

BLAND ISD

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

2017

Introduction

The 84th legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allowed traditional independent school districts the ability to access flexibilities which had previously been reserved for Texas' open enrollment charter schools. In order for an independent school district to obtain these flexibilities, districts must seek designation as a District of Innovation. On February 9, 2017 the Bland ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by adopting a resolution to pursue a District of Innovation designation.

Process

On February 9, 2017, the Board appointed Superintendent Rick Tidwell to form a District of Innovation Committee which was composed of administrators, teachers, parents, a business owner and community representatives. The committee met on February 20, 2017 to discuss options pertaining to the plan of Innovation and to determine which of these options might benefit Bland ISD schools and community. After the development of the plan the Committee motioned on February 27 to move forward. It was posted on the school website for public viewing and comment for 30 days beginning on February 28, 2017. The Commissioner of Education was notified at the Texas Education Agency. On April 5, 2017, the District of Innovation Committee voted to approve the final document after a public hearing. It was approved by the Bland ISD Board of Trustees on April 13, 2017.

Committee Members

KaLynn Blount	Elementary Teacher
Brandon DeLorge	Middle School Teacher
Jamie D'Amico	High School Teacher
Renee Molck	Parent
Catherine Taylor	Parent
Tammy Godwin	Parent
Lisa Morquecho	Business
Shelli Wendland	Curriculum Specialist
Erin Gray	Elementary/Middle School Assistant Principal
Ted Capps	Technology Director
Jason Hammack	Elementary/Middle School Principal
Dustin Evans	High School Principal
Brian Bymaster	Assistant Superintendent
Rick Tidwell	Superintendent of Schools

Timeline of Events

February 9, 2017	The Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to pursue the District of Innovation.
February 9, 2017	The Board of Trustees held a hearing regarding the District of Innovation, voted to develop a District of Innovation plan, and delegated authority to Superintendent Rick Tidwell to appoint a District of Innovation Committee.
February 20, 2017	The District of Innovation Committee held a meeting to draft a local innovation plan.
February 27, 2017	The District of Innovation Committee held a meeting to complete the District of Innovation Plan. Motion was made to move forward and post the plan on the District's website for public viewing.
February 28, 2017	The District of Innovation Plan was posted on the District's website. The Commissioner of Education was notified by mail of the District's intent to vote on the plan.
April 5, 2017	A public hearing was held to discuss the District of Innovation plan. The plan was approved by the committee by a unanimous vote.
April 13, 2017	The Board of Trustees approved the District of Innovation Plan by at least 2/3 majority vote.
April 14, 2017	The Commissioner of Education is notified of the approval of the Local Innovation Plan. The District begins updating local policies to reflect the District of Innovation Plan.

Term of Plan

The term of the District of Innovation plan, as constituted by the Texas Education Agency, will be for five (5) years. Therefore, this plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year unless terminated by the Board of Trustees. The District of Innovation Committee will annually monitor the Local Innovation Plan.

Innovations

Uniform School Start Date

Texas Ed. Code 25.0811
Bland ISD Policy EB Legal

Current

The District may not begin instruction for the school year before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposed

The flexibility provided by permitting an earlier start date will allow Bland ISD to annually determine, at the local level, what start date best meets the needs of the students and community. This enables us to increase college and career readiness, balance the amount of instructional time per semester, maximize instructional time prior to State mandated assessments, and provide more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff. In addition, this change will help enable students to enroll in college courses that start in early June, avoiding a hurdle that otherwise might hinder students' college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date would also allow Bland ISD to start classes on a Wednesday or Thursday, as a short week, easing the transition for students entering Pre-K/Kindergarten, as well as transitioning through the elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Students will start school no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction and Length of School Day

Texas Ed. Code 25.081 and 25.082
Bland ISD Policy EC

Current

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amended Texas Education Code TEC §25.081 by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring the District to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess) each school year. Additionally, TEC §25.082(a) currently requires that a school day be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.

Proposed

Exemption from the 7 hour school day requirement would allow Bland ISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule whenever it was locally determined as

beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is an existing waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum per school year.

Exempting BISD from the 420 minute daily requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with the annual minute requirements. This would allow the district the flexibility to schedule non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant professional development.

BISD does not intend to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days will be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media.

Probationary Contracts

Texas Ed. Code 21.102
Bland ISD Policy DCA Legal

Current

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year.

Proposed

This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in BISD.

Teacher Certification

Texas Ed. Code 21.003, 21.053
Bland ISD Policy DK Legal, Local, Exhibit

Current

The Texas Education Code requires 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.

Proposed

It would benefit the district and students to have the ability to allow a teacher to teach one class subject out of their certified teaching field. It would also benefit the students and the district to have the flexibility to hire individuals with college teaching or industry experience on a part or full time local certification. The district's first option would be to hire a qualified applicant with a Texas Education Agency certification. In order to meet the criteria above, the following procedures would be implemented:

- a) The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- b) An individual with college teaching or industry experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certificate. The campus principal would make a request to the superintendent and make all credentials available that verify the individual is knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. The superintendent would have the capability to hire this person on a local certification and the employee would obtain an at-will contract.