

Aransas County Independent School District

District Innovation Plan



Committee Members

Name	Position
Molly Adams	Director of Federal Programs
Carrie Cox	Teacher
Cindy Duck	Parent
Linda Erwin	Teacher
Bridget Johnson	Director of Human Resources
Greg Karl	Parent
Smith Nguyen	Community Member
Candace Ochoa	Teacher
Joseph Patek	Superintendent
Tisha Piwetz	Assistant Superintendent
Robin Rice	Principal
Scott Rogers	Principal
David Swartwout	Teacher
Judith Thomas	Teacher
J. D. Villa	Community Member

Aransas County ISD as a District of Innovation

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations, in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. As a District of Innovation, Aransas County ISD will be able to implement the work of our *ACISD Profile of a Learner* with the increased flexibility and freedom necessary to be innovative with the kinds of learning experiences afforded to our students. Making important educational decisions at the local level is the most effective way to support the innovation plans in our district.

District of Innovation Timeline:

Board Meeting: 01/19/17	ACISD Board of Trustees pass resolution to submit District of Innovation Plan.
Board Meeting: 01/19/17	ACISD Board conducts a public hearing to consider developing an innovation plan.
DEIC Meeting: 03/06/17	ACISD District Education Advisory Committee holds a public meeting to consider and approve the final version with a majority vote.
Board Meeting: 03/09/17	ACISD Board Adoption of Innovation Plan and authorize Superintendent to post plan on District website and notify Texas Education Agency.
Day after Board Meeting: 03/10/17	ACISD notifies the Commissioner of intent to approve plan and District of Innovation Plan posted on District website: http://www.acisd.org .
Board Meeting: 04/20/17	ACISD Board of Trustees vote to approve innovation plan (2/3 majority vote required).

This plan is specific to the exemptions as outlined. The district intends to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, as per the Districts of Innovation process, the district will reconvene the District of Education Advisory Committee to explore the request. The term of the plan is for five years, beginning at the start of the 2017-2018 school year and ending at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) "that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan" The *ACISD Profile of a Learner* demands innovative practices and opportunities for our students, and therefore, ACISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute:

- Uniform Start Date
- Minimum Minutes of Instruction
- Class Size Ratio
- 90 Percent Attendance
- Campus Behavior Coordinator Provisions
- Teacher Certification
- Probationary Contracts

Uniform School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Statute:

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. In the past, districts could apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier to meet the needs of the local community. This waiver opportunity was met with resistance from the Texas tourism groups who lobbied to have the practice ended, because they believed it was detrimental to the Texas 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.

Proposed flexibility:

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would support semester course curriculum.

In addition, flexibility in the start and end of the school year would allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also allow ACISD to begin the first week of classes with a shortened week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.081)

Current Statute:

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity.

Proposed flexibility:

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. The ACISD community values the opportunity to meet face to face with teachers to discuss student progress. Early release time would allow parent-teacher conferences to occur both in the fall and spring semesters. A later start or additional early release time would accommodate professional development/collaboration opportunities for teachers.

Class Size Ratio

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

Current Statute:

Kindergarten - 4th Grade class sizes are to remain at or below 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 completed at the start of a school year as well as anytime a child enrolls in an elementary school at a grade level where the ratio is already maintained according to staffing projections the previous year.

Proposed flexibility:

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, this must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff, and the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. We do not believe it has a negative effect when a district adds only 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. Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. In the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten — 4th grade classes, a TEA waiver and Parental Notice of a Class Size Waiver will not be necessary, but the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval. This exemption only allows ACISD the local control over class size ratios, not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements.

This plan also emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passions and needs. This grants flexibility in class size at all times-regrouping for success, small groups, large groups, etc. It also works to minimize paperwork requirements in order to free up time to place additional focus on student success. An exemption in meeting Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.112, will allow the ability to group students based upon academic, social, and emotional needs without adding ongoing filings of waivers when the need arises.

90 Percent Attendance Rule

(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)

Current statute:

State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.

Proposed flexibility:

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Flexibility in the abstaining from the

requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances that supports ACISD's goal to educate the whole child.

To meet the needs of 21st century learners, ACISD would like to investigate the option to provide students credit for courses based on content mastery, not the amount of time the student spends in the classroom. This exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime anyplace apart from the traditional way of delivering instruction.

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.

Additionally, flexibility in this area directly supports ACISD's goal of educating the whole child. Our students attain valuable and meaningful learning from extra/co-curricular activities and experiences that currently count against the student's 90% attendance availability if a student has to miss part of the traditional school day.

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.

Campus Behavior Coordinator Provisions

(FO LEGAL & LOCAL) (Ed. Code 37.0012)

Current Statute:

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 flexibility:

The proposal is for the District to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. ACISD's approach to discipline is more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the ACISD Student Code of Conduct.

Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.003)

Current Statute:

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.

Proposed Flexibility:

The flexibility in allowing ACISD 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, high-demand dual credit courses.

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area.

This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. The superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees whenever this exemption is used.

Probationary Contracts

(DCA LEGAL) (Ed. Code 21.102)

Current Statute:

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 Flexibility:

Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 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 in Aransas County ISD. This will allow ACISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.