



## O'DONNELL EAGLES...FLYING STRONG

### O'Donnell Independent School District

#### District of Innovation Plan

##### **Introduction**

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1842 which gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to the state's open enrollment charter schools. HB 1842 provides O'Donnell ISD has an opportunity to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of our student population, in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. To become a District of Innovation, OISD must have an academic performance rating of at least Academically Acceptable and adopt an innovation plan.

O'Donnell ISD took the first step in exploring this opportunity when the O'Donnell Board of Trustees approved a resolution initiating the process in February 2017. The Board then held a public hearing to consider whether the district should develop an innovation plan, at which time the Board decided to move forward in the process. A committee was appointed to develop an innovation plan. The committee created a District of Innovation Plan. The plan then will be posted on-line for at least 30 days. The District Innovation Team will have a public meeting to approve it before it can go back to the Board.

##### **District of Innovation Team – All Meetings Are Open to public**

Mandy Stidham, Board of Trustee

Randy Cook, Board of Trustee

Sharla Edwards, Elementary Principal

Cody White, Secondary Principal

Nicole White, Counselor

Tonya Graham, Counselor

Donna Forbis, CATE Teacher

Edie Hagler, Elementary Teacher

Terri Small, Community Member/Parent

Brooke James, Parent

Stacy Bolton, Elementary Teacher

Irma Ruiz, Elementary Teacher

Cathy Amonett, Superintendent



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### **District of Innovation Timeline – Activities led by Superintendent OISD**

January 20, 2017 – Discussion with Administration Team

January 26, 2017 – Discussion with Board of Trustees

February 8, 2017 – Initial Meeting of the District of Innovation Team

February 9, 2017 – Meeting with District Innovation Team

February 10, 2017 – Meeting with District Innovation Team

February 15, 2017 – Review of plan by the District of Innovation Team

February 16, 2017 – Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation. Public Hearing to explain and discuss possibility of becoming District of Innovation.

February 17, 2017 – Innovation plan posted on district website for 30 days (TEC 12A.005 (a)(1))

March 27, 2017 – Public Meeting and District Innovation Team Meeting

March 30, 2017 – Public hearing with Board to discuss becoming a District of Innovation. O'Donnell ISD Board meeting to consider and approve District of Innovation Plan

April 24, 2017 – Notification of proposed plan sent to TEA

May 16, 2017 – School votes on proposed plan

### **Term**

As outlined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the Innovation Plan is five years. The plan will commence with the adoption at the March 30, 2017, Board of Trustees Regular meeting and conclude March 30, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District Innovation Team will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications annually.



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### **Goals of O'Donnell ISD Innovation Plan**

**Goal 1:** O'Donnell ISD Board of Trustees and administration will make teacher certification and contract decisions based on district qualifications that meet the needs of our district's students and community.

**Goal 2:** O'Donnell ISD Board of Trustees and administration will make governance decisions based on the unique needs of the district's students and community.

### **Innovations**

O'Donnell ISD in conjunction with the District of Innovation Team proposed the following flexibilities with the TEC to provide the best educational opportunities for students at O'Donnell ISD.

#### **Teacher Certification – School District Teaching Permit (DK Legal) (TEC §21.003, §21.053, §21,057)**

##### *Currently*

State law 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.

##### *Rational for Exemption*

This current system inhibits the district's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill positions as well as elective positions. It does not take into account the unique instructional and/or financial needs of our district. O'Donnell ISD is a rural 1A school district in which teachers must teach multiple courses, but we are still limited on courses and the variety of course offerings. In order to offer additional courses and create flexible scheduling which would benefit our students and community, the district must establish local qualification requirements. This exemption from the existing teacher certification requirements would allow the district to have the flexibility to hire community instructors or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their certifications. In addition, this exemption would allow the district the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades, vocations, or fields to teach those trades, vocations,



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or languages (such as welding, fine arts, health science, criminal justice, law, Spanish, etc.) if certified teachers are not available.

O'Donnell ISD has struggled to find certified teachers for Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and foresees continued difficulty in filling positions in this area. Requiring teaching certifications for candidates in these areas is a financial barrier and hardship to many applicants who are likely taking a pay cut from the private sector to join the school district.

The district is seeking an exception for teachers in CTE classes as well as hard to staff areas. Potential applicants would be required to meet current qualifications as required for entry into teacher certification programs. The District would designate these candidates with a local teacher permit a duty would be hired as at – will or contacted employees.

### *Innovation Strategies*

- The campus principals may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach a subject(s) out of his or her certified field. The principals must provide reasoning for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- 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 of the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if he or she believe that the individual could be an asset to the students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning employment. Local teaching certificates will require an employment agreement rather than a contract.
- An individual with a college degree or certification in a trade could be eligible to teach a course related to his or her expertise or experience through a local teaching certificate. A minimum of 5 years' experience in the field will be required. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all of the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if he or she believes that the individual could be an asset to the students and district. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning employment. Local teaching certificates will require an employment agreement rather than a contract.



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- The School Board of Trustees will create and provide a local Teaching Permit for individuals teaching any course.

### **Teacher Contract Days (DB Legal), (DBC Local), (DEA Legal) (TEC §21.401)**

#### *Current Law*

Current education law located in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

#### *Rationale for Exemption*

This exception reduces teacher contract days from 187 to 184 with no effect on teacher salaries. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule would make our salaries more competitive. This plan will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers. This plan should enhance teacher recruitment. This plan will provide teachers more flexibility during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

#### *Innovation Strategies*

In each year of the plan, it will be part of the calendar planning process to maintain the reduced number of teacher contract days.

The calendar each year will be developed with teacher and community input including surveys and access to options online.

### **School Start Date (EB Legal) (TEC § 25.0811, §25.0812)**

#### *Currently*

#### *State law states*

*a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.*



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### *Rationale for Exemption*

The current process does not allow flexibility for our school district and what is the best fit for our students, school, and community. With this flexibility of an earlier start date it allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of our district. This would enable our district to increase college and career readiness, personalize learning, balance the amount of instructional time per semester, and extend learning time for December End of Course. This would also allow O'Donnell ISD to start classes as a short week to transition the students during the back to school time.

### *Innovation Strategy*

O'Donnell ISD would have the ability to create a calendar that could start during the week of the third Monday of August.

In each year of the plan, it will be part of the calendar planning process to maintain the reduced number of teacher contract days.

The calendar each year will be developed with teacher and community input including surveys and access to options online.

## **Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (TEC §25.092)**

### *Current Law*

25.092 (a)... [A] student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

### *Rationale for Exemption*

O'Donnell ISD has successfully implemented a technology 1:1 plan for students in grades Prek- 12. To capitalize on this progressive learning arrangement, O'Donnell ISD is seeking a minimal attendance exemption to further expand this 1:1 learning arrangement and to meet the individual needs of the students and community.

In order to continue to expand educational opportunities for students, the District has identified the following two digital learning initiatives:

- ***Providing students with online dual credit courses scheduled during the school day.***



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Beginning in 2017-2018, students may choose to enroll in online dual credit courses through Howard College and South Plains College. Students who request to participate must have parental permission. The course would be completed at home if scheduled as a first or last period course. If a student is scheduled to take the course during the school day, the student would be assigned a location at the campus such as the library, a computer lab, or other area as assigned by the principal. Students completing the course off campus must be enrolled separately in other required courses that together meet the TEA's required minutes of instruction for attendance accounting purposes. Board Policy EIC (LOCAL) will be revised to include online dual credit and will be phased into the campus system for calculating a student's grade point average beginning with next year's ninth grade class.

***\* Providing a locally developed online/blended learning course in a core content area with flexibility to complete a portion of the coursework from home.***

Beginning in 2017- 2018, the District would pilot a locally developed online course in an identified core content area for junior or senior level high school students. Students who request to participate must have parental permission and be enrolled separately in other required courses that together meet the TEA's required minutes of instruction for attendance accounting purposes. Students would be assigned to the course either first or last period. Teachers would develop the course(s) to be delivered in a blended learning model whereby students would meet with the teacher in a face-to-face setting and have the flexibility to allow students to work from home or another location, including independently in the school building in a flexible common space. Students would be required to be in attendance as requested by the teacher for tutorials or enrichment and/or for whole group instruction. Students would be awarded credit based on course mastery. Students due to personal issues that cannot physically attend school will have access to an online, blended learning arrangement beginning in the 2017 – 2018 school year. Students that seek to pursue job – based learning arrangements will be provided opportunity to work and attend classes on school grounds in a flexible schedule that meets the needs of the employer, yet provides a stable learning environment using both technology and classroom attendance as needed by the student.

## Resolution

On February 17, the Board of Trustees met and approved a resolution allowing the District Innovation Team to develop a plan. The plan was posted online for 30 days. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, the team met and held



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a public hearing at 7:00PM. The Plan was approved and presented to the Board of Trustees on March 30, 2017. It was then approved by the Board on that date.