

**VERNON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**District of Innovation Plan**  
**2017 – 2022**

**Purpose**

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, permits Texas public school district to become District of Innovation (DOI) and to obtain exemption from certain provision of the Texas Education Code. The VISD Board of Trustees believes in supporting innovation and local initiatives through the use of local District control. The adoption of the District of Innovation plan allows District flexibility to improve the educational environment for the benefit of students and the community.

**Term**

The term of the plan is for five years, beginning August 01, 2017, and ending July 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended by the VISD Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemption in the form of an amendment. Amendments adopted by the Board will adhere to the terms of the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans.

**VISD District of Innovation Timeline**

Tuesday, February 21, 2017	VISD Board of Trustees adopts Resolution for District of Innovation and appoints District of Innovation committee.
Wednesday, February 24, 2017	Submit letter of intent to Commissioner of Education.
Thursday, March 23, 2017	DOI Committee finalizes the DOI plan.
Friday, March 24, 2017	Final DOI plan is posted on District website.
Wednesday, April 26, 2017	Public Forum for the discussion of the DOI plan. Following forum, the plan will be presented to the Board for review.
Wednesday, April 26, 2017	Board considers the proposed recommendation of the District of Innovation Plan and the designation of the Vernon ISD as a District of Innovation.

**VISD District of Innovation Committee**

Jeff Byrd, Superintendent  
Dr. Hope Appel, Asst. Superintendent  
Vickie Hennessee, Business Manager  
Lynn Anderson, High School Principal  
Joe Hennessee, State Hospital Principal  
Michael Campos, Middle School Principal  
Stefanie Merrell, Shive Elementary Principal  
Kacy Hunter, Central Elementary Principal  
Scott Mills, McCord Elementary Principal  
Mark Bateman, Athletic Director

Tracy Goodman, Mandy Kajs, Michelle Hodges, Jennifer Wilkinson, Katrina Price, Sheridan Lamp, Robin Storey, David Storey, Wilainia Baskerville, Gib Baskerville, Judy Pattison

## VISD PROPOSED INNOVATIONS

### School Start Date/Last Day of School [EB (LEGAL), TEC 25.0811, 25.0812]

- **Current:** Student instruction cannot start before the fourth Monday of August. Waivers are no longer allowed to alter start date. The last day of instruction may not occur before May 15 of any year. Again, no waiver is allowed. These changes occurred through the lobby of tourism groups which argued the loss of business due to local control of school calendars.
- **Plan:** To meet local community needs and offer a more balanced calendar through the design of the instructional periods, start dates and end dates. Instruction will not begin before the second Monday of August. Advantages:
  - Balance six-week grading periods and semester schedules.
  - Allow for first semester to end before holiday break.
  - Align curriculum of dual credit courses through neighboring Vernon College.
  - Allow calendar to be more efficient following May STAAR/EOC assessments.

### Teacher Certification [DK(LEGAL), DK(LOCAL), DK(EXHIBIT), TEC, 21.003, 21.056]

- **Current:** A district must place a certified teacher in the instructional classroom. The teacher cannot teach outside their certification without the District submitting a request to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). TEA may then approve or deny the request.
- **Plan:** Allow local control over certification requirements so that the best interest of the student is served. Advantages:
  - Campus Principal may request that the Superintendent allow a certified teacher to teach subject or subjects out of their certified field. The Principal must specify the reason for the request and document the credential the certified teacher possesses which would qualify them to teach outside their acquired field.
  - An individual with Career and or Technology experience may be considered for a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The Principal must specify the reason for the request and document the credential the individual possesses which would qualify them to teach within the District. The Superintendent will provide the Board of Trustees with this information and seek Board approval of the hiring. Local certificates will be for one year only and the employee will be hired as an at-will employee.
  - Open scheduling options for students in CTE.

### Teacher Contract Days [DCB(LEGAL), DCB(LOCAL), TEC 21.401]

- **Current:** TEC Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a ten month contract equivalent to 187 days.
- **Plan:** Allow local control over the teacher contract days. Requirements and advantages:
  - Teachers will be required to attend a minimum of 7 days beyond the scheduled student instruction days.
  - Staff development will include professional development and workdays for teachers.
  - Increased daily rate on professional salary scale (teachers only).
  - Enhance teacher recruitment and retention.
  - Improve teacher morale.

### Length of Instructional Day [TEC 25.081, 25.082]

- **Current:** Chapter 25 sets the instructional year for students at 75,600 minutes including intermissions and recess each year. TEC 25.081(e) defines a day of instruction to be 420 minutes while 25.082(a) requires a school day to be at least seven hours per day including intermissions and recess.

- **Plan:** Allow local control over the minutes per year based on the following requirements:
  - Do not drop below 420 minutes per day.
  - Increase the instructional day to no more than 450 minutes per day; advantages:
    - Reduce the number of days following spring STAAR/EOC assessment
    - Aid in balancing semesters for a more uniform grading period each six-weeks
    - Provide flexibility in scheduling post-district extracurricular events

**Contract Employees** *[TEC Chapter 21]*

- **Current:** The definition of teacher for purposes of Chapter 21 is a principal, supervisor, classroom teacher, counselor or other full-time professional employee who is required to hold a certificate issued by the State Board for Educator Certification (as well as educational diagnosticians and nurses). Superintendents may receive term contracts, but not probationary or continuing contracts.
- **Plan:** Allow local control over the issuance of a probationary or term contract. Advantages:
  - The district will have the option to increase a probationary contract out to three years for incoming teachers that were currently on a term contract in another district. This will allow the district to mentor a teacher before moving the teacher to a term contract.
  - District may offer a term contract to an incoming teacher for the purposes or recruitment as long as the teacher meets the needs of the district and is certified in the needed area.