



**Azle Independent School District**  
**District of Innovation Plan**  
**2017 - 2022**  
***“It Makes a Difference to this One”***

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# AZLE ISD

## DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

### **Introduction**

HB 1842 was passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> legislative session in 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as Districts of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have:

- Greater local control as the educational decision makers,
- Increased freedom and flexibility, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think creatively.

### **Term**

The Azle ISD District of Innovation plan will be in effect for a period of five years, November 14, 2017 until November 14, 2022, unless terminated or amended by the Azle ISD Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.

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## Azle ISD Timeline

August 2017	<u>District of Innovation Introduction</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• August 21, 2017, the Azle ISD school board presented a resolution to investigate becoming a District of Innovation.</li></ul>
September 2017	<u>Public Hearing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• September 18, 2017, a public hearing was held and the Azle ISD school board appointed a committee to develop a plan of innovation.</li></ul> <u>District of Innovation Committee Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• September 27, 2017, the District of Innovation Committee met and developed a district plan.</li></ul>
October 2017	<u>District Leadership Team Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• October 11, 2017, the Azle ISD District Leadership Team met, reviewed, and approved the District of Innovation plan and recommended the plan be submitted to the Azle ISD school board for approval.</li></ul>
November 2017	<u>Plan Approval</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• November 13, 2017, Azle ISD school board approval vote for the AISD District of Innovation Plan.</li></ul>

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## **District of Innovation Planning Committee**

Member Name	District/Community Role
Jordan Dunn	Hoover Elementary Teacher
Sandra Glaze	Parent Representative
Shannon Hart	Azle ISD School Board Member
Cynthia Hawpe	Liberty Elementary Teacher
Chris Hill	Forte Junior High Administration
Holly Huling	Silver Creek Elementary Teacher
Mark Kehoe	Director of Human Resources
Thomas Kisner	Community Representative
Teresa Moore	Azle High School Administration
Dr. Suzanne Murr	Director of Career and Technology
Heidi Nelson	Silver Creek Elementary Administration
Shelley Newton	Parent Representative
Andy Rector	Community Representative
Kayla Reneau	Azle High School Teacher
Amy Rollmann	Eagle Heights Elementary Administration
Kate Verhulst	Azle Junior High Teacher

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## **AZLE ISD AS A DISTRICT OF INNOVATION**

*Exemptions from Provisions of the Texas Education Code under House Bill 1842*

The philosophy and core beliefs of Azle ISD emphasizes collaboration with all stakeholders: students, schools, family, and community. In order to operate under these guiding principles, Azle ISD seeks to maximize local control of its educational decisions. Azle ISD will continue to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas except for the specific exemptions outlined in this plan. If at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, as per the Districts of Innovation process, the district will reconvene the District Leadership Team to explore the request.

*Within the scope of HB 1842, passed during the 84 Legislative Session, Azle ISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed by the statute:*

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## **I. FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION**

*(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)*

### Current Statute:

Students may not begin the school year before the fourth Monday of August.

### Proposed Flexibility:

Flexibility of the school start date allows Azle ISD to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for more balanced instructional time in each semester, especially regarding semester course instruction and STAAR testing preparation. Flexibility in the start of the year would allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. The ability to adjust the school start date will also allow more flexible professional development opportunities for Azle ISD staff.

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## **II. PROBATIONARY CONTRACTS**

*(DCA LEGAL) (Ed. Code 21.102(b))*

### Current Statute:

Under current guidelines, newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years receive a probationary contract that cannot exceed one year.

### Proposed Flexibility:

Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for certified educators newly hired in Azle ISD. A one-year probationary contract may be insufficient in determining a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. The opportunity to add an additional probationary year would provide Azle ISD a better opportunity to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

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### **III. CERTIFICATION REQUIRED**

*(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.003)*

Current Statute:

In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a single subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Proposed Flexibility:

This exception will allow Azle ISD to establish local qualification and training requirements to hire teachers for hard-to-fill teaching positions. Azle ISD will have the flexibility to hire external or internal applicants that do not have traditional state certifications. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the district the flexibility to hire university professors and/or professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as engineering, computer science, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

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#### **IV. TRANSFER STUDENTS**

*(FDA LEGAL, FDA LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.036)*

Current Statute:

Any child, other than a high school graduate, who is younger than 21 years of age and eligible for enrollment on September 1 of any school year may transfer annually from the child's school district of residence to another district in this state if both the receiving district and the applicant parent or guardian or person having lawful control of the child jointly approve and timely agree in writing to the transfer.

Proposed Flexibility:

The district will reserve the right to revoke the transfer of a student at any time during the year based on behavior, excessive tardies, late pick-up, attendance, or not remaining in good academic standing. Revocation of transfers for the above reasons is final and may not be appealed.

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## **V. 90 PERCENT ATTENDANCE RULE**

*(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)*

### Current Statute:

State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.

### Proposed Flexibility:

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Flexibility from the requirement means the district will not have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances that supports Azle ISD's goal to engage students in authentic learning. To meet the needs of 21st century learners, Azle ISD would like the opportunity to provide students credit for courses based on content mastery, not the amount of time the student spends in the classroom. This exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime and anywhere apart from the traditional way of delivering instruction.

Relief from Section 25.092 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 Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

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## **VI. CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR**

*(FO LEGAL) (Ed. Code 37.0012)*

### Current Statute

State law requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

### Proposed Flexibility

Azle ISD seeks exemption from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. AISD's approach to discipline is more collaborative, with multiple people providing support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration concerning student discipline, as outlined in the AISD Student Code of Conduct.

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