New Boston Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan

Background

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes 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.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability.

Timeline

Board approved the Resolution to initiate the process to explore the option of becoming a District of Innovation on November 14, 2016

Public Hearing was held on November 14, 2016

Members for District Advisory Committee were approved by board on December 12, 2016

Committee met on January 12, 2017 to propose a plan

Plan posted on website for 30 days

Committee met again on February 16, 2017, to discuss the Plan and unanimously voted to approve it.

Plan sent to Commissioner of Education

Plan will be presented to the Board of Trustees on February 27, 2017 and may be adopted by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the board.
District of Innovation Committee Members

COMMUNITY
Angela Riles
Becky Melton
Bobbie Burns
Brandon Gray
Crystal Hall
Dustin Austin
Elizabeth Sissons
Jackie Barber
Marty Thomas
Misti Thomas
Shara Hobson
Stacie Johnson
Tim Graham
Tommy Earl Burton
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EDUCATORS
Angela Hastings
Anna Edmonds
Dana Ellington
Daniel Morton
Denise Davis
Don Mathis
Jamey Thomas
Jana Duffer
Kim Fernandez
Kristen Elder
Kristi Shepherd
Lora Doss
Margie Manning
Patty Green
Robbie Pool
Rose Mary Neshyba
Sandy Hamilton
Tammy Slagle
Welda Cox
Whitney Parker
Requested Exemptions

1. First and Last Day of Instruction - TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August unless the district operates a year-round system. TEC §25.0812 states that a school district may not schedule the last day of school before May 15.

Proposal: These laws restrict flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community. The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in New Boston ISD. An earlier start date allows a better balance between semesters, more instructional days prior to mandatory testing, and a school end date prior to June. By ending earlier, NBISD can support students who need remediation, as well as students who are entering college or trade school. An earlier school start date allows students to register for summer classes with finalized official transcripts and attend new student orientation meetings without missing instructional time. Staff will also be able to attend summer school classes as well.

Local Guidelines
The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin and end.

2. Teacher Contracts - TEC §21.102(b) states that a probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

Proposal: This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member’s effectiveness since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end-of-year classroom and student data. A waiver from this requirement will permit the District to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in New Boston ISD.

Local Guidelines
At the time of contract recommendation consideration, newly hired teachers and counselors with the district, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the district, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member’s effectiveness.
3. **Teacher Certification Requirements** - TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher 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 of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator for teaching before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate.

TEC §21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

**Proposal:**
New Boston ISD needs the ability to make a local decision regarding who is best-suited to teach our children. While the District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and make attempts to hire individuals with appropriate certification for the position in question, when that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. NBISD needs flexibility in order to hire for “hard to fill” positions at all levels, PreK-12. NBISD aspires to continue growing programs offering students career and technology industry certifications. In order to position our students for the most opportunities, at times, it may be appropriate to be flexible with teaching candidates who possess the knowledge and skills that would benefit the students of NBISD, but who do not possess a Texas teaching certification.

**Local Guidelines**

New Boston ISD is seeking flexibility with certification requirements for all courses excluding core courses, i.e.: English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. To bolster classroom management skills of non-SBEC certified teachers, NBISD shall implement a mentorship and intensive training program for all new hires lacking SBEC certification that must be no less than one year in length. New hires must have proper industry certification or comparable industry experience. Administration/hiring panels may determine what level of education, certification, or industry experience must be present.

Note: Special Education and bilingual teachers must continue to be SBEC certified.
4. **Campus Behavior Coordinator** – TEC §37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC), who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37. This provision also allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

**Proposal:** By eliminating the behavior coordinator designation, the District can focus on building a culture of excellence that fosters the development of social-emotional learning. In addition to exempting the district from the application of TEC§37.0012, any authority, responsibility, or duty granted to a CBC by law or board policy shall be exercised by other appropriate school officials.

**Local Guidelines**
Appropriate school officials designated by board policy or by the superintendent will be responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37.

5. **Inter-District Transfers** - Under Texas Education Code, 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.

**Proposal** – New Boston ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to 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, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC §25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one year commitment by the district. The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, NBISD 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 by the Superintendent 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.
6. **Bank Depository Contract:**
Currently, the District must renew its depository contract every two years. The two-year contract term begins and ends in odd-numbered years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

**Proposal:**
The District is seeking an exemption from TEC 45.205 and 45.206 to allow the District's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term, if the District determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the District's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the District's business.

**Local Guidelines**
The District will only go out for bid if it is determined that contract-pricing is not competitive and there is an operational or financial reason to send the District’s banking services out for bid. The District will continue with two year contracts for our banking depository.