

Abbott

Independent School District



District of Innovation Plan

February 2023 - February 2028

A District of Innovation is a concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 that allows school districts greater local control and flexibility regarding certain state-level regulations in an effort to utilize the designation to better serve students.

The proposed plan, once adopted, will remain in effect for the next five years (February 2023-February 2028). The plan may be amended at any time by the District of Innovation Committee with the approval of the school board.

District of Innovation Committee

Coker, Jon	Administration	Remini, Cindy	Business Rep.
Crawford, Kara	Special Education	Sikes, Mindy	High School
Little, Debbie	CTE	Sullins, Mandy	Community Rep.
Pustejovsky, Eric	Administration	Thomas, Renee	Parent Rep.
Pustejovsky, Kat	Elementary		

Timeline	Task
October 19, 2022	Informed the Board of Trustees that Abbott ISD will hold a public meeting to consider the renewal of the District of Innovation Plan.
October 26, 2022	District level committee public meeting to consider the final version of the proposed plan and approved the plan by a majority vote of the committee members.
October 26, 2022	DOI Plan approved by the DOI committee
October 27, 2022	Final version of the proposed plan made available on the district’s website for 30 days.
December 15, 2022	Board of Trustees to approve the Abbott ISD DOI plan.
December 16, 2022	DOI Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education
December 16, 2022	District provided a copy of the link to the renewed DOI plan to TEA.

Statutes under consideration at this time include:

Abbott ISD **District of Innovation Plan**

TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIRED

(DK Legal) (Ed. Code 21.003(a))

Certification Required. (a) A person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

Proposed

Abbott ISD would like to make decisions regarding certifications locally and based on the needs of the campus and students. In the event that the district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or teachers are teaching a subject outside of their certification, AISD would like to be afforded the flexibility to consider entering into contract agreements with noncertified individuals that have field experience in a CTE, STEM field or vocational skill that would provide more options for students and flexibility in scheduling. The District will make every attempt to hire individuals with appropriate certification for positions; however, where 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. Abbott ISD would also like to allow a certified teacher to teach one, or two subjects outside of their certified field in the event there is a need. AISD will locally document the reasoning for the request and the credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach the subject. Abbott ISD will continue to follow SBEC certification requirements for special education and bilingual/ESL teachers.

Examples of these exemptions include, but are not limited to the following:

- For grades EE-12, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow an already certified teacher to teach a course or grade level for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials or life experience the teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject.
- Allow for greater flexibility in determining appropriate CTE experience in order to teach a CTE course.
- Whenever possible, instructional planning for the uncertified teacher's course will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field. Uncertified teachers will be provided teacher mentoring, increased observations and feedback, professional development or instructional resources, or other supports.
- The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- Teacher certification waiver requests, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency. The District will ensure that all individuals assigned to teach have the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful.
- Allow a teacher to teach one or two classes out of their certified field in an area or areas that the teacher has college coursework and/or expertise.

These exemptions will allow the District to be innovative as educators and offer courses and class sizes previously impossible to have contemplated. This kind of flexibility will allow the District to move our personnel to places where their greatest talents and passions may be, regardless of where

their certification might be limiting them, and in turn, they may take our students to greater and higher achievements.

TEACHER PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS

(DCA Legal) (TEC 21.102(b))

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.

Proposed

Current legal policy allows experienced teachers new to the district to have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Relief from this law would allow time to sufficiently determine a staff member's effectiveness. Exemption from this requirement will allow ample time for campus administrators to determine the effectiveness of employees who have been a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years thus providing a more stable and effective learning environment for students. Abbott ISD would like to have the ability to renew the probationary contract two additional year periods, for a maximum of three school years, for all teachers that are new to the district who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of eight years preceding employment by the District.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/MENTOR TEACHERS

(TEC §21.458)

TEC 21.458 sets eligibility requirements for teacher mentors and mentees. This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, despite the fact that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. The District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers in need of assistance. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers.

Proposed

Abbott ISD will exercise local discretion in determining the areas of need, content, duration, and frequency for professional development for its instructional and non-instructional staff. The District will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers to serve as mentors based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFER STUDENTS

(FDA (Local) & TEC 25.036)

TRANSFER STUDENTS. Currently, under Texas Education Code 25.036, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district, but TEC 25.036, has been interpreted to require a transfer to be for a period of one school year.

Abbott 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

Proposed

Abbott 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 exemption from the one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants and allow the district to rescind a transfer at any time during the school year.

SCHOOL START DATE

(EB Legal) (Ed. Code 25.0811(a))

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.

Proposed

Abbott ISD, who does not qualify for any of the exceptions noted in the statute, would like to have the freedom to develop a calendar that better fits the needs of the community should the committee choose. Having greater flexibility in this area would allow the District Committee to better balance the first and second semesters and provide more instructional days prior to state testing.

CLASS SIZE IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 4TH GRADE

(EEB Legal) (TEC 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. Notice of Class Size in Kindergarten through 4th Grade (Ed. Code 25.112 & 25.113) Notice of Class Size. (B) A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section 25.112(d) from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or a person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.

Proposed

By gaining exemption from these statutes, Abbott ISD would no longer have to submit redundant class size waivers that are continuously approved by TEA and prevent multiple communications to parents each time a new student enrolls. The district is experiencing steady growth; students continue to enroll after school has started and it is impossible to predict class size.

LOCAL SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL AND HEALTH EDUCATION INSTRUCTION

(FFA Local) (TEC 28.004)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan Sec. 28.004 (d) 1 of this code requires the SHAC to meet four times annually.

Proposed

In a small district, the same staff members are required to sit on several different committees thus limiting their ability to effectively serve on those that meet at the same time, or require several meetings throughout the year. Additionally, the members of the SHAC will have a much more intimate relationship with the needs and goals of this committee due to the small number of students it serves, thus not requiring four meetings throughout the year to update its plan and vision. Innovation Strategies: a. The District takes exemption from the requirement to hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year under Sec. 28.004(d-1) The AISD committee shall meet at least once each year. Rationale: As a small district committee members are intimately aware of the needs of the District’s students and are often able to review and revise the District’s plan in a single meeting. This should be a matter for the local board of trustees and the committee members to determine how often they need to meet to meet the district’s needs.

CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR

TEC §37.0012

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 campus administrator selected by the principal. The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline.

Board Goals Inhibited by TEC §37.0012

Proposed

Abbott ISD will partner with and involve our diverse community to support AISD students and staff. Flexibility with regard to the designation of campus behavior coordinators allows for greater collaboration when addressing the social and emotional learning of students. Time and resources can be spent on fostering positive school culture and implementing multi-systemic prevention and intervention programs.

The district will decide which employees and systems to involve in maintaining student discipline instead of a single person designated as a campus behavior coordinator. Disciplinary responsibilities will be included in an employee’s job description when applicable. The maintenance of student discipline will be appropriately addressed in the Student Code of Conduct.

SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPOSITORIES CONTRACT

(BDAE Legal & Local) (TEC Subchapter G. 45.206)

TERM OF CONTRACT. (A) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the depository bank when selected shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is selected and has qualified. (B) A school district and the district’s depository bank may agree to extend a depository contract for two additional two-year-terms. An extension under this subsection is not subject to the requirements of Section 45.206. (C) The contract term and any extension must coincide with the school district’s fiscal year.

Proposed

By gaining exemption from these statutes, Abbott ISD would be able to 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) when there is are no other banking institutions within district boundaries available to bid on the district's business. In addition, this would further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to alter their direct deposit instructions and afford district flexibility with respect to local banking relationships.