

**ROBSTOWN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
AGENDA ACTION SHEET**

Date: February 21, 2021

Subject: Discuss and Consider Approval of Intent to Renew the District of Innovation for Robstown Independent School District

Administrator Responsible: Diana L. Silvas

Position: Deputy Superintendent

A. Purpose of Agenda Item:

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Information Only

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Action Needed

B. Authority for this Action:

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Local Policy

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Law or Rule

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C. Strategic Objective, Goal, or Need Addressed: The District of Innovation concept passed by the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools. The district presently is a District of Innovation however we must renew for the next five years. Exemptions being proposed:

- First Day of Instruction
- Minimum Attendance for Class Credit for Final Grade
- Teacher Certification
- Campus Behavior Coordinator

D. Summary:

E. Alternatives Considered:

F. Comments Received:

G. Administrative Recommendation: Recommend that the Board of Trustees authorize the Board President to notify the Commissioner of Education of the Board's intent to renew the District of Innovation Plan for additional five years 2022-2027.

H. Fiscal Impact and Cost:

I. Monitoring and Reporting Time Line:



## **Robstown ISD District of Innovation Plan**

### **Introduction**

[House Bill 1842](#), passed in the 84<sup>th</sup> session of the Texas Legislature, allows Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation (DOI). This title allows districts to exempt themselves from certain state-level regulations defined in the Texas Education Code.

### **Plan Term**

The term of the Robstown ISD District of Innovation Plan is for five years, beginning with the 2022 school year until the 2027 school year.

### **DEIC/DOI Committee Members 2021-2022**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Connection to RISD</b>
<b>Dr. José Moreno</b>	<b>Superintendent</b>
<b>Diana L. Silvas</b>	<b>Deputy Superintendent</b>
<b>Vanessa Riggs</b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer</b>
<b>Lorena Ceballos</b>	<b>Exec. Director of Teaching &amp; Learning</b>
<b>Pam Kwiatkowski</b>	<b>Director of Special Education</b>
<b>Eric Gonzalez</b>	<b>Director of Support Services</b>
<b>Benito Portillo</b>	<b>RECHS Assistant Principal</b>
<b>Beatrice Lopez</b>	<b>RECHS Teacher</b>
<b>Robert Silguero</b>	<b>RECHS Teacher</b>
<b>Anisa Chavera</b>	<b>Seale Jr. High Principal</b>

Spencer Wingert	Seale Jr. High Teacher
Erik Gallegos	Seale Jr. High Teacher
Patricia Erebia	San Pedro Elem. Assistant Principal
Ronaldo Escobar	San Pedro Teacher
Katherine Broomfield	San Pedro Teacher
Adan Botello	Lotspeich Elem. Assistant Principal
Ruben Sanchez	Lotspeich Teacher
Cori Jones	Lotspeich Teacher
Noemi Ortiz	Robert Driscoll Elem. Assistant Principal
Christina Rodriguez	Robert Driscoll Teacher
Priscilla Benavidez	Robert Driscoll Teacher
Danny Lozano	Salazar Crossroads Academy Teacher
Paula S. Rodriguez	Community Member
Ninfa Trevino	Business Member
Amie Tamez	Parent
Gabi Valderrama	Parent

## **EXEMPTIONS REQUESTED**

### **1. TEC §25.0811- First Day of Instruction**

#### **Statute:**

[TEC §25.0811](#) states that: "a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August."

#### **Proposed Changes:**

Robstown ISD would like the flexibility to change the school start date to better serve the needs of our students. Starting earlier would allow alignment with area college schedules and allow for additional instructional days before state assessments. The earlier start date would result in an earlier end date which would also provide students more days of summer intervention before their state-required retest opportunity. In the past, students may have had less than two weeks of summer accelerated instruction

## **2. TEC §25.092 Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade**

### **Statute:**

[TEC §25.092](#) states that: "except as provided by this section, a student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered."

### **Proposed Changes:**

Many of our students demonstrate mastery of standards, but they lose credit due to attendance requirements under this statute. This rule has a significant impact on our secondary students. To better serve our alternative campus and our ECHS campus, the district needs flexibility to award credit(s). This will increase student achievement and refocus students to take meaningful coursework instead of retaking courses based on standards they have already mastered. While there are significant concerns about raising student attendance, Robstown ISD believes that campuses need to have flexibility to determine if an exception should be made to the 90% attendance requirement. We propose that a campus based committee would help guide the implementation of this exemption.

## **3. TEC §21.003 Teacher Certification and TEC §21.053 Filing of Teacher Certification**

### **Statute:**

[TEC §21.003](#) states that: "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 issued as provided by Subchapter B.

[TEC §21.053](#) requires that an individual's teaching certificate must be filed with the hiring district before the individual's contract is binding and prohibits a district from paying a non-certified individual for teaching or work done prior to the effective date of the issuance of a valid certificate.

### **Proposed Changes:**

Robstown ISD would like to have the flexibility to recruit non-certified teachers in strategic areas like Dual Credit Professors, Advanced Career and Technical Education, and other high need areas where there is a teacher shortage. As we expand course offerings at all levels, we will need staffing with specific credentials to be able to teach classes for certification and college credit. These individuals may have the credentials to award college credit or administer required industry certifications; however, they may not be a certified teacher. Staffing flexibility will benefit our students and aid in the district's efforts to expand postsecondary opportunities for our students.



Robstown ISD would also like the flexibility to recruit teachers for high need areas that may not have the appropriate certifications. For example, if a potential teaching candidate has a degree in physics, but does not have a teaching certificate, we would like the flexibility for that candidate to teach physical science classes.

Robstown ISD seeks to offer many specialized courses to meet the needs and interests of our students. Many times the courses could be offered to interested teachers if they could teach classes outside their certification. This flexibility would allow interested teachers, who have a strong background, to effectively meet the instructional needs of the district. All exceptions would require the superintendent's approval.

Exemption from 21.003 and 21.053 provides maximum flexibility in hiring practices for school districts.

#### **4. Campus Behavior Coordinator TEC §37.0012**

##### **Statute:**

A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator who is responsible for maintaining student discipline which includes notification to parents of in-school or out-of-school suspension or placement in an alternate education program.

##### **Proposed Changes:**

Exempting from this requirement and allowing shared responsibility of discipline among campus principals and assistant principals will minimize the loss of instructional time and ensure the safety of all students as well as provide increased opportunities to build relational capacity with parents and students. All campus administrators engage in comprehensive professional learning to support the implementation of the Robstown ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct. Assigning existing professionals the responsibility for maintaining discipline and for notifying parents of disciplinary removal and/or arrests is a much more cost effective means of fulfilling the duties of the campus behavior coordinator; however, the Local Innovation Plan Committee recognizes the importance of discipline oversight to ensure compliance and consistency.