



Rockwall

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rockwall ISD District of Innovation Plan

Call to Action

Rockwall ISD empowers learners to embody independence, value relationships and achieve excellence as thriving members of a dynamic global community.

Our Goals

1. We will provide authentic and innovative learning experiences for every learner.
2. We will ensure consistent instructional processes to achieve and maintain high performance for all learners.
3. We will ensure continuous improvement through maximizing fiscal efficiency to address growth.
4. We will partner with our community to enhance the learner experience.
5. We will engage in consistent and interactive communication.
6. We will ensure a safe and civil environment that is responsive to the needs of our diverse community.
7. We will attract, recruit, develop and retain high-quality professional staff.

Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC). On February 20, 2017, the Rockwall Independent School District's Board of Trustees ("Board") passed a Resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and the community.

In September 2017, a twelve member District Innovation Committee ("Committee") composed of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's various stakeholders, including principals, parents, community members, and administrators was assembled. The Committee met to discuss and draft the original Rockwall ISD District of Innovation Plan ("Plan"). At a public joint meeting of the District of Innovation Committee and the District Education and Improvement Committee ("DEIC") on

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November 7, 2017, the DEIC voted to approve this plan. In the fall of 2022, the District of Innovation Committee reconvened to review the plan and consider updates for renewal of the plan. A public hearing was held on September 12, 2022, and the District of Innovation renewal plan was approved by the DEIC on September 12, 2022. The revised plan is being presented for renewal to the Rockwall ISD Board of Trustees on November 14, 2022.

Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning November 14, 2022 and ending November 14, 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with the law. If, within the term of the Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Innovations

To achieve the District's Call to Action and to align the District practices and operations with the District's goals, the District needs the flexibility to exert local control to modify:

- School Start Date
- Teacher Certification Requirements

I. School Start Date

Exemption from: TEC §25.0811

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin instruction before the 4th Monday in August.

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The flexibility of a start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students, parents, and our local community. The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in August will enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in RISD. This will also allow for flexible professional development scheduling for district staff.

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II. **Teacher Certification Requirement**

Exemption from: TEC §21.003, TEC §21.053

Manner in which law inhibits Board Goals

TEC §21.003 states 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 submit a request to the Texas Education Agency (“TEA”) to hire without certification, with requirement to obtain certification in a specified time. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.053 requires a teacher to present his or her certificate to the District before their employment contract will be binding, and prohibits the District from paying an educator if the educator does not hold a valid certificate at the time.

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The District will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certifications for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question. Rockwall ISD would like the ability to locally certify teachers in areas of high demand, to better meet the educational needs of our students. These areas could include CTE, languages other than English, and other hard to fill positions. Teachers with industry experience and native speakers with qualified experience could be eligible to teach a course through a local teaching certification. Additionally, Rockwall ISD will notify parents if a locally certified teacher is employed for their child's class. This process will allow more flexibility in our scheduling, and provide more options for our students in class offerings leading to industry-recognized certifications.

Implementation

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the District will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. The appropriate campuses and departments will develop specific implementation plans.

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