiffany Montez	Kandice Sarles	Ali Tyler
Stephanie Spicer	Cassandra Padgett	Susie Echols
Zachary Neu	Krystle Shepherd	Dusty Holley
Tammie Sullivan	Nicole Osimiri	Elizabeth Cox
Lori Robertson	Princess Netherly	Cristina Araiza
Kimberly Campbell	Richard Reid	Emma Dugas
Brooke Emerson	Meagan Wendt	Jessica Branch
Maricela Helm	Shaynon Crawford	

On January 24, 2022 the plan, along with the recommendation of the DWEIC committee, was presented to the school board as an information item. It is the DWEIC's recommendation that the original plan be renewed for five additional years with no changes.

2023 Amendment

In April 2023, an amendment was presented to the 2022-2023 DWEIC committee which added the exemption for not yet certified administrators, counselors and hard-to-fill teaching positions.

The members on the committee include:



Amy Southern	Zachary Neu	Todd Dixon
Sarah Miller	Stephanie Spicer	Just Strauch
Freddy Lopez	Krystle Shepherd	David Morales
Liz Damien	Jillian Palomino	Cassy Chappell
Maria Oviedo	Kathryn Ozols	Shaynon Crawford
Ffion Zarcaro	Hugo Valdez	Elizabeth Knapp
Austin Cooper	Liz Cox	Crystal Harrelson
Karrie George	Leslie Coble	Tracy Halligan
Alyshia Zimmerman	Tammie Sullivan	Jill Vasquez
Chantelle McMurrian	Devron Philo	Richard Reid
Rhonda Blackburn	Emma Dugas	Nicole Osimiri
Raelyn Scoggins	Katie Myers	Laura Salander
Jessica Branch		

A majority approved the amendment, and it was then presented to the Board on Monday, April 15, 2023.

In July 2023, an amendment was presented to the 2022-2023 DWEIC committee which added the exemption to utilize the district's current discipline matrix in regard to student misconduct pertaining to e-cigarettes and/or vape pens. The committee voted unanimously to accept the amendment, and it was presented to the Board on Monday, August 21, 2023.

2024 Amendment

In February 2024, an amendment was presented to the 2023-2024 DWEIC committee which added the exemption for the District to utilize its own discipline matrix and determine the most appropriate amount of time of suspension needed for individual students.



The members on the committee include:

Amy Southern	Janie Berg	Jill Vasquez
Nikki Davis	Ffion Zarcaro	Chantelle McMurrian
Todd Dixon	Shannon Brignac	Lisa Felthous
Khellan Paul	Elizabeth Knapp	Nick Hill
Justin Strauch	Austin Cooper	Rhonda Blackburn
Freddy Lopez	Angie Wilsford	Laura Salander
Chnita Hardy	Jesmar Colon-Hungria	Katie Myers
David Morales	Karrie George	Christina Rigby
Liz Rodriguez	Leslie Coble	Brandon Day
Jillian Palomino	Tracy Halligan	Jessica Branch
Cassie Shappell	Alyshia Zimmerman	
Victoria Storm	Stephanie Nishiyama	
Lindsey Anderson	Austin Keisler	

A majority approved the amendment, and it was then presented to the Board on Monday, February 26, 2024.

III. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning March 20, 2022 and ending March 20, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of the Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

IV. 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.

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 4th 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 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.

Previously, districts had the option of applying to TEA for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Innovation Strategies

Relief from the statute will allow WISD to develop a calendar that addresses student instruction and focused professional development in conjunction with the new instructional minutes requirement, rather than days.

- Relief from the statute will enable WISD to align the district calendar with local universities, Advanced Placement exams, and STAAR timelines.
- Relief from the statute will provide for increased local control of the instructional calendar in order to be responsive to community needs.

Instructional Minutes / Length of Instructional Day / Early Release Days

Exemption from: TEC 25.081 Relevant Board Policies: EB 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 intermissions 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

- Although all students will still be required to receive 75,600 minutes of instruction, the flexibility to adjust when those minutes of instruction are accrued will allow WISD to more effectively meet the needs of our students taking dual credit course offerings by affording the district the ability to match the days and times met with the cooperating college offerings.
- This exemption will also allow WISD to alter the length of the school day or school year in the cases of inclement weather.

Probationary Contracts

Exemption from: TEC 21.102(b)

Relevant Board Policies: DCA LEGAL

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan:

For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period 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. A one-year probationary period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract renewal timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to District receipt of state assessment results.

Innovation Strategies

- For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years. All other teachers hired in the District may remain on probationary status for three years, and may be issued a fourth year of probation in accordance with TEC 21.102(c).

Educator Certifications

Exemption from: TEC §21.003



Relevant Board Policies: DBA LEGAL; DK LEGAL

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 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. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

Innovation Strategy

- The current state teacher certification requirements could potentially inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach only specialized Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of specialized CTE course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach CTE courses in lieu of the certification requirements set forth in law. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for only specialized CTE course offerings, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, business professionals or certified teaching professionals seeking assignments outside of their certification area. This innovation has the potential to enrich applicant pools in specialized CTE course offerings and afford more students the opportunity to take courses if state certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.
- Employees hired under this exemption will be supported and mentored toward their attainment of credentials required for state teacher certification. Before examining the employment of non-certified personnel, all efforts will be made to hire state certified teachers. The current state teacher certification requirements could potentially inhibit the district's ability to hire teachers to teach in high-demand areas, hard-to-fill courses, certified teachers to teach courses outside of their certification area, or to hire an uncertified person, when



that person is the best individual for the job. While this may be rare, there are professionals from various academic or vocational fields that can be the best choice for a teaching position – even if they are not yet certified to teach. The exemption would allow the district to hire otherwise qualified individuals whose experience and expertise in lieu of certification have been demonstrated and verified as conditions of employment. This innovation has the potential to enrich applicant pools in specialized course offerings and afford more students the opportunity to take courses if state certified teachers are not available. This exemption would not be used for special education or bilingual/ESL teaching positions.

- Administrators and counselors hired under this exemption will be named Dean of Students and Counselor Interns, respectively. They will assume the roles of campus administrators or counselors as determined by the district job description. This exemption allows the district to hire an administrator or counselor who exemplifies the values of the district and the needs of the campus who may not yet be fully certified. The district will only hire individuals that have made significant progress in their certification program and are expected to be fully certified within 18 months of being hired.

Student Discipline

Exemption from: TEC §37.006; TEC §37.008

Related Board Policies: FO(LEGAL); FOC(LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan:

Effective September 1, 2023, TEC §37.006 mandates the following:

- (a) Subject to the requirements of Section 37.009(a), a student shall be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program as provided by Section 37.008 if the student:*
 - (2) commits the following on or within 300 feet of school property, as measured from any point on the school's real property boundary line, or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off of school property:*
 - (C) sells, gives, or delivers to another person or possesses or uses or is under the influence of:*
 - (C-1) possesses, uses, or is under the influence of, or sells, gives, or delivers to another person marihuana, as defined by Section 481.002, Health*



and Safety Code, or tetrahydrocannabinol, as defined by rule adopted under Section 481.003 of that code;
(C-2) possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.081, Health and Safety Code;

The above language allows no flexibility, other than the mandatory mitigating factors provided in TEC §37.001. Previously, districts could handle student misconduct regarding e-cigarettes and/or vape pens pursuant to their respective Codes of Conduct or Student Handbook. The statute essentially creates a zero-tolerance, automatic DAEP placement for students.

Innovation Strategies

- Relief from the statute will allow Wylie ISD to develop its own discipline matrix as it relates to the above instances of misconduct.
- Relief from the statute will enable Wylie ISD to provide students a “second chance” if found with e-cigarettes, vape pens, or other related paraphernalia.
- Relief from the statute will enable Wylie ISD to offer students on their first offense a lesser consequence for violating the above statute, such as detention, in-school suspension, or another appropriate consequence, and enforcing the statute as written for each additional instance of misconduct, as appropriate.

Student Discipline

Exemption from: TEC §37.005(b)

Related Board Policies: FOB(LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan:

Texas Education Code Section 37.005 mandates the following:

- (a) The principal or other appropriate administrator may suspend a student who engages in conduct identified in the student **code** of conduct adopted under [Section 37.001](#) as conduct for which a student may be suspended.*
- (b) A suspension under this **section** may not exceed three school days.*

...

Recent guidance issued by the Texas Education Agency (“TEA”) interprets the three-day limitation on suspension to apply to both out-of-school and in-school suspension. Such interpretation is not in line with historic interpretations wherein the three-day limitation applied only to out-of-school suspension. The above language



and recent TEA guidance allows no flexibility, limits disciplinary choices of campus staff, and does not align with historic interpretations of the statute. Previously, districts could utilize out-of-school suspension for a maximum of three (3) days, and in-school-suspension was within the purview of districts' Student Code of Conduct and disciplinary matrices. Providing a range of options for the campus, including use of in-school-suspension beyond three (3) days, allows campus staff to meet a student's needs more fully while they are being disciplined.

Innovation Strategies

- Relief from the statute will allow Wylie ISD to develop its own discipline matrix as it relates to the instances of misconduct where in-school suspension beyond three (3) days may be more appropriate than placement in DAEP.
- Relief from the statute will enable Wylie ISD to provide staff and students with a range of disciplinary options to suit students' individual needs while addressing violations of the Student Code of Conduct.

V. Implementation

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses and departments. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched and adopted where appropriate.

