

Flour Bluff Independent School District
District of Innovation Plan
Five Year Renewal

2024-2029



Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan as outlined in the Texas Education Code, Chapter 12A. To be eligible for a District of Innovation designation, a school district's most recent academic performance rating must be at least acceptable. Once formally approved, an innovation plan is effective for five years. The plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed in the same way it was developed and approved at any time.

Each school district may pursue designation as a District of Innovation for different reasons. As a District of Innovation, Flour Bluff ISD will be able to increase the flexibility necessary to personalize the learning experiences of our students. We also believe Flour Bluff ISD must have the ability to make important educational decisions for our students at the local level. As we developed our District of Innovation Plan, our community has been involved throughout the process, giving ongoing feedback on what they want for their children to prepare them to be positive contributors to the world.

Process

October 8, 2024—The District of Innovation Committee held a public meeting and considered the final version of the proposed plan.

2024-2025 District of Innovation Committee Members

Chris Steinbruck	Superintendent
Dr. Linda Barganski	Asso. Supt. for Federal and State Programs
Nicole White	Asso. Supt. for Curriculum and Instruction
James Crenshaw	Asso. Superintendent for Student Services
Dr. Melonie Shandy	Director of Special Education
Cassie Freeman	Executive Director of Human Resources
Kristen Bily	Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations
Clynt Elwood	Athletic Director
Crystal Elliott	High School Administrator
Chris Hess	High School Administrator
Sonja Edwards	Junior High Administrator
Dr. Sal Alvarado	Intermediate Administrator
Juan Aleman	Elementary Administrator
Jessica Gutierrez	Primary Administrator
Mollie Crowley	Early Childhood Administrator
Rose Ford	Special Education Counselor
Billie Lashua	High School Teacher
Erika Garza	Junior High Teacher
Brian Chambers	Intermediate Teacher
Misty Beckwith	Elementary Teacher
Vanessa Hernandez	Primary Teacher
Tami Krueger	Early Childhood Center Teacher
Megan Gordon	High School Parent
Deb Avery	Junior High Parent
Marisol Garza	Intermediate Parent

Aaron Parker

Elementary Parent

Katie Barrett

Primary Parent

Mendy Meurer-Busby

Early Childhood Parent

Tammy Pfeffer

Community Member

Rachelle Cintron

Community Member

Michelle Ewing

Business Member

Kellie Addison

Business Member

Requested Exemptions

Uniform School Start Date

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. For many years, this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier. Many districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was detrimental to the tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed

This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. This empowers us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. In addition, by having flexibility at the start and end of the school year, students can enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also let the Flour Bluff ISD start classes as a short week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

Class Size Ratio

(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.112 and 25.113)

Currently

Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22-student to 1-teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them that the waiver has been submitted. Many times, students move out of the district soon after the waiver is submitted, and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

Proposed

Flour Bluff ISD believes that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom. This must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff and the best teacher-to-student ratio that can be achieved, given the total number of students. It is often not the number of students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom that influence the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows that the teacher in the classroom has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size. In the event that class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten-4th grade classes, a TEA waiver will not be necessary, but the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval. Flour Bluff ISD will not allow a ratio greater than 23:1 in Kindergarten-4th grades.

Bank Depository Contract Term

(Ed. Code 45.206 and Ed. Code 45.205)

Currently

The current statute requires school districts to enter into a two-year contract with a depository bank and allows for two additional two-year terms. At the end of the six-year period, Districts are required to process a Request for Proposal (RFP).

Proposed

Flour Bluff ISD would like to gain exemption from these statutes. Terminating our banking agreement at the end of this period does not provide stability to the district and can allow the depository banks to limit service options, interest rates, and fees. Relief from this mandate would allow the District to continue with a depository bank as long as it is beneficial to the District. It would allow the district's existing bank contract to be extended beyond the total 6-year allowable contract term if the district determines contract pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out to bid. This exemption would lessen the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP). In addition to costs and time involved in the request for proposal process, a district incurs costs and manpower to update all electronic banking transactions and account signatory should the district be forced to change depositories.

Probationary Contracts

(TEC §21.102)

Currently

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

Flour Bluff ISD proposes an exemption from TEC §21.102 for the flexibility to extend the time period to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the District who have been employed as a teacher for at least five of the last eight previous years. This limited time is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. This also addresses the fact that contracts for teachers are renewed in either March or April which demands that employment decisions must be made without the benefit of an entire school to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a second- year probationary contract for a total probationary period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in Flour Bluff ISD.

Certification Required

(T.E.C. §21.003) Local Implementation – (T.E.C. §21.003) Board Policy D.B.A. (Legal and Local)

Currently

Current policy states 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 district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit. A person who desires to teach shall present the person's certificate for filing with a district before the person's contract with a board is binding.

Proposed

Flour Bluff ISD would like to gain exemption from this statute. The district specifically seeks flexibility to hire professionals who are not certified teachers but have experience and a related degree in the content area for hard-to-fill positions, except for special education and bilingual/ESL teaching positions. Flour Bluff ISD will provide local qualifications and training requirements for professionals and experts to teach courses in lieu of traditional state requirements. All other teachers would not be exempt from TEC 21.003, and the Flour Bluff ISD. Board of Trustees would monitor the implementation of this exemption. Due to the geographic location of FBISD and our connection with a military installation, FBISD will also establish local qualifications, allowing the district to recognize out-of-state certifications for all levels and all certification areas. When required, a 6-12 certified teacher may teach sections in a related field for which he or she is not certified, or a K-5 certified teacher may teach a grade level for which he or she is not certified.

Transfer of Student

(TEC §25.036) Local Implementation – (T.E.C. §25.036) Board Policy F.D.A. (Legal and Local)

Currently

Under current policy, a nonresident student wishing to transfer into the district shall file an application for transfer each school year with the Superintendent or designee. Transfers shall be granted for one regular school year at a time.

Proposed

Flour Bluff ISD proposes an exemption from TEC §25.036 for the flexibility regarding nonresident students who have been accepted as district transfer students may have such transfer revoked by the Superintendent or designee based on the recommendation of the Campus Principal at any time during the school year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, expulsion, or documented continual disruption of the educational process. In addition, students not meeting the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of their transfer status. Revocation of transfer is not appealable.