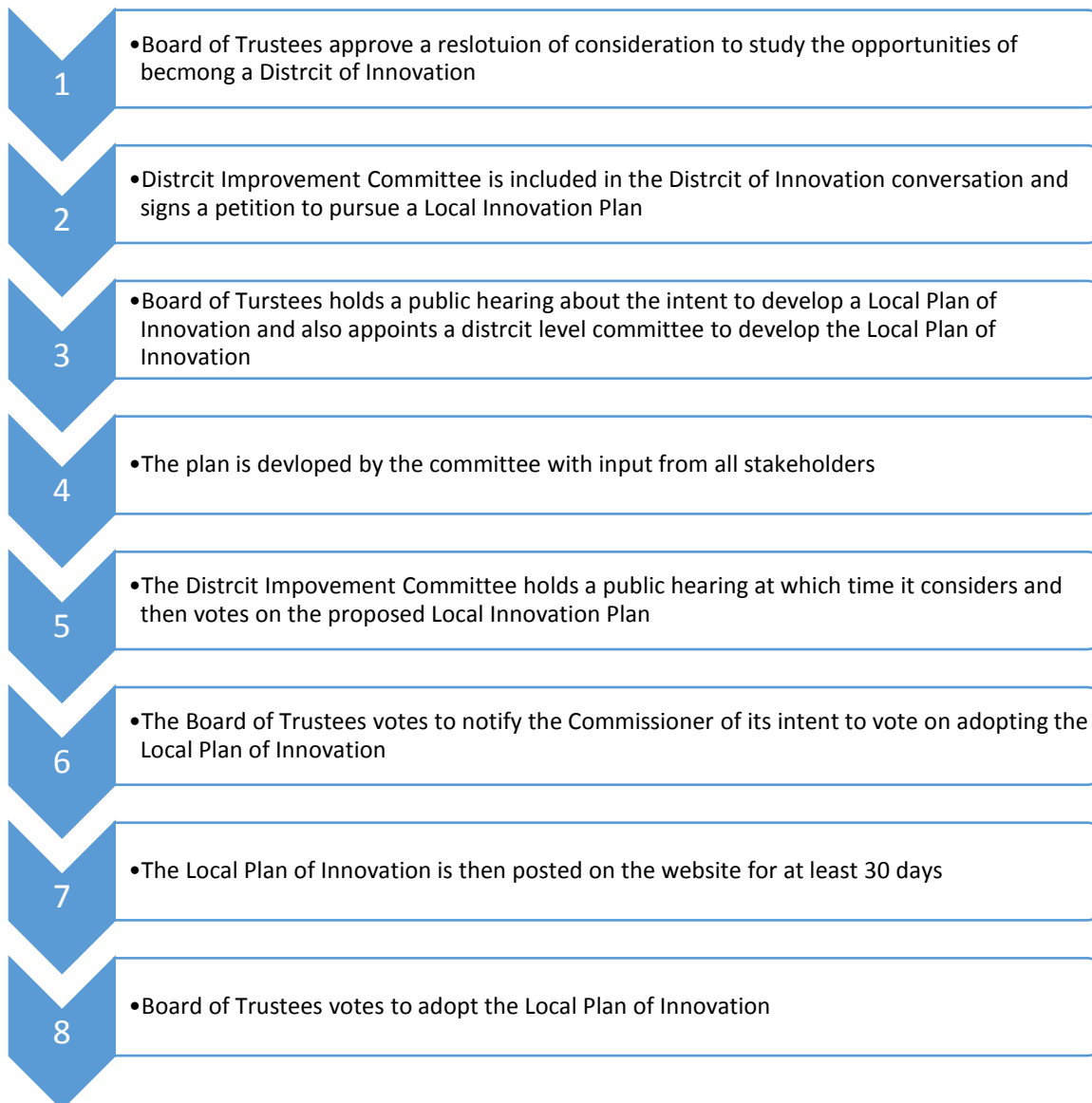


# House Bill 1842 - District Plan of Innovation Process

Passed in Spring of 2015 by 84th Legislature – District must be academically acceptable

A District of Innovation can be exempted from a number of statues and 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; and
- empowerment to innovate and think differently.



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## **Plan Must:**

Provide for a comprehensive educational program for the district, which program may include:

- a. Innovative Curriculum, Instructional Methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement
- b. Modifications to the school day or school year
- c. Provisions regarding the district budget and sustainable program funding
- d. Accountability and assessment measures that exceed the requirements of state and federal law
- e. Any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees

## **Prohibited Exemptions:**

- a state or federal requirement applicable to an open-enrollment charter school operating under Subchapter D, Chapter 12 (examples include PEIMS reporting, special education, retention of student records, use of public funds, etc.);
- Subchapters A, C, D, and E under Chapter 11 that pertain to accreditation, responsibilities of a school district and board of trustees
- state curriculum and graduation requirements adopted under Chapter 28;
- and academic and financial accountability and sanctions under Chapter 39

## **Considerations (afforded to Charter schools)**

- Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code governs how districts hire and evaluate staff, and the types of contracts, job descriptions and salary requirements for staff.
- School Admission and Attendance Policies, including school start date and 22:1 requirement
- Chapter 37 of the Education Code, which deals with student discipline

## **Timeline:**

The state does not set a timeline on the required steps listed in the House Bill.

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## Examples for Districts of Innovation

### 1. School start date

*(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)*

#### Currently

*Students may not begin school before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of August. For many years this was the rule, however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, some even going as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday.*

*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 4<sup>th</sup> Monday, with no exceptions.*

#### Proposed

To allow for a calendar that fits the local needs of our community, we would like to consider moving the mandatory start date back one week which would better benefit our students.

- a. Students will begin no earlier than the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of August.
- b. Teachers will begin no earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of August.
- c. This will allow the first and second semesters to be closer in the number of days of instruction.
- d. The goal is to improve the district attendance rate and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

### 2. Submitting waivers for Kindergarten – Grade 4 class size

*(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.111) (Ed. Code 25.112) (Ed. Code 25.113)*

#### Currently

*Kindergarten – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.*

*Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.*

#### Proposed

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment.

- a. CISD will attempt to keep all K-4<sup>th</sup> core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio. However, in the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- b. In the event a K-4<sup>th</sup> core classroom reaches 25:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be necessary when a K-4<sup>th</sup> classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- d. This gives CISD the flexibility without having the bureaucracy of waivers within the Texas Education Agency.

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## 3. Teacher and Principal Evaluation

*(DNA LEGAL, DNA LOCAL) (Ed. Code 21.203) (Ed. Code 21.352)*

### Currently

*The state of Texas has used the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) teacher appraisal system since 1997. The state is issuing a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, that will be called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS).*

*Districts currently have the authority to only formally appraise teachers once every five school years. Canton ISD teachers are formally evaluated annually.*

*Principals must complete five informal walk-throughs each week.*

*Principals are evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.*

### Proposed

A committee of administrators and teachers would have the option to develop a teacher evaluation system that would be a combination of PDAS, T-TESS, and other best practices to develop a local instrument and/or process that fits the needs and goals of CISD.

- a. Canton ISD will utilize a locally developed teacher and principal evaluation tool.
- b. This instrument will be developed with input from central administration, campus administration, and teachers. It will use staff input, PDAS, T-TESS, T-PESS, and any other relevant best practice.
- c. A minimum of 50% of a campus's teachers must be formally evaluated every year. All teachers must be formally evaluated at a minimum of every third school year. Every teacher will receive a minimum of six, informal walk-throughs per year.
- d. All teachers will have an annual summative conference to discuss the year and to set classroom goals and a staff development plan.
- e. Principals will continue to be evaluated annually on a locally developed plan.
- f. These locally developed plans should reflect the strengths, areas of concern, and goals for Canton ISD.

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## 4. Teacher certification

*(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT)*

### Currently

*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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. There is a lot of bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork involved in the process.*

### Proposed

In order to best serve CISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally.

- a. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.
- c. This will allow more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

## Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade - §25.092

If the district is to be able to implement innovative instructional methods such as virtual classrooms, blended learning, and work study opportunities, it will need an exemption from the 90% "seat time" attendance rule as set forth in §25.092. Relief from this Section will also inhibit barriers for students who wish to engage in service learning opportunities in the community.

**Kaufman ISD:** The district's five-year innovation plan, starting in 2016-17, includes exemptions from several significant education laws, including the 22:1 class-size limit; the uniform school start date law; and teacher certification requirements for grades 7-12 and bilingual classes. Certain contract laws are also being waived so that KISD may place experienced teachers new to the district on probationary contracts for two years rather than one year. The district is also exempting itself from some disciplinary statutes in TEC Chapter 37 in order to implement a more liberal policy on student expulsions for persistent misbehavior.

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**Lytle ISD:** The district's five-year innovation plan beginning with the 2016-17 school year includes exemptions from the school start date law and teacher certification requirements. As in some other districts, LISD's plan will allow teachers to be assigned to teach classes outside their certification field upon a principal's request. It also allows for the creation of one-year local certificates for CTE teachers who will be hired as at-will (non-contract) employees.

## **90 Percent Attendance Rule**

*(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)*

### **Currently**

*State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.*

### **Proposed**

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow DSISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they've attended a certain number of school days.

The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. DSISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption. This exemption supports overarching goals in the strategic plan to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

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## Alternative Education Setting Exemption:

### Benefits for GPISD Alternative Campuses (ie. Crosswinds)

- Campuses such as Crosswinds offer an alternative education program designed to meet the needs of non-traditional students. This program offers an opportunity for students to accelerate credit attainment, acquire credits at a faster rate, and mitigate credit deficiencies. Crosswinds High School provides an alternate route to graduation for students who have not been successful in the traditional school due to special challenges. These challenges include (but are not limited to) parent or parenting students; over-age students; family hardships created by economic situations that result in the student having to work instead of attend school; being credit deficient for various reasons; and/or having difficulty passing STAAR End-of-Course exams.

## Local Guidelines for Alternative Campuses:

Crosswinds High School will offer three options for students choosing an alternative setting.

**Option 1:** Students attend a 4 hour school window daily, three 70 minute courses.

**Option 2:** Students attend full day sessions to have days off throughout the week to work and/or care for their families.

**Option 3:** Evening School Option

M-TH: 5:30 PM-8:00 PM

Students will be enrolled in one session and will be required to attend daily and meet district attendance guidelines. Students will have the opportunity to attend an additional session to accumulate attendance time and credits.