



DeSoto ISD District of Innovation Plan 2017-2018

Developed Spring 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas public schools with sufficient academic ratings to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The allowable exemptions are for those sections of code that do not apply to charter or private schools in an attempt to reduce the extra administrative or operational burdens placed on public schools.

To obtain exemptions, the District must create a Local Innovation Plan detailing the code requirements that inhibit the goals of the District and the benefits to the District expected from the exemption.

II. TERM

The term of the plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and terminate at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, unless amended, rescinded or renewed by the District of Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees. The District of Innovation Committee will review the plan annually to confirm consistent alignment with the needs of the District. Any recommended plan changes will be posted on the District website for 30 days and require the approval of the District of Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees.

[Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy AF.](#)

III. DISTRICT OF INNOVATIVE COMMITTEE

The District of Innovation Committee developed this Local Innovation Plan and included members appointed by the Board and Superintendent representing the following:

- Teachers
- Community Leaders
- Parents
- District Administrators

District of Innovation Committee

Committee Member	Type of Member	Nominated By
Sabrina Mayberry	ISD (RYE)	Sandre Moncriste
Miriam McNeal-Hall	Community	Sandre Moncriste
Amy Aris	ISD (DHS)	Karen Daniel
Cynthia Seay	Community Former Employee	Karen Daniel
L'Risa McCowan-Kelly	ISD (WMS)	Kathy Goad
Chris Henderson	Community Alum	Kathy Goad
Robin Ford	ISD (CCR)	Aubrey C. Hooper
Erica Broussard	Community Parent	Aubrey C. Hooper
Megan McCutchen Mitchell	ISD (NSE)	Carl Sherman, Jr.
Ronneshia Bronner	Community Parent	Carl Sherman, Jr.
Versia Lusk	ISD (ATDDECA)	Don Gant
LaVada Lusk	Community	Don Gant
Karen Pittmon	ISD (WINGS)	Jerry Hall
Richard Graves	Community	Jerry Hall
Andreana Coleman	NSE Community Member	Supt. David Harris
Angela Bolton-Smith	WRE parent	Supt. David Harris
Kquinta Jackson	CHE parent	Supt. David Harris
Destiny Gordon	RYE parent	Supt. David Harris
Michelle Carter-Pope	DCAC - TTCU partner	Supt. David Harris
Charles Bowen	DCAC - Parent	Supt. David Harris
Darlene Jessie	DCAC - WMS, DHS parent	Supt. David Harris

Ad Hoc

Beth Trimble	ISD Exec
Levetta Levels	ISC Exec
Dr. Gabrielle Lemonier	ISC Exec
Bobby LaBorde	ISC Exec
Dr. Cheryl Ensley	ISC Exec
Kathy Ferrell	ISC Leadership
Dr. Kevin Phillips	ISC Leadership
David C. Harris	Superintendent

IV. TIMELINE

December 12, 2016, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

- Board approved Resolution for district to consider designation as a District of Innovation

February 13, 2017, 6:30 p.m. Public Hearing

- Public Hearing held at Board Meeting
- Board appointed Innovation Committee

February 16-March 9, 2017 DeSoto ISD Administration Building

- Innovation Committee meetings held
 - February 16
 - March 2
 - March 9
- Post final plan online March 10, 2017

March 20, 2017- 5:30 p.m. Board Review at Board Workshop

March 27, 2017- 6:30 p.m. Public Hearing at Board Meeting

- Following Hearing
- DoI Committee Votes to Approve Plan

April 10, 2017- 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

- Board Votes to Approve Plan

V. STRATEGIC PLAN

This Local Innovation Plan is guided by and aligned with the District's [Strategic Plan 2020](#). This five-year plan has six areas of focus and 23 specific results to be accomplished over the next five years.

- **MISSION:** Prepare students academically and socially to be problem-solvers and productive citizens.
- **CORE VALUES:** Individualized Learning, Quality Teachers, Equal Access, Relationships
- **MAJOR AREAS OF FOCUS & SPECIFIC RESULTS**

Communications

GOAL: Expand pathways and maintain methods of communication throughout DeSoto ISD for parents/guardians, students, and community.

- 1.1 Enhance current digital and social media
- 1.2 Increase pathways to fully engage all stakeholders
- 1.3 Improve communication and access with community resources

Programs

GOAL: Develop a system for implementation and assessment of new and current programs and initiatives to ensure alignment to district Call to Action and beliefs.

- 2.1 Create a coherent framework to assist campuses in implementing programs
- 2.2 Develop an assessment system to evaluate and improve programs
- 2.3 Implement an accountability plan for programs

Partnerships

GOAL: Capitalize on community resources to improve ISD partnerships, provide student opportunities.

- 3.1 Write protocols to define expectations and requirements for partnering with district
- 3.2 Develop relationships through partnerships between communities and DeSoto ISD
- 3.3 Expand sponsorships and outreach to strengthen our relationships with the community

Assessment

GOAL: Design assessments to align with curriculum to focus on student learning.

- 4.1 Engage students to collaborate in developing assessments
- 4.2 Create an authentic, product-based assessment system that demonstrates student learning
- 4.3 Establish a district database of non-traditional assessments
- 4.4 Implement a collaborative cross-curricular assessment model

Curriculum

GOAL: Allow and encourage flexibility within the learning environment.

- 5.1 Integrate flexible scheduling to maximize student learning opportunities
- 5.2 Prioritize the purchase of furnishings that are conducive to flexible learning spaces
- 5.3 Create professional development focused on flexible teaching strategies
- 5.4 Implement group and student-led projects

GOAL: Design curriculum that promotes analytical thinking & problem-solving.

- 6.1 Create courses that develop analytical and problem-solving skills and are aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standard
- 6.2 Establish a teacher mentor program that utilizes peer teachers, industry professionals
- 6.3 Implement feedback tools for each course

Parental Involvement

GOAL: Develop ways to reach our parents/guardians and engage them in their child's education process.

- 7.1 Implement a collaborative parent communication model
- 7.2 Expand and improve parent engagement activities to encourage participation for students' educational pursuits
- 7.3 Expand and improve opportunities for parent and teacher dialogue

VI. INNOVATION PLAN

1. TEACHER CERTIFICATION

TEC Code: §21.003 Certification Required.

(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.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career Technical Education (CTE), fine arts, athletics, and foreign languages. To provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses instead of the requirements outlined in the law.
- The certification requirements inhibit the ability to hire qualified but non-certified early childhood educators to grow and develop additional early childhood educational opportunities.
- The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws related to teacher contracts or teacher benefits.
- The exemption is to allow the District to establish local requirements including the current requirements in Sec 21.055 for teacher preparation (including background checks, training, and classroom management preparation) to enhance our ability to compete for teaching resources with industry expertise.

Flexibility affords the District the following advantages:

- Industry certified and trade professionals to teach specialized certification courses.
- A greater number of CTE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.
- Ability to hire TRS 4-STAR childcare providers who do not hold EC-6 teaching credentials but are actively engaged with District partners to provide early childhood educational experiences.
- Ability to increase private provider partnerships for early childhood education.

Local Guidelines:

- The DeSoto ISD Human Resources Department in conjunction with CTE, Curriculum and Instruction, and Early Childhood will establish the local process to have the option to issue local certification for Early

Childhood positions, CTE, fine arts, athletics, and foreign languages classes. The district's local guidelines will maintain the requirements for criminal background checks and classroom management training and preparation, including optional support at the district discretion for a mentor teacher.

- DeSoto ISD is not seeking exemption from parental notification.
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy DBA.

2. PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

TEC Code: §Sec. 21.102. Probationary Contracts

(a) Except as provided by Section 21.202(b), a person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by the district for two consecutive school years subsequent to August 28, 1967, shall be employed under a probationary contract. A person who previously was employed as a teacher by a district and, after at least a two-year lapse in district employment returns to district employment, may be employed under a probationary contract...

(b) A probationary contract may not be for a term exceeding one school year. The probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period 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 by the district.

(c) An employment contract may not extend the probationary contract period beyond the end of the third consecutive school year of the teacher's employment by the school district unless, during the third year of a teacher's probationary contract, the board of trustees determines that it is doubtful whether the teacher should be given a continuing contract or a term contract. If the board makes that determination, the district may make a probationary contract with the teacher for a term ending with the fourth consecutive school year of the teacher's employment with the district, at which time the district shall:

- (1) terminate the employment of the teacher; or
- (2) employ the teacher under a continuing contract or a term contract as provided by Subchapter D or E, according to district policy.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- The exemption is specifically for teachers who have taught in at least 5 of the last 8 years in public education. In addition to a one-year probationary contract, the district MAY recommend a second-year probationary contract to be approved by the Board of Trustees. An extension to a second-year probationary contract is to recognize that, at times, even experienced teachers new to the

district need more than one year to learn the DeSoto ISD system and the district's educational improvement models. A one-year probationary period may not allow the teacher or the administrator time to evaluate the teacher's capacity or ability to adopt the DeSoto ISD requirements.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will have the option to recommend a second-year probationary contract to teachers who are new to the district but have taught at least 5 of the last 8 years in public education.
- There are no changes to first time teacher probationary contract terms only teachers who have taught in public education in at least 5 of the last 8 years.
- There are no changes to continuing or term teaching contracts.
- The second-year probationary contract is not automatic but at the discretion of Human Resources and the campus administrator.
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy DCA.

3. EARLIEST POSSIBLE SCHOOL START DATE

TEC Code: §25.0811 First Day of Instruction

(a) Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- The DeSoto ISD Calendar Committee will have the flexibility to start school earlier than the fourth Monday in August for the entire District.
- Starting earlier will balance the two semesters with a natural Winter Break, set exams before Winter Break, and create more instructional time before STAAR/EOC/AP exams.
- The balanced semesters will align with college semesters as well, allowing more opportunities for summer school, internships, and industrial certification opportunities.
- Starting earlier will also accommodate new and innovative educational models such as summer bridge programming.

Local Guidelines:

- The DeSoto ISD Calendar Committee will receive parent and staff

input, then decide, subject to Board of Trustees approval, whether the entire District will start school earlier than the fourth Monday in August.

4. MINIMUM ATTENDANCE – ‘NINETY PERCENT RULE’ FOR CREDIT

TEC Code: §25.092 Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade.

(a) Except as provided by this section, 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.

(a-1) A student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class. A student under the jurisdiction of a court in a criminal or juvenile justice proceeding may not receive credit or a final grade under this subsection without the consent of the judge presiding over the student's case.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Our charge as educators is to ensure that students reach their greatest potential. However, that potential cannot be achieved if the individual needs of students are not addressed. Tailoring a student's educational instruction in a manner that meets their specific needs will undoubtedly maximize their potential and educational experience. To that end, the following students would benefit from flexibility in their instruction:
 - Students unable to attend class due to illness,
 - Students unable to attend class because of family difficulties,
 - Students who benefit from virtual classes or tutoring,
 - Students who benefit from an alternative school schedule, or
 - Students who benefit from tutoring.
- Exemption from this requirement will enable DeSoto ISD to provide meaningful instruction through innovative methods such as tutoring, location of instruction, and times of instruction, thereby, reducing dropout rates while increasing graduation rates.

Local Guidelines:

- DeSoto ISD will develop policies and procedures through teachers, counselors, and administration to evaluate each student's specific need and modify their educational experience appropriately.
- Compulsory attendance laws still apply.
- A student's specific educational needs may not necessitate making up 'seat time' if they meet the academic content mastery procedures.
- This exemption will provide DeSoto ISD the opportunity to matriculate quality students who otherwise would be ineligible.

5. CLASS SIZE IN K-4TH GRADE

TEC Code: §25.112. CLASS SIZE. (a) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth-grade class.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Schools begin the school year with staff based on projections of student enrollment. Often, enrollment will exceed projections for one school while under projections for another school. As a result, teachers and students must be moved from class to class or school to school to meet the 22-to-1 requirement. As a result, students leave behind friends and teacher relationships that have already formed.
- Being exempt from the inflexible 22-to-1 requirement will allow students to remain with the teacher and classmates that they began the year with, fostering continuity and stability which will support increased student achievement.
- Incoming students can remain in their preferred or neighborhood school rather than have to be transported to a different campus.
- Districts will not be forced to hire new teachers not accounted for in the Local Board's adopted Budget.

Local Guidelines:

- The Human Resources Department will develop the procedure for this exemption in collaboration with the Associate Superintendent who oversees elementary campuses.
- The District will strive to keep class sizes at 22:1 in grades K-4, with the flexibility to go above 22:1 if needed:
 - If the student/teacher ratio in a class needs to go to 23:1, it must have both administrator and teacher approval, and class size parental notification.
 - If the student/teacher ratio in a class needs to go to 24:1, it must have both administrator and teacher approval, Associate Superintendent notification and class size parental notification.
 - Additional personnel should be brought in for assistance at 24:1 as outlined in the procedures. Additional help could be a substitute or aide.
- At 25:1, an additional FTE shall be hired and classes leveled.
- DeSoto ISD is not seeking the parent notification exemption, thus will continue to notify parents if a class exceeds the 22:1 ratio but with DOI exemption and explain the plan to monitor and adjust should the number increase.
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy EEB.

6. KINDERGARTEN START AGE

TEC Code: §29.151 Free Kindergarten

The Board of Trustees of each school district shall establish and maintain one or more kindergartens for the training of children residing in the district who are at least five years of age on September 1 of the school year.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- Children mature and demonstrate readiness for school at varying rates, and their social/emotional development can be affected by a wide range of factors.
- The September 1st deadline for entering public kindergarten does not provide the flexibility needed for the district to serve students who are ready for school slightly earlier than the established date.
- Parents of students who are ready for kindergarten curriculum and learning environments are enrolling their children in private kindergarten, and then requesting to skip ahead to first grade once they enter public schools the following year, thus they have not participated in any district kindergarten program.

Local Guidelines:

- The Assessment Department will develop the assessment tool and procedures for this exemption to determine if a child is ready both academically and socially. Testing will take place the summer before the start of school.
- Parents will be notified of the option for students who will be age 5 by December 31 of the year.
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy EHDC and DeSoto ISD Board Policy FD

7. DESIGNATION OF CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

TEC Code: §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator.

- (a) A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other administrator selected by the principal.
- (b) The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter.
- (c) Except as provided, the specific duties of the coordinator may be established by campus or district policy. Unless superseded by campus or district policy:
 - i. A duty imposed on the principal can be performed by this coordinator
 - ii. A power granted to a principal or other administrator under this subchapter may be exercised by the coordinator.
- (d) The coordinator will notify parents/guardian promptly if the student is placed into: in or out of school suspension, disciplinary alt. education, expelled or in juvenile justice program.
- (e) Phone and written notification requirements
- (f) Principal to provide notice if the coordinator is unable or unavailable.

Rationale for the Exemption:

- DeSoto ISD believes that school discipline is best administered and managed within a team concept and should not be limited to one school administrator being responsible for contacting and the documentation requirements to parents. DeSoto ISD will use all school administrators to manage student behavior effectively and consistently monitor school discipline and parental contact.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will maintain all the duties and responsibilities outlined for a Campus Behavior Coordinator and allows the role to be fulfilled by more than one administrator per campus.
- DeSoto ISD is not seeking an exemption for the parental notification procedures listed in subsection (d), (e) and (f).
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy FO.

IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY EXPECTATIONS

This Local Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the DeSoto ISD will operate to provide improved student opportunities.

This Plan sets out the laws from which DeSoto ISD seeks relief from the Texas Education Code so that it can develop more innovative programming and better meet the needs of its stakeholders.

While this Plan sets out those parameters, it does not and cannot establish the full scope of innovative practices within the DeSoto ISD.

Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses, departments, and committees to realize the work of the District of Innovation Committee fully. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched, developed, and presented to the Board of Trustees where appropriate. It is the expectation of the District of Innovation Committee that all Board Policy language will reflect the spirit of the Committee work and honor the parameters and limitations expressed in this Plan.

Any and all changes that arise from the District of Innovation work will be accompanied by a comprehensive communication plan for students, families, and the community.

All content is posted on the DeSoto ISD website at www.desotoisd.org