



Blanket Independent School District



2025-2030 District of Innovation Plan

Background: BISD as a District of Innovation

The district of innovation concept was passed into law in 2015 when the 84th Texas Legislature created Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 12A, District of Innovation. The law allows traditional independent school districts to access most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open enrollment charter schools. To access the flexibilities, a school district's most recent academic performance rating must be at least acceptable and it must adopt an innovation plan, in accordance with the process set forth in Chapter 12A and Texas Education Agency rules. An innovation plan allows a school district to gain exemption from many Texas Education Code requirements, authorizing the district to pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, budgeting or other areas. Ultimately, innovations plans are about local control. Community members should note that each innovation plan will be unique to the local school district and no two plans may look the same.

Blanket ISD became a District of Innovation with its approved Innovation Plan on November 19th, 2019. Based on the requirements in TEC, Chapter 12A and its regulations, Texas Public School Districts are required to renew their District of Innovation status every five years. Blanket ISD is taking this opportunity to not only renew the plan, but also amend it. This document serves as Blanket ISD's Local Innovation Plan, proposed renewal and amendments.

The original plan provided exemptions from the following legal requirements that we seek to renew:

- First Day of Instruction - TEC 25.0811
- Teacher Certification - TEC 21.003 & TEC 21.051 & TEC 21.057
- Inter-District Transfers – TEC 25.036
- Teacher Contract Day – TEC 21.401
- Length of School Day – 25.081

In addition to these existing exemptions, Blanket ISD seeks exemption from:

- Uniform School Start Date – TEC 25.0811 & TEC 25.0812 (EB Legal) (EB Local)
- Counselor Work Time – TEC 33.006 (d-j)
- Behavior Coordinator – TEC 37.0012
- Minimum Minutes of Instruction – TEC 25.081 & 25.082 (a)
- Site-Based Decision Making and SHAC – TEC 11.251 & TEC 11.252 & TEC 28.004 (d)

- School District Depositories Contract – TEC 45.205 & TEC 45.206
- Refusal of Entry, Ejection and Identification of Individuals – TEC 37.105
- Probationary Contracts – TEC 21.102
- Planning and Preparation Time – TEC 21.404
- 90 Percent Attendance Rule – TEC 25.092

Blanket ISD DOI Planning Committee

<u>Member Name</u>	<u>Representation</u>
David Whisenhunt	Superintendent of Schools
Joe Branham	School Principal
Adrian Greenfield	Assistant Principal
Melinda Sims	Counselor
Jalen Helms	Secondary Teacher
William Massey	CTE Teacher
Juana Rodriguez	Parent
Presley Helms	Elementary Teacher

Timeline:

Activities to Renew DOI Plan	Date
Intent to begin the renewal process as information item to the BOT Renewal process formally begins with a majority vote of the DSB	12/9/2024 12/11/2024
BISD administration submits Proposed Renewal Plan draft to DSB to review (after face-to-face meeting, a copy of the presentation was provided to all members)	12/20/2024
LEA notifies commissioner of an action to begin the renewal process	

Information Item on Board Agenda	
Proposed final plan is posted on district website for 30 days	
DSB holds a meeting to consider approval of the posted version of the plan with a majority vote	
BOT votes on the plan with a 2/3 majority vote needed to pass	
Commissioner has been notified with 15 days via email or USD as is required by TEA Chapter 12A	

Uniform School Start Date – (TEC 25.0811) (TEC 25.0812) (EB Legal) (EB Local)

Current Law

A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.

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. It also offers the below opportunities:

- An improved balanced instructional calendar
- Student participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities due to balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- An early start date permits students an additional week of instruction prior to state assessments
- Creates Flexibility for the district to pursue other calendar options for identified populations.

Local Guidelines

The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin

Inter-District Transfers – (TEC 25.036)

Current Law

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year.

Proposed

Blanket ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules and regulations of the District. TEC 25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion which would be just cause to revoke the student transfer. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard, in these rare cases, Blanket ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Local Guidelines

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfers may have such status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the state 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status

Behavior Coordinator – TEC 37.0012

Current Law

Current Law TEC 37.0012 requires that a person be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator (CBC), who is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and implementation of Chapter 37. This provision also allows duties imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator to be performed by the campus behavior coordinator.

Proposed

By eliminating the behavior coordinator designation, BISD can focus on building a premier District that fosters the development of social-emotional learning. In addition to exempting the district from the application of TEC 37.0012, any authority, responsibility, or granted to a CBC by law or BISD Board Policy shall be exercised by other appropriate school officials.

Teacher Certification - (TEC 21.003) (TEC 21.057) (DK LEGAL) (DK LOCAL) (DK EXHIBIT) (DBA LEGAL) (DBA LOCAL)

Current Law

TEC §21.003(a) 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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

TEC §21.055 A school district may issue a school district teaching permit and employ as a teacher a person who does not hold a teaching certificate issued by the SBOE. To be eligible for a school district teaching permit under this section, a person must hold a baccalaureate degree. Promptly after employing a person under this section, a school district shall send to the commissioner a written statement identifying the person, the person's qualifications as a teacher, and the subject or class the person will teach. The person may teach the subject or class pending action by the commissioner.

TEC§ 21.057 requires that a school district provide parental notification if the district assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year. Rural, high poverty districts have the hardest time filling positions with quality instructors, especially in subjects where state-wide shortages exist. 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 request emergency/local certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. TEA then approves or denies this request. This system is burdensome and does not consider the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district. Furthermore, there have been instances when persons meeting the criteria outlined in TEC§21.057 have been denied local certification because they were actively, yet unnecessarily, pursuing an alternative certification. Additionally, highly qualified standards/notifications have been removed from federal requirements under repeal of the NCLB Act.

Proposed

Blanket ISD will continue its quest for highly effective educators.

a. In order to best serve Blanket ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally.

b. Notification of District Teaching Permits (local certification) shall not be necessary.

c. The campus principal may submit to the Superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified.

a) The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the subject/field of study.

b) Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.

d. When possible, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field

e. Blanket ISD will allow District Teaching Permits (local certification) based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway.

a) An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to, TEA approved shortage areas such as mathematics, science, Languages Other than English (LOTE), Career & Technical Education (CTE), etc.

b) A person seeking District Teaching Permit (local certification) should have the abilities and related knowledge/experience to fulfill the requirements of the position.

c) The principal may submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for District Teaching Permit (local certification) outlining all the individual's credentials/qualifications. Special Education Teachers and Bilingual Education Teachers will not be granted District Teacher Permit due to federal regulations.

d) Qualifications that may be considered include but are not limited to

i. Professional work experience

ii. Formal training and education

iii. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration

iv. Combination of work experience, training, and education

v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students.

e) The superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students.

f) An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will not receive a contract but will work on an at-will basis and have a separate pay scale from state certified teachers.

g) Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

f. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency or other district stakeholders.

g. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will adhere to the same professional standards, ethics, and requirements of all certified teachers.

h. An employee working under a District Teaching Permit (local certification) will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction, School Day – (TEC 25.081, TEC 25.082(a))

Current Law

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amended the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by eliminating the required 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with the requirement that schools provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction annually and 420 minutes of instruction daily. While the bill allowed schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity; it eliminated any options to pursue state waivers to reduce the minimum number of minutes per day to provide teachers with professional learning time beyond an early release waiver currently used by the elementary schools and intermediate schools. Additionally, Texas Education Code §25.082(a) requires that each school day be at least seven hours long including intermissions.

Proposed

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction within a designated school day will assist with personalizing learning to better meet students needs. This flexibility has the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of a school day, which may include, for example, a later start/early release time which will accommodate professional learning/collaboration opportunities for teachers. BISD would continue to meet the annual requirement of 75,600 minutes.

Site-based Decision Making and SHAC (TEC §11.251, TEC §11.252 and TEC §28.004 (d))

Current Law

State law currently requires that the Site-based decision making and the SHAC meet 4 times each year. Additionally, statutory requirements dictate the composition of the Site-based decision making committee.

Proposed

In place of a Site-based decision making committee and the School Health Advisory Council, a District Advisory Council (DAC) will be established to meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding Blanket ISD and its students. The District Advisory Council will once per semester to guide the general direction of district resources and efforts. This consolidation of committees will be comprised of various stakeholders and yield an opportunity for one council to address multiple needs of the students served by the district as opposed to having multiple committees addressing a narrower focus of needs. Blanket ISD views this DAC as a more efficient and effective way to serve our students, parents and community.

School District Depositories Contract (TEC §45.205, §45.206)

Current Law

Currently, the District must renew its depository contract every two years. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, the District must use a uniform bid or proposal blank in the form prescribed by the State Board of Education

Proposed

This exception is to permit Blanket ISD to allow the district's banking contract to be extended beyond the allowable contract term if BISD determines contract-pricing remains competitive and there is no operational or financial reason to send BISD's banking services out for bid. This exemption lessens the administrative burden related to preparing and reviewing a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there is a limited number of banking institutions available to bid on the district's business.

Refusal of Entry, Ejection and Identification of Individuals (TEC §37.105)

Current Law

Under the current law, the District must maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from a school facility that is issued, including the name of the person to whom the

warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property, the District shall provide to the person written information explaining the appeal process.

Proposed

TEC 37.105 includes a process for ejecting or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate for the school setting. To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in BISD, we propose that the District not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities. Campus and District administrators may refuse to allow a person to enter or may eject a person from property under the District's control in accordance with law. An appeal notice may be filed with the Superintendent, in writing, and submitted to the Administration Office for review within 10 business days.

Probationary Contracts (DCA Legal) (TEC 21.102 (b))

Current Law

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

This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Relief from TEC 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers or counselors newly hired at BISD.

Planning and Preparation Time (DL Legal) (TEC 21.404)

Current Law

Teachers are entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for preparing to teach, conducting parent conferences, and evaluating students' work.

Proposed

In an effort to implement PLCs and a culture of opportunity within BISD, flexible scheduling is a requirement. Having flexibility in planning and preparation time helps in creating schedules where select teachers can reach more students and have more planning time on teachers' teams. All teachers will have appropriate planning and preparation time, but flexibility is required in a small school environment.

Counselor Work Time (FDA Local) TEC 33.006 (d-jj)

Current Law

Currently TEC 33.006 subsections (d) – (h) places restrictions on the duties that can be fulfilled by school counselors, requires policy adoption and annual review by the school board, and limits contracting options with counselors in the district.

Blanket ISD desires to maintain flexibility in its school counseling and guidance program by requesting relief from the requirement of TEC 33.006 (d) that a counselor must spend 80% of the total work time on duties identified by statute.

In addition, Blanket ISD wishes to remove restrictions imposed by subsections (e) – (h) which are related to policy adoption, annual review, and counselor employment contracts.

Blanket ISD believes that these changes will help the district better meet the ever-changing needs of its students by allowing BISS counselors to fulfill other important roles throughout the district, including but not limited to, scheduling and student assessment.

Blanket ISD counselors will continue to focus on the district's counselor program and its goals; however, restrictions which mandate time tracking/logging as required under the 80/20 duty requirement also impedes the district's ability to utilize the counseling staff in a variety of roles which will determine are best suited to serve the needs of the students and the community.

Proposed

The campus principal will utilize all counselors at BISS in a way that he or she feels will best serve the staff and students of Blanket ISD.

90 Percent Attendance Rule (TEC 25.092)

Current

Texas Education Code 25.092 requires students to attend class for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered in order to earn class credit or be given a final grade for the class.

Proposed

The 90 Percent Rule is an arbitrary standard, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district will no longer be required to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the district to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow BISS administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they have attended a certain number of school days. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption

from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the district by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. BISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate content mastery, given this exemption. This exemption supports the districts overarching goals and provides the flexibility needed to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.

Exempting the District from the 90 Percent Rule does not, in any way, impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with a District grading policy adopted pursuant to Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

Exemptions from Future TEC Mandates

Proposed

To best serve our local Blanket ISD community, staff, and students, Blanket ISD includes a provision in our Local Innovation Plan for the District to maintain control over any future, eligible Texas Education Code mandates, which may be exempted by a 2/3 majority vote of the Blanket ISD Board of Trustees.