

Olton Independent School District Local Innovation Plan

***Empowering every child to succeed tomorrow by inspiring and
creating pathways today.***

Olton Independent School District

Local Innovation Plan

Local Innovation Committee Members

Amber DeBerry	Elementary Parent
David Azam	Elementary Community Member
Ben Wagner	Elementary Business Member
Sandi Roberts	Junior High Parent
Craig Woody	Junior High Community Member
Ryan Leathers	Junior High Business Member
Kip McCall	High School Parent
Paula Allcorn	High School Community Member
April Burns	High School Business Member
Janie Cano	Elementary Teacher
Colleen Wilson	Elementary Teacher
Susan Soliz	Elementary Teacher
Stacie Ramage	Reading Interventionist
Mark Silva	Elementary Principal
Angie McGee	Junior High Teacher
Kim Thetford	Junior High Teacher
Michelle Ast	Junior High Teacher
Marissa Lopez	Junior High Counselor
Brian Hunt	Junior High Principal
Julia Guerrero	High School Teacher
Nati Sandoval	High School Teacher
Gregg Ammons	High School Teacher
Angi Martin	High School Counselor
Kenny Eudy	High School Principal
Connie Maxwell	Board Member
Ruben Luera	Board Member
Jill McCall	Director of Federal Programs and Curriculum
Dr. G. Steve Mills	Superintendent

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842 was passed during the 84th Legislative Session. This bill provides the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue becoming a District of Innovation, which allows districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to allow more flexibility and local control for innovative programming.

On January 19th, 2017, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution initiating the process under the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A to become a district of innovation. A public hearing to allow the public to learn more about the designation and provide feedback was held on February 16th, 2017. Also on February 16th, 2017, the Board of Trustees appointed the District Advisory Committee, along with two board members, to begin the process of developing a local plan in accordance with TEC 12A.003 to address the needs of the district.

The District Advisory Committee met to develop an initial draft of the Plan of Innovation. The plan was posted online for public viewing and feedback from DATE to DATE and the Commissioner of Education was notified. The DAC held a public meeting on DATE and approved the plan of innovation. The board approved the plan on DATE.

II. TERM

The term of the Plan of Innovation will be in place for the 2017-2018 school year through the 2021-2022. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed by a majority vote of the DAC and the Board of Trustees in the same manner required for the initial adoption. The District may review the plan more frequently.

III. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

The Plan of Innovation is guided by and aligned with the District's Vision and Mission statement.

Vision Statement

Empowering every child to succeed tomorrow by inspiring and creating pathways today.

District Mission Statement

It is the mission of Olton ISD to provide equal opportunity of high quality education to all its students. To this end, the District will effectively and creatively use its talents, resources, and time to ensure that each student will be challenged to reach his or her highest potential. The ultimate goal of this District is to help students exit this institution with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be productive citizens with an enriched quality of life.

Board Mission Statement

The mission of the Board of Olton ISD is to ensure that the people in and affected by the institution have the opportunity to grow and become productive citizens of society. The trustees will delegate operational power, adopt policies, require accountability, evaluate patterns of operation, and ensure flexibility and competence. At all times the Board will maintain accountability to the taxpayers and residents of the District.

District Beliefs

We believe the following:

1. Every employee of the District is important to the success of our educational goals and objectives.
2. Education is a joint venture that requires the involvement of families, churches, and the community.
3. Open communication is essential to student success.
4. All stakeholders should demonstrate respect for self and others.
5. We must educate all students to reach their highest potential and become lifelong learners.
6. We should be innovative in the use of all our resources.
7. We must foster an environment which attracts and retains high quality personnel.
8. Discipline must be consistent and fair for all students.
9. We must inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.

1. Length of the school day (TEC §25.081) (TEC §25.082) (EC LEGAL)

CURRENT LAW:

State law currently requires that all school days must be 7 hours (420 minutes) long each day in order to count for ADA calculations and funding purposes, with 6 waiver days available.

RATIONALE:

- Exemption from the 420-minute day requirement would allow Olton ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it is locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is a waiver process available, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum for the school year.
- Exempting from the 420-minute requirement would also give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the district calendar to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development. OISD will continue to meet the required overall minimum requirement of 75,600 minutes for K-12 students and 37,800 minutes for Pre-K students.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

Olton ISD believes that having a flexible school day benefits teachers and campus leaders who participate in Professional Learning Communities, perfecting their craft, deepening their content knowledge, and analyzing student data. In addition, at the elementary level this flexible day allows for teachers to conference with parents about the progress of their child. The school code also allows school districts to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions without fear of losing funding or credit for the instructional time. The loss of a flexible day would be counterproductive to the Olton ISD community which has embraced the current flexible school day.

2. Certification requirements (TEC §21.003a) (DBA LEGAL)

CURRENT LAW:

State law currently states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

RATIONALE:

The current certification requirement severely limits the district's options to hire professionals with work related experience or degrees to teach a variety of courses needed throughout the district. OISD will continue to require special education and bilingual teachers to be SBEC certified.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

Olton ISD will continue to seek highly effective certified educators for teaching positions. By establishing local certification in lieu of requirements set in the education code, OISD will be able to best serve students by employing high quality educators that might not ordinarily qualify under the traditional teacher certification pathway.

In order to best serve students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally, and notification of Local Teaching Permits (local certification) shall not be necessary. The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the designee a request for Local Teaching Permit outlining the individual's credentials/qualifications. Qualification for local certification could include, but is not limited to: professional work experience formal training/education in the content area active/relevant professional industry certification/registration a combination of work experience, training, and education demonstration of successful experience working with students The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students, by providing quality instruction.

An employee working under a Local Teaching Permit who does not hold a state teaching certification will not receive a contract, but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers. The Local Teaching Permit will become void at the end of the school year in which it is issued. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders. An employee working under a Local Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers and will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers. Also, where applicable and appropriate, employees working under a Local Teaching Permit will be encouraged to seek state certification in the area that they are teaching. All state certified teachers will continue to receive a contract and will be paid according to the state and district teacher pay scale.

3. Probationary Contracts (TEC §21.C)

CURRENT LAW:

Current law states that a probationary contract 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 with the district.

RATIONALE:

This period of time is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the availability of end of year classroom and student data.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to Olton ISD that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, the probationary period when becoming employed by Olton ISD shall be for a period of two years with probationary contracts issued for each of the two years.

4. Start date (TEC §25.0811) (TEC §25.0812) (EB LEGAL)

CURRENT LAW:

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts.

RATIONALE:

The flexibility in the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the need of the students, the school, and the community. Another benefit of exempting this restriction is it allows the school to look at starting classes as a short week which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. Additionally, the ability to change the school start date can also help to better balance the amount of days in each semester.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

Olton ISD will have the flexibility to start class as early as the second Monday in August, depending on the needs of the district.

5. Contract service days (TEC §21.401) Contract Service Days (Minimum Service Required)

CURRENT LAW:

State law currently requires educators employed on a 10-month contract to provide a minimum of 187 days of service.

RATIONALE:

With the implementation of TEC §25.081 which changed the required number of “days of instruction” to “minutes of instruction,” the law did not address contract days for 10-month contract employees. This exemption would allow for the contract days for teachers to better align with the “minutes of instruction” requirement.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

The determination of how many days are required to fulfill an employee's contract should be a local decision.

6. Student discipline (TEC §37.007) (TEC §37.010) Student Discipline in a DAEP Setting

CURRENT LAW:

Current law states that a student placed in a District Alternative Education Program (DAEP) who engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled. Serious misbehavior includes:

■ Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;

□ Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat;

■ Conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Penal Code 1.07; or

■ Conduct that constitutes the offense of:

- Public lewdness under Penal Code 21.07;
- Indecent exposure under Penal Code 21.08;
- Criminal mischief under Penal Code 28.03;
- Personal hazing under Penal Code 37.152; or
- Harassment, under Penal Code 42.07(a)(1), of a student or district employee.

RATIONALE:

The Olton ISD DAEP has a structured system of discipline. The Texas Education Code makes no allowance for students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental to the educational environment.

INNOVATION STRATEGIES:

In accordance with state law, a student placed in a District Alternative Education Program (DAEP) who engages in documented serious misbehavior (as defined above) while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.

Additionally, through this innovation plan, a student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented persistent misbehavior while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may also be removed from class and expelled.

7. Class size (TEC § 25.111, TEC § 25.112, TEC § 25.113)

CURRENT LAW:

Texas Education Code section 25.111 requires districts to employ a sufficient number of certified teachers to maintain an average ratio of not less than 1 teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance. Texas Education Code section 25.112 generally prohibits a district from enrolling more than 22 students in a K-4th grade class unless the district claims an exemption through the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) waiver procedure. Texas Education Code section 25.113 requires a campus or district that is granted a class size waiver to provide parental notice. (Board Policy Ref: BF Campus Class Size Waivers; EEB Instructional Arrangements—Class Size)

RATIONALE:

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom and it continues to be a priority in our school district, 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. The absolute class size also does not take into account that there may be additional staff in the classroom for some or most of the instructional time (such as special education teachers or paraprofessionals). 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 will not be necessary, but the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval. This exemption allows for local control over class size ratios, and it is not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements. OISD seeks exemption from 22:1 class size ratio because of the difficulty in finding a qualified teacher when ratios above 24:1 require hiring additional staff. OISD is a rural community with limited qualified teacher applicants. OISD will continue to provide information to parents regarding class size but will include explanation of the exemption under the district of innovation plan.

INNOVATION STRATEGIES:

An exemption in meeting Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.112 and TEC §25.111 will allow the ability to group students based upon academic, social, and emotional needs while reducing paperwork (not having to file waivers when the need arises).

8. Appraisal system (DNA LEGAL, DNA LOCAL) (Ed. Code 21.353) (Ed. Code 21.352)

CURRENT LAW:

Teacher Appraisal System Current Statute: The state is issuing a new teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). The domains within these systems are developed by the State to meet the needs of the entire State of Texas.

RATIONALE:

New statewide teacher appraisal systems, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS), are being introduced for the first time since 1997. These systems also require state standardized test scores be used as the primary evaluation measure for both teachers and administrators.

INNOVATION STRATEGIES:

A committee of district and campus administrators and teachers will convene to determine a best fit instrument to support the work of our Olton ISD Profile of a Learner. As we move forward with the implementation of the growth indicators for students, our professional staff will also set goals in coordination with these efforts, including multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth progress toward learning objectives, as evaluation measures on teacher and administrator appraisals.

9. Student attendance/credit (TEC 25.092) (FEC (legal and local))

CURRENT LAW:

Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan: Texas Education Code restricts a student from receiving credit or a final grade in a course of study in which the student was not in attendance for at least 90% of the days the course was offered. If the student attends the course at least 75% of the time, the student may be awarded credit if he/she successfully completes a plan of action determined by the principal. An established attendance committee must hear petitions for credit from students that failed to meet the plan of action. The committee may approve the award of credit based on extenuating circumstances.

RATIONALE:

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 OISD's goal to educate the whole child. 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.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

To meet the needs of 21st century learners, OISD 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. Additionally, flexibility in this area directly supports OISD'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.

10. Revoke transfers (FDA (Local))

CURRENT LAW:

Olton 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.

RATIONALE:

The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants.

INNOVATION STRATEGY:

The district will reserve the right to revoke the transfer of a student at any time during the year based on behavior, excessive tardies, late pick up, attendance, or not remaining in good academic standing. Revocation of transfers for the above reasons is final and may not be appealed.