

Belton Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan
Adopted February 27, 2017



Overview

During the 84th Texas Legislative Session, House Bill 1842 was passed providing public school districts the opportunity to seek a District of Innovation (DOI) designation. This designation allows eligible districts the flexibility to exempt certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC) in an effort to allow for additional local oversight for up to five years. On September 19, 2016, the Belton Independent School District’s Board of Trustees adopted a resolution initiating the process of becoming a District of Innovation.

Board Resolution

RESOLUTION TO INITIATE THE PROCESS OF EXPLORING THE OPTION OF DESIGNATING BELTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

WHEREAS, the Belton ISD Board of Trustees is Committed to the success of every child; and,

WHEREAS, HB 1842 provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation; and,

WHEREAS, Texas districts designated as Districts of Innovation may be exempt from a number of state statutes which affords traditional public schools with many of the same freedoms that apply to open-enrollment charter schools; and,

WHEREAS, the vision of the Belton Independent School District is to be a leader in “preparing every student to excel in tomorrow’s world” and this legislation empowers local communities to be creative and innovative, while also providing greater local control in the decision-making process; and

WHEREAS, Belton ISD Board of Trustees has a long-standing practice of supporting innovation for the benefit of students; and,

WHEREAS, Belton ISD Board of Trustees believes it can be a better decision-making body for students when it has freedom to exercise local control over the decision-making process; and,

WHEREAS, HB 1842 requires districts seeking to be designated as Districts of Innovation to develop a local innovation plan that allows for increased freedom and flexibility from certain state mandates; and,

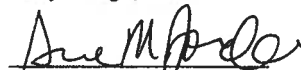
WHEREAS, the Belton ISD Board of Trustees believes that a local innovation plan, if created, should be developed in conjunction with the District's Improvement Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Belton ISD Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing and receive feedback from stakeholders to consider the development of a local innovation plan; following the public hearing, the Board may decline to pursue the designation or may appoint a committee to develop a plan in accordance with Chapter 12A of the Texas Education Code.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Belton Independent School District Board of Trustees on September 19, 2016, initiates the process of exploring and considering designation of the Belton ISD as a District of Innovation under HB 1842.


Randy Pittenger, President



Mike Cowan, Vice-President


Sue M. Jordan, Secretary


Jason Carothers


Amanda Winkler


Leo Camden, Jr.


Jeff Norwood

District of Innovation Public Hearings

Date: October 17, 2016 and January 23, 2017
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: Belton ISD Administration Building
400 N. Wall Street
Belton, TX 76513

District of Innovation Committee Members

On October 17, 2016, the Board of Trustees appointed the following DOI Committee:

Member Name	Role
Dr. Susan Kincannon	Superintendent
Sue M. Jordan	Board Representative
Kim Hardin	Parent
Tracey Moore	Parent/Booster Club Rep
Dr. Justin Winkler	Parent
Juli Bryan	BEEF/Community Member
Dr. Deanna Lovesmith	Asst. Supt.
Celia Ray	Director of PEIMS
DeAnna Clavell	Coord., Financial Reporting
Amanda Necessary	Director of CTE
Dr. Becky Musil	DWEIC/Teacher
Chad Hammonds	DWEIC/Teacher
Kelsie Finn	DWEIC/Teacher
Maredeth Robinson	DWEIC/Parent Liaison
Michelle Mikeska	DWEIC/Teacher
Misty Houston	DWEIC/Teacher

Member Name	Role
Veronica Smith	DWEIC/Teacher
Jill Ross	DWEIC/Principal
Sheryl Nielsen	DWEIC/Community Member
Lindsey Allison	Teacher
Jim Deeken	Counselor, Middle School

District of Innovation Committee Meetings

Date: October 26, 2016
 Time: 4:30 pm
 Location: Belton ISD Administration Building
 400 N. Wall Street
 Belton, TX 76513

Date: November 16, 2016
 Time: 4:30 pm
 Location: Belton ISD Administration Building
 400 N. Wall Street
 Belton, TX 76513

Date: December 1, 2016
 Time: 4:30 pm
 Location: Belton ISD Administration Building
 400 N. Wall Street
 Belton, TX 76513

District Vision

The vision of Belton ISD is to be a leader in preparing every student to excel in tomorrow's world.

District Goals

1. Implement and monitor well-designed processes, including long-range planning and budgeting to address future growth, changing student needs, and the maintenance of effective and efficient operations.
2. Achieve success on the State's student achievement and quality of learning indicators to prepare students to live, learn, and lead in an ever-changing global economy.
3. Attract and retain high performing administration, faculty, and staff who reflect the values of the community, serve as positive role models, exhibit moral excellence and are committed to achieving excellence for all students.
4. Sustain safe and supportive schools that provide secure, nurturing, non-threatening, respectful and disciplined learning environments where all members excel and exhibit moral excellence.
5. Promote shared partnerships of students, parents, schools, community and BISD alumni to include clear, informative, timely, concise communication and recognition of the achievements of all stakeholders.
6. Comply with all state and federal guidelines regarding instructional programs, including but not limited to Title I, Special Education, Dyslexia, State Compensatory Education, Bilingual English as a Second Language, Migrant, Career Education and Gifted and Talented Education.

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 February 27, 2017, Board of Trustees Regular meeting and conclude February 27, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The Districtwide Educational Improvement Committee (DWEIC) in conjunction with the DOI Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications as needed.

Innovation Plan

Teacher Certification

TEC 21.003

Current Law

21.003 (a) 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.

Plan to Address Comprehensive Educational Program

Belton ISD has struggled to find certified teachers for business and industry Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and foresees continued difficulty in filling positions in this area. Specifically, it has been and/or potentially could be difficult to hire certified teachers in the areas of law enforcement, health science, culinary arts, construction trades, and automotive technology. Requiring teaching certification for candidates in these areas is a financial barrier and a hardship to many applicants who are likely taking a pay cut from the private sector to join the school district. Most come prepared to begin teaching immediately and are discouraged by the hurdles required to obtain certification prior to being awarded a teaching position. Certification costs can exceed \$5,000 and take months to complete.

Many qualified candidates in the identified CTE fields have wage-earning experience, certifications, and/or associate's degrees. However, most candidates do not possess a bachelor's degree and teaching certification. While the District has the ability to hire applicants with a bachelor's degree using the School District Teaching Permit process, it is difficult to find applicants from these fields with a bachelor's degree. The District requests an exception for teachers in the identified fields listed above in order to hire candidates with an associate's degree and/or the appropriate work-related professional certification in the particular course of study for the job in which they are applying. Potential applicants would be required to meet current qualifications as required for entry into teacher certification programs according to the Educator Preparation Program, Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Secondary Career and Technical Certification including wage earning experience. However, qualified candidates would not be required to complete a certification program. The District would designate these candidates with a local teaching permit and they would be hired as at-will employees.

In addition to the plan outlined above, Belton ISD requests not to submit the application for a School District Teaching permit for any candidate who is qualified under this locally developed innovation plan. Records will be maintained in the District to confirm that qualifications are met, but no paperwork will be submitted to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

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.

Plan to Address Comprehensive Educational Program

Belton ISD's one-to-one digital learning initiatives began in 2010 with a locally funded innovative grant project awarded to one teacher at Belton High School and all fifth grade classrooms at Joe M. Pirtle Elementary. By the fall of 2011, the District launched its first one-to-one campuses at South Belton Middle School and Belton New Tech High School @ Waskow whereby each student was issued an individual device for learning. The project was so successful

that the school was recognized as an Apple Distinguished school, and the District made the commitment to plan for the phase-in of infrastructure upgrades and the purchase of digital devices for all secondary campuses. By the fall of 2014, all Belton ISD secondary students were in a one-to-one learning environment. From 2010 to 2016, the District has been able to implement the use of digital library books, digital textbooks, a learning management system, and the use of hundreds of digital learning resources to enhance instruction.

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 the University of Texas – Permian Basin through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). 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.

First Day of Instruction

TEC 25.0811

Current Law

25.0811 (a) ... [A] school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Plan to Address Comprehensive Educational Program

Belton ISD's DOI Committee has determined that a school calendar that provides the option to begin the first day of instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August as currently required by the TEC will provide the District the ability to develop a calendar that effectively meets local community values and supports a comprehensive educational program.

Currently the District serves a population of approximately 11,100 students. Significant to Belton ISD's population is the growing number of military connected families who are moving into the District. This year, 8% of the student population is considered military connected. An increasing number of families working at nearby Fort Hood, the world's largest military installation, are choosing Belton ISD as their home. In collaboration with Fort Hood and Commanding General Sean McFarland, the District wishes to ensure that students are off with their families on federal holidays in collaboration and support of our military. A calendar which begins on the fourth Monday in August does not provide the ability to incorporate the majority of federal holidays for students without compromising other community values including professional development days, parent conference days, and the length of Christmas and spring breaks.

In addition to meeting the needs of students and families, Belton ISD wishes to develop a school calendar that provides options for students to participate in and enter postsecondary opportunities at institutions of higher education. A calendar which ends prior to the beginning of local college and university summer sessions provides for students' educational needs to be effectively served. Students would not be asked to juggle multiple schedules by ending one course early or starting a course late in order to further their education.

Adoption of Innovation Plan

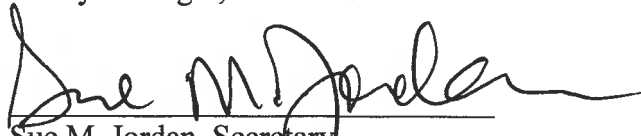
Belton ISD has met all of the process requirements outlined by the TEA and the Commissioner of Education to receive the designation as a District of Innovation. The local Innovation Plan was developed and approved by both the DOI Committee and DWEIC. In addition, a public hearing was conducted on January 23, 2017. The plan was then posted on the District's website for the required 30 days following approval by the Board of Trustees.

Approved by the DOI Committee on the 1st day of December, 2016.

Approved by the DWEIC Committee on the 9th day of January, 2017.

Approved by the Belton ISD Board of Trustees on the 27th day of February, 2017.


Randy Pittenger, President


Sue M. Jordan, Secretary