

# O'Donnell ISD



## District of Innovation Plan

*Final Approval Pending Board Action on 07.14.2026*



## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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

**Renewed Plan, Posted June 11, 2026**

#### **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**

Blake Nichols  
Tanner Bales  
Frances Enriquez  
Tonya Graham  
Melissa Clark  
Donna Forbis  
Mandy Nichols  
Brooke James  
Bailey Barton  
Brenna Mikes  
Shelbie Hannum  
Lisa Alcala

Superintendent  
Secondary Principal  
Elementary Principal  
Counselor  
Business Manager  
CATE Teacher  
Secondary Staff/UIL  
Elementary Staff  
Special Education Staff  
Secondary Staff/FFA  
Parent  
Parent



## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **District of Innovation Timeline – Activities lead by Superintendent**

- 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** – District of Innovation Team meeting
- February 10, 2017** – District of Innovation Team meeting
- February 15, 2017** – Review of plan by District of Innovation Team
- February 16, 2017** – Board of Trustees approved resolution to hold a public hearing regarding becoming a District of Innovation; public hearing conducted
- February 17, 2017** – DOI plan posted on district website for 30-day public review (TEC §12A.005(a)(1))
- March 27, 2017** – Public meeting and District of Innovation Team meeting
- March 30, 2017** – Public hearing and Board meeting to consider and approve DOI plan
- April 24, 2017** – Notification of proposed plan submitted to TEA
- May 16, 2017** – District vote on proposed plan
- June 25, 2020** – Amendment approved for health insurance provisions
- January 12, 2021** – DOI Team discussion regarding renewal of OISD DOI plan
- February 8, 2021** – Review of recommended changes and renewal updates by DOI Team
- February 18, 2021** – Board of Trustees approved resolution to hold public hearing for DOI renewal
- February 26, 2021** – TEA notified of DOI renewal/revision process
- July 29, 2021** – Board of Trustees approved revised DOI plan
- August 3, 2021** – Final revised plan posted on district website and submitted to TEA
- June 2023** – Amended DOI approved by Board of Trustees; TEA notified; updated plan posted on district website
- July 2025** – DOI committee membership updated and revised plan posted on district website
- May 21, 2026** – District of Innovation committee meeting to discuss renewal of DOI plan.
- June 2, 2026** - District of Innovation Committee meeting to discuss revised DOI Plan
- June 9, 2026** - District of Innovation Committee meeting to hold public hearing on finalized version of new DOI Plan
- June 11, 2026** – New DOI plan posted on O'Donnell ISD website for 30 days.
- June 16, 2026** – New DOI plan presented and discussed with Board of Trustees.
- July 14, 2026** – Board of Trustees will vote on New DOI plan.



## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **Term**

The O'Donnell ISD adoption of the renewal of the O'Donnell ISD District of Innovation Plan will be voted on at the July 14 Regular Board of Trustees meeting. As outlined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the Innovation Plan is five years. If approved, the District of Innovation Plan will be in place from July 14, 2026 through July 14, 2031, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with law. The District Innovation Team will monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend any suggested modifications to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis.

### **District of Innovation Goals – O'Donnell ISD**

#### **Goal 1: Recruit, Support, and Retain High-Quality Staff**

O'Donnell ISD will create flexible employment practices and innovative staffing strategies that strengthen recruitment, improve retention, support employee morale, and attract highly qualified educators and professionals to serve district students.

#### **Goal 2: Increase Student Opportunities and Educational Excellence**

O'Donnell ISD will provide innovative learning opportunities that expand student access to rigorous academics, Career and Technical Education, extracurricular experiences, and personalized pathways that prepare students for postsecondary success.

#### **Goal 3: Maximize Local Control and Operational Efficiency**

O'Donnell ISD will utilize local decision-making authority to design systems, calendars, and programs that efficiently use district resources, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and respond to the unique needs of students, staff, and the O'Donnell community.



## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **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 Certifications (DK Legal), (DK Local) (TEC 21.002, 21.003, 21.051, 21.053, 21.057)**

##### **Current Law**

State law requires educators to hold appropriate certification for their assigned teaching fields unless otherwise permitted.

##### **Rationale for Exemption**

O'Donnell ISD seeks flexibility in certification requirements to address staffing shortages, expand course offerings, and allow the use of individuals with industry experience or specialized expertise. This flexibility supports CTE programs and helps meet district and student needs while maintaining instructional quality.

##### **Innovation Strategies**

- Maintain preference for certified educators when available.
- Allow local assignment of teachers outside certification fields based on instructional need.
- Require principals to submit justification and documentation of qualifications for exceptions.
- Permit industry professionals and specialists in CTE or specialized courses.
- Superintendent reviews and approves certification exceptions.
- Report exceptions to the Board of Trustees prior to implementation.
- Allow recognition of out-of-state credentials with possible transition to Texas certification.
- Support employees in obtaining required certifications when applicable.

##### **Benefits**

- Expands staffing flexibility
- Increases CTE and course offerings
- Supports recruitment of skilled professionals
- Addresses teacher shortages
- Maintains instructional quality with local oversight
- Improves student access to specialized programs



## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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

#### **Current Law**

Texas Education Code §21.401 defines a teacher contract as a 187-day, ten-month contract.

#### **Rationale for Exemption**

State law requires 75,600 instructional minutes for students but does not provide flexibility in teacher contract days. This limits O'Donnell ISD's ability to align staff calendars with student schedules and impacts local control, recruitment, retention, and operational efficiency.

#### **Innovation Strategies**

- Establish a teacher calendar with fewer than 187 contract days while meeting all instructional minute requirements.
- Review contract days annually through the calendar planning process with stakeholder input.
- Maintain compensation while reducing contract days.
- Align teacher schedules with student instructional calendars to improve efficiency.
- *Use flexibility to support recruitment, retention, and staff morale.*

#### **Benefits**

- Improves recruitment and retention
- Increases staff morale and work-life balance
- Enhances local control over calendar decisions
- Aligns staffing with instructional needs
- Maintains compliance with state requirements

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

#### **Current Law**

Texas Education Code §21.401 establishes a 187-day, ten-month teacher contract year.

#### **Rationale for Exemption**

State law requires 75,600 instructional minutes for students but provides no flexibility in teacher contract days, limiting O'Donnell ISD's ability to align calendars, manage staffing efficiently, and support recruitment and retention.

#### **Innovation Strategies**

- Allow fewer than 187 teacher contract days while meeting all instructional minute requirements.

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## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

- Review and set calendars annually with stakeholder input.
- Maintain teacher compensation while adjusting contract days.
- Align staff calendars with student instructional schedules.

### **Benefits**

- Improves recruitment and retention
- Increases staff morale
- Strengthens local control
- Improves calendar efficiency
- Maintains state compliance

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

### **Current Law**

State law requires students to attend at least 90% of class days to earn credit or a final grade.

### **Rationale for Exemption**

The 90% rule bases credit on seat time rather than mastery, limiting flexibility and potentially penalizing students for absences due to extracurricular activities, illness, or other extenuating circumstances. O'Donnell ISD seeks flexibility to emphasize learning and content mastery while maintaining academic rigor.

### **Innovation Strategies**

- Award credit based on demonstrated mastery of course standards.
  - Maintain attendance monitoring and compulsory attendance compliance.
  - Allow consideration of extenuating circumstances in credit decisions.
  - Provide alternative methods for students to demonstrate mastery.
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- Support participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
  - Use interventions and recovery options for at-risk students.
  - Preserve teacher authority in grading decisions.

### **Benefits**

- Focuses on mastery-based learning
- Increases flexibility for students and staff
- Supports student engagement and participation
- Reduces barriers to graduation
- Maintains academic rigor and teacher authority

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## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **Inter- District Transfers (FDA Legal) (FDA Local) (TEC 25.036)**

#### **Current Law**

Texas Education Code allows districts to accept nonresident transfer students, with transfers generally interpreted as one-year agreements.

#### **Rationale for Exemption**

O'Donnell ISD seeks local control over student transfers to ensure enrollment decisions support educational quality, district resources, and student success. Flexibility allows the district to evaluate capacity, staffing, programs, and student performance when considering transfers.

#### **Innovation Strategies**

- Require annual transfer applications for all nonresident students.
- Evaluate transfers based on capacity, staffing, academics, discipline, and attendance.
- Consider parent/guardian support and cooperation with district expectations.
- Require transfer students to comply with all district policies and attendance requirements.
- Allow superintendent authority to revoke transfers for disciplinary issues, attendance concerns, or failure to meet expectations.
- Reconsider transfers when family cooperation with the district is not maintained.
- Maintain administrative authority for all approval and revocation decisions under local policy.

#### **Benefits**

- Maintains local control of enrollment
- Protects instructional quality and resources
- Supports positive school culture
- Improves staffing and capacity management
- Encourages strong family-district partnerships
- Aligns enrollment decisions with student success

### **Site Based Decision Making (TEC11.251, 11.252, 11.253, 11.255)/School Health Advisory Council (TEC 28.004) (BQ Legal) (BQA Legal) (BQA Local)**

#### **Current Law**

Texas Education Code Chapter 11 requires districts to implement site-based decision-making processes and maintain a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to provide input on district planning and student health initiatives.



## **O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **Rationale for Exemption**

O'Donnell ISD seeks flexibility from required committee structures to reduce duplication, streamline decision-making, and better align stakeholder input with district priorities. While stakeholder involvement remains important, local structures can more efficiently support district needs and student success.

### **Innovation Strategies**

- Establish a Superintendent's Advisory Council (SAC) to replace SBDM and SHAC structures.
- Include district and community stakeholders to provide input on district priorities and student success.
- Review district data to support planning and improvement efforts.
- Meet at least twice annually.
- Use recommendations to guide planning, staffing, and resource allocation.
- Maintain opportunities for stakeholder engagement through local processes.

### **Benefits**

- Reduces duplication of committees and meetings
- Improves efficiency and decision-making
- Increases focus on student achievement
- Streamlines stakeholder input
- Supports local control and flexibility
- Maintains community involvement

## **Depository Contracts (TEC 45.205 and 45.206)**

### **Current Law**

Texas Education Code requires school districts to select a depository bank through a competitive bid or RFP process and limits contract terms and renewals.

### **Rationale for Exemption**

As a small rural district, O'Donnell ISD has limited banking options. Requiring frequent rebidding creates unnecessary administrative burden when existing banking services remain competitive and meet district needs. Flexibility would allow the district to extend depository agreements when it is in the best interest of the district.



## ***O'DONNELL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT***

### **Innovation Strategies**

- Allow extension of existing depository contracts when pricing and service remain competitive.
- Periodically evaluate banking performance and service quality.
- Use competitive bidding, when necessary, based on district needs.
- Superintendent recommends contract actions to the Board for approval.
- Maintain fiscal oversight and responsible stewardship of funds.
- Ensure continuity of banking and payroll services.

### **Benefits**

- Reduces administrative workload
- Maintains stable banking operations
- Supports efficient financial management
- Preserves flexibility in a rural banking market
- Allows focus on instructional and district priorities