

Kaufman ISD
District of Innovation Plan
2021 through 2026

*HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session,
allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation.
Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations
that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.*

This District of Innovation Plan provides for a comprehensive educational program for the district. It identifies requirements imposed by the Education Code that inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan and specifies the manner in which a particular statute inhibits one or more goals of the plan.

History of Kaufman ISD District of Innovation Plans

2016-2021 District of Innovation Plan adopted by Board of Education	7/18/2016
2016-2021 District of Innovation Plan amended	April 2021
2021-2026 District of Innovation Plan adopted by Board of Education	7/12/2021
2021-2026 District of Innovation Plan amended	July 2021
2021-2026 District of Innovation Plan amended	April 2022
2021-2026 District of Innovation Plan amended	July 2023
2021-2026 District of Innovation Plan amended	January 2024
2021-2026 District of Innovation Plan amended	October 2024

Goal 1: The Kaufman ISD Board of Trustees and Kaufman ISD Administration will make governance decisions based on the unique needs of the district’s students and community.

1-1. Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size

(TEC 25.112a-g) (TEC 25.113a-b) (EEB LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

TEC §25.113 requires district to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved negating the need for this notice.

Innovation Strategies:

- a. KISD will begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per K-4 in-person homeroom class. In the event that any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees and to the parents of the affected students.
- b. In the event that two or more K-4th core in-person classrooms reach 23:1 during the first grading period of the year, another teacher will be hired. If a K-4th core in-person classroom reaches 23:1 after that time, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation. A teacher may be hired at any time during the school year if the campus principal and superintendent agree that it is in the best interest of the students to do so.
- c. A TEA waiver will not be filed when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.
- d. A student to teacher ratio of 30:1 per K-4 virtual class will be allowed if the campus principal and superintendent agree that it is in the best interest of the students to do so.

1-2. School start date

(TEC §25.0811a) (EB LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. However, 2020-21 is likely to include short-term disruptions to instruction and high student absenteeism. Building a calendar that anticipates these scenarios and minimizes disruption is in the best interest of all students.

Innovation Strategies

- a. Kaufman ISD students will begin instruction no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.
- b. Teachers' work days will begin no earlier than the 1st Monday of August.

1-3. Student Discipline

(TEC §37.007 (c), §37.010(b))

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §37 (noted above) states that a student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled. "Serious misbehavior" includes: (1) Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; (2) Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat; (3) Conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Penal Code 1.07; or (4) Conduct that constitutes the offense of: a. Public lewdness under Penal Code 21.07; b. Indecent exposure under Penal Code 21.08; c. Criminal mischief under Penal Code 28.03; d. Personal hazing under Penal Code 37.152; or e. Harassment, under Penal Code 42.07(a)(1), of a student or district employee. If the student is expelled, the board or its designee refers the student to the authorized officer of the juvenile court for appropriate proceedings under Family Code Title 3 (Juvenile Justice Code).

The Kaufman ISD DAEP has a strong and structured system of discipline. The Texas Education Code makes no allowance for students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental to the educational environment to be expelled.

Innovation Strategies

- a. A student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior (as defined above) while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled.
- b. A student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented persistent misbehavior while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.
- c. All students expelled from a DAEP campus will be given the option of attending night school one night per week for the term of his/her expulsion in order to gain and/or maintain as many credits as possible during the period of expulsion **or another optional educational experience on a case-by-case basis.**
- d. Night school transportation will not be provided.

1-4. Transfer Policy

(TEC §25.036)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §25.036 states, or has been interpreted to state, that districts are required to maintain the enrollment of a student transfer for a period of one school year.

Innovation Strategy

- a. Students who have been accepted as inter-district transfers may have their transfer status revoked by the Superintendent or designee at any time during the school year if the transfer student is assigned disciplinary consequences such as suspension, placement in a disciplinary alternative education program, or expulsion. In addition, transfer students who fail to meet the State's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of their transfer status.

1-5. Behavior Coordinator

(TEC §37.0012)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

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.

Innovation Strategy

By eliminating the position of the CBC, Kaufman ISD can focus on building a Culture of Excellence that fosters the development of social-emotional learning. In addition to the exempting the district from the application, any authority, responsibility, or duty granted to the CBC by law or board policy shall be exercised by the appropriate campus administrator.

1-6. SHAC Meetings

(TEC §28.004 (d))

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §28.004 requires that a SHAC meeting be held at least four times per school year

Innovation Strategy

By eliminating the requirement to meet at least four times annually, the Kaufman Independent School District can maintain local control and determine when it is in the best interest of the district to host SHAC meetings. Meetings will occur as needed at district leadership discretion.

1-7. 90 Percent Attendance Rule

(TEC §25.092)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §25.092 requires that a student in any grade level from Kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. In addition, a student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the dates may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal.

Innovation Strategy

By eliminating this requirement, the campus administration can make a local determination to award credit based on mastery learning. The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage. Districts should have the local option to set their own requirements for student achievement. Local districts need flexibility as they work to meet the needs of their students. This flexibility can also allow the local school board and district administrators to set higher expectations for students while promoting a healthy school environment.

It must be noted that relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules.

1-8. Professional Development

(TEC §21.404)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §28.004 entitles each classroom teacher to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating student work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day.

Innovation Strategy

It is necessary for local districts to have the flexibility to schedule weekly, and/or bi-weekly instructional meetings during the workday without compromising instructional time. In addition, eliminating the oversight provisions in §11.253 will allow for flexible, responsive staff development activities without having to first be approved by a committee which reduces the time teachers must take from their time to attend such meetings. Providing mentors to teachers in need should be a local choice and should be available for any teacher regardless of their years of service.

By eliminating this requirement, Kaufman ISD can also provide additional compensation to teachers who are willing to give up their conference period in order to cover a class period. These teachers would be paid for this work; it is completely voluntary. Substitute teachers can be hard to find and this creates another avenue to put a quality, certified teacher in a classroom when one is not available.

1-9. Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

(TEC §37.105)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §371.05 currently required a District to maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under Section 37.105(a)(2)(A), 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 under Section 37.105, the District must provide the person written information explaining how to appeal. Each school board must adopt a policy that uses the District's existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal unless the appeal is granted sooner.

Innovation Strategy

Texas Education Code §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 Kaufman ISD, we propose that the District not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from District property/facilities, nor be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to District property/facilities or removed from District property/facilities. The District currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from District property/facilities. The District shall continue to provide written notice through the KISD Police Department to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from District property/facilities in situations where the administrator on-site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so. The District already has a grievance process for taking complaints to the Board of Trustees and there is no demonstrated need for a unique complaint timeline as provided under §37.105.

Goal 2: The Kaufman ISD Board of Trustees and Kaufman ISD Administration will make teacher certification decisions based on district qualifications that meet the unique needs of the district’s students and community.

2-1. Local Teacher Certification

(TEC §21.003a) (DK LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

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. Also, the system does not take into account sporadic or sustained teacher shortages which arise.

Innovation Strategies

Kaufman ISD will make every attempt to employ individuals who hold the appropriate certification for posted vacancies. When that is not reasonably possible, the district will employ the following strategies.

- a. Campus principals may request that the superintendent or designee assign a local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach one or more subjects in a related field for which he/she is not certified. 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 proposed subject.
- b. Campus principals may submit to the superintendent or designee a request for local certification that will allow an uncertified applicant to be hired for a vacant teaching position including, but not limited to vacancies in Career and Tech (CTE), core classes, and electives. Selected applicants will be deemed to have the knowledge and expertise that will meet the needs of students in the short term. Preference will be given to a candidate who: i. has a bachelor’s degree; ii. is enrolled or eligible to be enrolled in an alternative certification program, and/or; iii. is currently employed with the district in a paraprofessional role and have demonstrated skills leading to student success.
- c. Local teaching certificates will expire at the end of each school year and may only be renewed at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
- d. Non-degreed employees working under a local teaching certificate will not receive a probationary or term contract but will be employed on an at-will basis. Non-degreed employees under a local teaching certification will receive a maximum of 80% of a beginning teacher’s salary as reported.
- e. Degreed, but uncertified teachers employed under a local teaching certificate, will receive a salary on the teacher’s salary scale as reported.
- f. Employees provided contracts can be given credit for years of service if they previously served in another role or within a role that qualifies for service per Kaufman ISD determination.

- a. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- b. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

2-2. Probationary Contracts

(TEC 21.102) (DCA LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

For experienced ~~teachers~~ employees new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a ~~teachers~~ employees in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the ~~teachers~~ employees effectiveness since ~~teachers~~ employees contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to the first or second year's state assessment results.

Innovation Strategies

- a. For experienced administrators, teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to three years from the last date of district employment.

2-3. Counselor - General Duties

(TEC §33.006 (d))

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §33.006 requires the board of trustees of each school district to adopt a policy that requires a school counselor to spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor's total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program. Each school district shall annually assess the district's compliance with the policy adopted.

Innovation Strategy

- a. By eliminating the 80 percent requirement set forth, counselors can continue to perform all duties assigned to them by the local district. Counselors will continue to work with students, staff, and parents to support the learning and growth of all students within the district.
- b. Counselors will no longer be limited by this time constraint or be forced to calculate their minutes for submission. The district nor any individual counselor will be required to submit any waivers or counseling minute documentation.