

Northside ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Rationale for Seeking District of Innovation Status

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allows public school districts to declare exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code by becoming a designated District of innovation. On March 22 at their regular monthly meeting the Northside ISD board of trustees unanimously approved a resolution for the district to seek to return to a district of innovation status. Northside had been a DOI during the 2015-2016 school year, but returned to a regular calendar in August 2016. We believed that the DOI status was no longer an option due to being placed on the school improvement list (IR- 1st Year). Northside met accountability as of August 2017 and currently we are listed as a Formerly Improvement Required (FIR) district. We are seeking to return to the District of Innovation Status as we feel the flexibility it will offer will continue to allow us to improve in all areas.

Local Innovation Committee/ Campus Improvement Committee

Christopher Casarez- teacher
Darcy Ham- Teacher
Lynn Sawin- Teacher
Dawn Wilkinson- Teacher
Tonya Reed- Teacher
Shaliese Woodard- Parent
Brian Pounds – Parent
Jennifer Wolfe- Teacher
Molly Lemon- Principal
Mark Haught- Superintendent

At the March 5, 2018 Campus Improvement Committee meeting, members met and among items of discussion was Northside ISD becoming a district of innovation. At the March 22, 2018 regular meeting the Northside ISD board of trustees unanimously approved a resolution to allow the Northside Campus Improvement Committee to meet as a Local Innovation Committee and compose a draft of a District of Innovation Plan.

The committee met on April 9 and approved a plan draft and school calendar options that may be a part of the plan. A public hearing was held at the April 17, 2018 Board Meeting, and a draft of the proposed plan has been posted on our website for public review. The Campus Improvement Committee, meeting as the District of Innovation Committee met again on May 8th and voted unanimously to approve the final draft of the District of Innovation plan for Northside ISD. A final copy of the plan was presented to the NISD board of trustees at their regular May 14, 2018 board meeting and was approved unanimously.

1. Uniform Start Date (TEC § 25.0811)

State law currently prohibits school districts from starting class before the fourth Monday in August, unless they are year-round districts. This provision disadvantages Northside ISD because it limits the district's flexibility in the periodic scheduling of professional development, remediation and continued efforts in school improvement.

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The flexibility of 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. Flexible starting dates will allow for a better balance of professional development throughout the school year and also allow for shorter break periods at different times such as at the end of grading periods. A flexible calendar will also allow for mid-week starts at the beginning of each semester. This can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle, and high school. Additionally, the ability to change the school start date can also help better balance the amount of days in each semester.

2. Teacher Certification (TEC § 21.003, § 21.053 and § 21.057)

State law specifies 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 the teacher's certification, the district must request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification or issue a school district teaching permit under TEC 21.055.

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Northside ISD faces continuing challenges in hiring and retaining quality, properly certified staff. The inability to compete salary-wise with neighboring, larger schools and with what can be considered our remote location can often create a challenge when the district has a vacancy. We will create a local policy that allows our district to consider similarly qualified teachers and other professionals that have acquired commensurate skills in the workplace that could enable them to become effective classroom teachers, particularly in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEMS).

For all certified staff vacancies Northside ISD will post notice of the vacancy and seek first a qualified applicant with traditional certification. If no acceptable candidates are available then the principal and /or superintendent will seek the best individual available for the position. Background checks will be conducted and fingerprints will be required.

The One -to- one computer initiative that began at Northside in 2014, along with enhanced online curriculum platforms in Math and Science will make this segment of an innovation plan successful by giving new teachers access to vetted curriculum,

The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following these assignments. The usual teacher certification waiver, state permit application, or other paperwork will not need to be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. This element of the plan will not be applicable to special education and bilingual teaching vacancies that will still be required to meet SBEC certification requirements.

3. Probationary Contracts (TEC § 21.102(b) and DCA (Legal)).

Probationary contracts 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. This period of time is not always a sufficient amount of time to accurately evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. This is particularly true since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions be made prior to the return of much of the end of the year classroom test data

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For experienced certified staff new to Northside 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 Northside ISD shall be for period of two years with probationary contracts issued for each of the two years. The additional observation period will allow a more thorough assessment of the teacher's aptitudes and abilities.