



O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

**O'Donnell Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan
Original Posted February 17,
2017
Posted Renewal August 3, 2021**

Introduction

The 84th 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 Trustees

Melissa Pedroza, Board of Trustees

Frances Enriquez, Elementary Principal

Tanner Bales, Secondary Principal

Tonya Graham, Counselor

Fernando Baeza, Athletic Director

Donna Forbis, CATE Teacher

Brooke James, Elementary Teacher

Stacy Bolton, Elementary Teacher

Mandy Nichols, Secondary Teacher

Blake Nichols, Superintendent

Irma Ruiz, Elementary Teacher

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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 June 25, 2020 – Amendment for Health

Insurance

January 12, 2021 - Discussion with District of Innovation Team for Renewal of the OISD District of Innovation Plan

February 8, 2021 – Discussion with District of Innovation Team to review recommended changes/renewal of the District of Innovation Plan

February 18, 2021 – Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of renewing the OISD District of Innovation Plan

February 26, 2021 – Notified Texas Education Agency with documentation to renew/revise the District of Innovation Plan for O'Donnell ISD.

July 29, 2021 – School Board of Trustees votes on proposed plan

August 3, 2021 – Posted Final Posted on Webpage and TEA Notification Submitted

June , 2023 – Amended DOI Approved by Board of Trustees

June , 2023 – Notification of Amended DOI emailed to Texas Education Agency

June , 2023 – Amended and Approved DOI posted on OISD Website

July 2025 - Members of teams updated and updated DOI Plan posted on OISD Website.

Term

The OISD adoption of the changes/renewal of the OISD District of Innovation Plan on July 29, 2021, in a Regular Board of Trustees meeting. As outlined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the Innovation Plan is five years. The District of Innovation plan will be in place from July 29, 2021, through July 29, 2026, 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 modification 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 consider 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, 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 for many applicants who are likely taking a pay cut from the private sector to join the school district.

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



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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. OISD would like to have the freedom to consider the reduction in contract day to better align teacher contracts with the number of days' students are in attendance. This reduction in contract days on 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 with 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.

Current Law

Current education law defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Rationale for Exemption

Manner in which the law inhibits: A recent change in school law has converted required student instructional and attendance days to 75,600 minutes. This change has resulted in the possibility of decreasing the number of days students must attend school but does not address a similar need to decrease the number of days required for teachers if a district deems it appropriate to do so.

Innovation Strategies



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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.

- The proposal would better align the number of teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- Reduces teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries.
- The proposal would increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- Enhances teacher recruitment.
- Improves teacher morale.

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 the 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 Pre K- 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.

Beginning in 2017-2018, students may choose to enroll in online dual credit courses through

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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.

Group Health Insurance

(TEC 22.004 (i))(CRD Legal and Local)

TEC 22.004 (i) Group Health Benefits for School Employees states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a district implements the program for coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code Innovation:

- O'Donnell ISD seeks to provide an alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program.
- Increased local control of the group health benefits plan to allow the district to be more

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responsive to district and community needs. This is being pursued so the district is responsive to employee and community needs. The amendment was originally approved by the O'Donnell ISD School Board on 06- 25-2020 and now included in renewal 07/29/2021.

Inter- District Transfers

(FDA Legal) (FDA Local) (TEC 25.036)

Current Law

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, 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.

Innovation Strategy

This would follow FDA Local policy requiring nonresident students to file a transfer application each school year. The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one – year commitment in accepting transfer applications.

- a. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records and attendance records will be evaluated.
- b. Transfer students are required to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district.
- c. In rare cases, transfer status may be revoked by the superintendent or his or her designee at any time during the school year if the student is assigned disciplinary consequences such as suspension (in school or out of school), placement at the DAEP, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance stand may also be subject to immediate revocation of the student's transfer status.

School Health Advisory Council

(BFD legal) (TEC 28.004)

Current Law

Current law requires that the SHAC committee must meet four times per year to assist the district in ensuring the local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction.

Innovation Strategy

The SHAC shall meet one time per year and may be in conjunction with the Site Base Decision Making Committee as needed.

- a. As a small district, committee members are intimately aware of the needs of the District's

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students, as well as the values that are to be promoted within the community.

- b. With the limited number of stakeholders and likelihood that community members that are actively involved serve the school in many ways and often serve on more than one committee or group, it is recommended that the committees may meet at the same time, location or date to complete duties and business of the committee.

Depository Contracts

(45.205 and 45.206)

Current Law

Current law requires that depository contracts between a bank and a public school district must be submitted every two years for banking services.

Currently, OISD has no banks located within district boundaries, so banking services in the nearest town are located 20 minutes away. When requested, the district does not receive any RFP and has been associated with the same bank for 6 years. Submitting an RFP with no returns beyond the present bank is an unnecessary paperwork issue for our small district.

Innovation Strategy

OISD will extend the length of selected depository contract from two to five years beginning in the 2021-2022 school year. After the five-year contract has expired, if the district and the banking entity agree, there will be an additional contract extension of two years. Cisd will continue to comply with all other TEC provisions regarding depository contracts.

OISD exemption will 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.

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.



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Resolution

On February 18, 2021, 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 July 29, 2021, the team met and held a public hearing at 7:00PM. The Plan was approved and presented to the Board of Trustees on July 29, 2021. It was then approved by the Board on that date.