BALMORHEA ISD

District of Innovation Plan

Approved:

by District Advisory Committee October 13, 2021

by the BISD Board of Trustees October 13, 2021

Renewal/Update District Advisory Committee October 16, 2026

Renewal/Update Board Approved November 11, 2026

Introduction

HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in the Spring 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 Texas Education Code Chapter 12A. Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will:

- give greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- increase freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- empower the district to innovate and to think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability.

Process

On February 10, 2021, the School Board reviewed the guidelines for becoming a District of Innovation. At the February board meeting the Board of Trustees appointed the DEIC to research information about becoming a District of Innovation. Following the February board meeting, the District of Innovation framework was presented to the DEIC for input. At the March 24th and May 11th DEIC meeting, a petition was signed to be presented to the Board of Trustees at the May Board meeting. A public hearing was held at the Sept. 8th board meeting. The Board appointed the District Advisory Committee (DEIC, Campus and District Administration) to discuss and finalize this plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus and district administration. The committee met on Sept. 9th to develop and finalize the plan. The plan was posted on the district website September 10, 2021.

Term

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in October 2021 and will remain in effect for five years, through October 2026, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. Any amendment to the Innovation Plan must follow the same process as the plan development. The District Advisory Committee would consider any proposed amendment(/s). Any amendment/s would require the majority approval of the District Advisory Committee, a posting of the proposed change on the district website for 30 days, and a Public Hearing to gather input from all stakeholders. A 2/3 vote by the Board of Trustees would be required for final approval of any amendment(/s). **This renewal/update will be valid through October 2031**

Timeline

February 10, 2021	Present District of Innovation to Board
March 24, 2021	DEIC signs petition to become DOI
September 8, 2021	Board Meeting: Present Petition to Board of Trustees Present findings from staff Public Hearing Board approves pursuing DOI
September 9, 2021	Committee meets to finalize the written plan
September 13,2021	Public meeting and vote of District Committee to approve plan
October 13, 2021	Board approves DOI plan
October 15, 2026	DEIC meets to renew and update plan
November 11, 2026	Board meeting: Approves update and renewal

DEIC Committee

Name	**Position**
Cielo Iniguez	Elementary Teacher
Teresita Barragan	Elementary Teacher
Graciela Fuentes	Elementary Teacher
Jose Garcia	Secondary Teacher
Kim Richardson	Secondary Teacher
Marcus Ely	Secondary Teacher
Alvaro Beltran	Parent Representative
Kristen Evans	Parent Representative
Jimmy Barragan	Community Member
Danny Vasquez	Community Member
Sandra Navarette	Community Member
James Ward	Business Representative
Harry Barron Jr.	Business Representative
Jessica Williams	District Health Representative
Erika Galindo	District Health Representative
Matthew Gray	Campus Representative
Roger Ellis	District Representative

Current Exemptions

UNIFORM SCHOOL START DATE

Texas Education Code (25.0811 and 25.0812) (EB LEGAL, EB LOCAL)

Current Law:
Sec. 25.0811 - Students are prohibited from starting school before the 4th Monday of August. For years, this was strictly a local decision. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their 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.
Sec. 25.0812 -A school district may not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15.

Our Proposal:
The district will have the flexibility to determine the school start date on. This allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and the local community. This flexibility enables us to customize learning and increase college and career readiness. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff. Balmorhea ISO will not start school earlier than the second Monday in August for students and the first Monday in August for teachers, not Including new teacher training.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Texas Education Code (21.003)

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DBA LEGAL, DBA LOCAL)

Current Law:
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 school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit. 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 then approves or denies this request. In certain circumstances, a district can use a local one-year permit.

Our Proposal:
The district will establish its own local qualification requirements for positions designated by the district as critical need. Benefits of this exemption for Balmorhea ISO include:

- The statutory certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach in areas designated by the district

as critical need, including but not limited to Career and Technical Education (CTE), STEM Courses and non-core electives.

Local Qualifications will allow the district to:

- Allow experienced teachers to pick up an elective in an area they are qualified
- Hire experienced and qualified instructors
- Offer dual credit opportunities
- Offer CTE courses
- Recruit teachers from the field, including individuals from certain trades and/or vocations with industry knowledge and real-world experience

INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS

Texas Education Code (25.036)

(FDA LOCAL)

Current Law:
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.

Our Proposal:
The district is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one school year commitment in accepting transfer students. Transfer students will be admitted upon district approval, following district requirements and procedures. Transfer students not meeting the local guidelines, may be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

Teacher Employment Contracts Texas Education Code (21.102)

Current Law:
Currently, experienced teachers new to the district 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.

Our Proposal:
Probationary Contracts• Experienced teachers and counselors new to BISD that have been employed in public education may be issued a probationary contract for up to two years from the last date of district employment. This will allow the district more time to evaluate a staff member's effectiveness.

Planning and Preparation Time

Texas Education Code (21.404)

Current Law:
Each classroom teacher Is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period, a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Our Proposal:
This Plan will exempt the District from the requirement to provide the planning and preparation time mandated by section 21.404 of the Texas Education Code. This will give the District the flexibility as to when and how it provides planning and preparation time to its teachers. It is necessary for teachers to use planning time to discuss student needs across content areas, student interventions, and instructional strategies needed for student academic growth. A collaborative time is needed to review data from universal screener with a collaborative team with like planning times. This will allow the data to be used in the most advantageous way to promote student growth. Flexibility in planning and preparation time helps in creating schedules where teachers can reach more students and have more planning time on teacher teams. All teachers will have planning and preparation time each week, but this Plan will provide the District with additional flexibility In this area. These planning events will be on an as needed basis, but the District will strive to require no more than one such planning event per week.

Update 10/2026

Grievance Processes

Texas Education Code (26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003)
(FNG LEGAL, FNG LOCAL, DGBA LEGAL, DGBA LOCAL)

Current Law:
Current law in TEC Chapter 26A requires each school district to adopt a standardized complaint policy with several burdensome requirements, including extended timelines for filing and compressed timelines for holding conferences at each level. The law requires a policy allowing 60 calendar days for a parent to file a grievance from the date on which the parent or person knew or had reason to know of the facts giving rise to the grievance, unless the parent engaged in informal attempts to resolve the grievance, in which case the parent could have up to 90 calendar days to file a grievance. The law further requires that such complaints be heard within ten calendar days of the complaint being filed. Moreover, in contradiction of existing law in the Texas Government Code, the recently adopted provisions in the Education Code would allow the person bringing the complaint to decide if it is heard in open or closed, rather than the person against whom the complaint is brought. Finally, parents and other grievants would be allowed to add issues and claims at any point during the grievance process, making it difficult to resolve concerns at the lowest possible level.

Our Proposal:
Balmorhea ISD has always and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines outlined in local Board policy. Such policies ensure thorough documentation of each step in the grievance process and provide adequate time for complaints to be filed and for complaints to be heard. All records related to grievances; including submitted forms, communications, investigations, findings, resolutions, and any corrective actions; are systematically maintained at the district level to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal and policy standards. Balmorhea ISD is committed to monitoring the legality and appropriateness of every decision and action taken. The District is further committed to hearing, reviewing, and attempting to resolve all parent complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response. Balmorhea ISD's long-standing grievance policy will ensure that all such complaints are carefully reviewed and that district responses are in alignment with state and federal regulations, as well as all other local board policies. Balmorhea ISD seeks to be exempt from a statewide grievance policy, established under Chapter 26A of the Texas Education Code and will continue to follow established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy. This will allow the district to hear and consider parent and employee complaints in an orderly and responsive manner and to resolve those concerns as quickly as possible.

The exemption from Texas Education Code §26.011 is limited to the following language in Section 26.011(a) which requires the board of trustees to adopt a grievance procedure "that complies with Chapter 26A". To effectuate the exemption discussed above for Texas

Education Code §§ 26A.001–26A.004, the District should also be exempt from the language in Section 26.011(a): “that complies with Chapter 26A”. This exemption allows the District to maintain local control over its grievance policies, procedures, and process.

School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Meetings
TEC §28.004(d-1), (BDF Legal)

Current Law:
Legal requirements concerning the required number of meetings for the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC). In TEC §28.004(d-1), the SHAC is required to meet at least four times each year.

Our Proposal:
As a small, rural, single-campus district, conducting required meetings can be challenging with limited staff and the remote location of the physical district. Innovation Strategy: An exemption from the required number of days would allow local control by the board of trustees and the council members to determine meeting dates as needed. The district’s size and the stability of the membership of the SHAC ensures that members are aware of the needs of the district’s students and are often able to review, discuss, and revise plans in fewer than four meetings.
• Number of Meetings. Balmorhea ISD will reduce the required number of meetings to two (2) meetings per year, holding a meeting at the beginning of the year to determine goals and objectives and second semester meeting to evaluate program goals and report to the school board.

• Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed.

School District Depositories Contract Exemption sought from TEC §45.205

Current Law:
Currently there are legal requirements 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.

Our Proposal:
An exemption 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 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. This will further mitigate any impact to employees that would have to change direct deposit instructions each

time a new depository occurs and allows the district flexibility with respect to banking relationships.

Strategies:
The district will only send depository services out to bid if the district determines contract pricing becomes uncompetitive or there is some operational or financial reason to send the district's banking services out for bid. With this exemption in place, none of the additional requirements related to the bid or request for proposal detailed in Sec 45.206 through 45.209 would be applicable.

Campus Behavior Coordinator
Current Law:

TEC §37.012 Related Board Policies

Current Law: In TEC §37.0012 requires that a school district designate a Campus Behavior Coordinator for each Campus.

Balmorhea ISD believes the roles and responsibilities of the Campus Behavior Coordinator are already in the job descriptions and expectations of the principal.

Our Proposal:
The principal will make assignments of duties and responsibilities for the district. The principal will be responsible for the behavior and conduct of the students for the district. The principal may delegate disciplinary duties to others as it is best for the district. This will enable the principal to work together to determine the best course of action for behavior intervention