



DeSoto ISD

Local Innovation Plan

2022-23

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Amendment - DRAFT: 12-04-2024

Overview

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, allows Texas public schools with sufficient academic ratings to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The allowable exemptions are for those sections of code that do not apply to charter or private schools in an attempt to reduce the extra administrative or operational burdens placed on public schools.

To obtain exemptions, the District must create a Local Innovation Plan detailing the code requirements that inhibit the goals of the District and the benefits to the District expected from the exemption.

Term

As outlined by the Texas Education Agency, the term of the Innovation Plan is five years. The term of the plan will begin with the 2022-2023 school year and terminate at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless amended, rescinded or renewed by the District of Innovation Committee and the Board of Trustees. The District Educational Improvement Committee (DEIC), in conjunction with the district leadership and the District of Innovation Plan committee, will monitor the effectiveness of the plan and recommend to the Board any suggested modifications, and ensure the recommendations are in line with the DeISD Strategic Plan efforts.

Any recommended plan changes will be posted on the District website for 30 days and require the approval of the DEIC and the Board of Trustees. Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy AF.

Committee

The District of Innovation Committee developed this Local Innovation Plan and included members appointed by the Board and Superintendent representing the following:

- Teachers
- Community Leaders
- Parents
- District Administrators

DOI Amendment Committee

Michael McSwain	Interim Chief Business Officer
Demitree Tatum	Campus Principal
Stephanie McCloud	Chief Academic Officer
Sandra Lee	Executive Administrative Assistant – Student Support Services
Dr. Lori Mathis	Assistant Principal
Lashay Williams	Instructional Design Leader
Stanley Valdez	Director – Bilingual ESL Programs
Lawrence Davis	Director - Human Resources
Ashley Brigham	Parent/Community Member
Stephanie Fuller	Executive Director – Special Populations
Christopher Polk	Assistant Principal
Deandra Holloway	Parent/Community Member
Dr. Michelle Neely	Campus Principal
Ronald Carter	Director – Accounting
Ajion Lair	Coordinator – Student Support Services
Lakedra Cardell	Community Member
Latasha Drain	Parent/Community Member
Dr. Elexia Davison	Manager – Staffing and Talent
Natasha Harris-Pratt	Instructional Specialist
Dr. Calvin Green	Project Director – College Driven GEAR Up
Uchenna Nwaizu	Instructional Design Leader
Dr. Silvia Martinez	Executive Director – Administrative Services
Shelonda Weaver	Community Member

Amendment Committee Timeline

Dates	Activities to Amend DOI Plan
September 2024	Form DOI Amendment Committee
September 2024	Conduct Research for amendment process
October 17, 2024	DOI amendment committee meeting
October 30, 2024	DOI amendment committee meeting
November 2024	DOI committee meeting voted to amend DOI Plan
March 30, 2022	DOI Meeting – Leadership
November 11, 2024	Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding DOI Amendment
November 15, 2024	Draft of proposed innovation plan completed
December 16, 2024	Presentation to Board of Trustees for approval of current DOI plan amendment
December 16, 2024	Board of Trustees adopts proposed local innovation plan by a two-thirds vote
December 2024	District notifies commissioner by mail or email of approval of the amendment to the local innovation plan
December 2024	District posts final copy of local innovation plan to district website
December 2024	District provides a link to the current local innovation plan to the TEA

Strategic Plan

Vision

The vision of DeSoto ISD is to inspire curiosity and consciousness, develop character, build courage and nurture compassion.

Mission

The mission of DeSoto ISD is to ensure students, without exception, learn and grow at their highest levels.

Strategic Commitments

- Treat every student as a whole child while building long-term health, safety, and empowerment.
- Transform the student experience through inclusive, learner-centered teaching and learning.
- Deeply invest in early learning.
- Develop extraordinary people.
- Amplify the voices & experiences of our stakeholders.
- Relentlessly seek equity
- Embrace continuous improvement in pursuit of collective excellence.

Innovation Plan

I. Teacher Certification

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §21.003	CERTIFICATION REQUIRED. (a) 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.
Sec. §21.053	PRESENTATION AND RECORDING OF CERTIFICATES. (a) A person who desires to teach in a public school shall present the person's certificate for filing with the employing district before the person's contract with the board of trustees of the district is binding.

	(b) An educator who does not hold a valid certificate may not be paid for teaching or work done before the effective date of issuance of a valid certificate.
Sec. §21.057	PARENT NOTIFICATION. (a) A school district that assigns an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year shall provide written notice of the assignment to a parent or guardian of each student in that classroom.

Exemption Rationale for CTE, LOTE, Fine Arts and Pre K:

The District seeks the necessary flexibility to recruit, select, and place instructors who do not hold teaching credentials required by these statutes when high quality, certified teachers are not available in hard-to-fill and high-demand positions.

The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach Career Technical Education (CTE), Languages Other Than English (LOTE), **Fine Arts**, and Pre-K. To provide more students the opportunity to take such courses and obtain professional certifications, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses instead of the requirements outlined in the law.

The District does not wish to be exempted from any existing laws related to teacher contracts or teacher benefits. The exemption is to allow the District to establish local requirements including the current requirements in Sec 21.055 for teacher preparation (including background checks, training, and classroom management preparation) to enhance our ability to compete for teaching resources with industry certified and trade professionals to teach specialized certification areas.

Flexibility provides the District the following advantages:

- A greater number of CTE course offerings resulting in more opportunities for students.
- Realistic requirements for professionals transitioning from industry to teaching.
- Ability to employ part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.
- Ability to hire educators who do not hold teaching credentials

Texas Education Code section 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.

An exemption from this provision provides:

- flexibility to hire expert educators regardless of teaching certificate
- flexibility in hiring “hard to fill” positions
- flexibility to hire those with industry expertise

Local Guidelines:

- The District will continue to seek certified educators for teaching positions and maintain expectations for employee certification. When efforts have been reasonably exhausted, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and are fully equipped to perform the duties of the position.
- The DeSoto ISD Human Resources Department in conjunction with CTE, **Teaching** and Learning, and Early Childhood will establish the local process to have the option to issue local certification for Pre-K* positions, CTE, and LOTE classes.
- CTE, with input from HR, will develop qualifications and a professional development plan for instructors hired under the District of Innovation
- The district’s local guidelines will maintain the requirements for criminal background checks and classroom management training and preparation, including optional support at the district discretion for a mentor teacher.
- The CTE Department, with assistance from campus leadership and Human Resources, will develop a parent notification cadence to communicate the certification status of staff hired under the District of Innovation distinction.
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy DBA

*For the purpose of this exemption, Pre-K specifically refers to 3-year-old Pre-K classes.

Exemption Rationale for Core Subjects:

The limited talent pool of qualified teachers also inhibits the districts ability to fill all vacant teaching positions annually. In this, the district seeks the necessary flexibility to recruit and place non certified teachers for core subject areas.

To address this need the district seeks the necessary flexibility to recruit, select, and place instructors who do not hold teaching credentials required by these statutes when high quality, certified teachers are not available in hard-to-fill and high-demand positions for EC-6 Core Subjects, 4-8 Core Subjects, and all Secondary Core Subjects certification areas.

Instructors must be enrolled in an TEA approved alternative certification program as the exemption will allow individuals working on certification attainment to teach.

Flexibility provides the District the following advantages:

- Ability to hire educators who do not hold teaching credentials
- Flexibility to hire expert educators regardless of teaching certificate
- Flexibility in hiring “hard to fill” positions

Local Guidelines:

- The District will continue to seek certified educators for teaching positions and maintain expectations for employee certification. When efforts have been reasonably exhausted, the district will have the flexibility to hire individuals who are knowledgeable in the area and are fully equipped to perform the duties of the position.
- Individuals hired under this exemption in EC-6 Core Subjects, 4-8 Core Subjects and Secondary Core Subjects areas will be employed in DeSoto ISD for a maximum of three years under the districts’ “Teacher in Residence” designation.
- Instructors’ performance will be reviewed annually through a local eligibility criteria created by the Office of Human Capital Management. The eligibility criteria reviews the following teacher performance indicators:
 - Teacher Incentive Allotment scorecard score of at least 40% for student achievement.
 - T-TESS Evaluation rating of proficient or above in at least 12 of the 16 T-TESS dimensions
 - Successful Passing of TEXES Certification Examination
- The Teaching and Learning department, in collaboration with the Office of Human Capital Management, will develop qualifications and a professional development plan for instructors hired under the District of Innovation.
- The district’s local guidelines will maintain the requirements for criminal background checks and classroom management training and preparation.
- The Offices of Financial Services and Human Capital Management, with assistance from campus leadership will develop a parent notification cadence to communicate the certification status of staff hired under this District of Innovation distinction.

II. Probationary Contracts

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §21.102	PROBATIONARY CONTRACT. (a) Except as provided by Section <u>21.202(b)</u> , a person who is employed as a teacher by a school district for the first time, or who has not been employed by the district for two consecutive school years subsequent to August 28, 1967, shall be employed under a probationary contract. A person who previously was employed as a teacher by a district and, after at least a two-year lapse in district employment returns to district employment, may be employed under a probationary contract...
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	<p>(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.</p> <p>(c) An employment contract may not extend the probationary contract period beyond the end of the third consecutive school year of the teacher's employment by the school district unless, during the third year of a teacher's probationary contract, the board of trustees determines that it is doubtful whether the teacher should be given a continuing contract or a term contract. If the board makes that determination, the district may make a probationary contract with the teacher for a term ending with the fourth consecutive school year of the teacher's employment with the district, at which time the district shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) terminate the employment of the teacher; or (2) employ the teacher under a continuing contract or a term contract as provided by Subchapter D or E, according to district policy.
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Exemption Rationale:

Currently, all teachers that have been teaching in public education at least five of the last eight years prior to being employed by the district must be offered a term contract following one year on a probationary contract. However, current requirements do not always allow for sufficient time to effectively evaluate the full range of skills and abilities of a teacher. Teachers may be limited in the time provided for them to demonstrate improvement in their teaching and instructional delivery.

Offering a second year of probationary contract provides campus administrators and hiring officials with the time needed to fully assess and support a teacher that is hired under the "five-of-eight" rule before making decisions regarding moving the employee from a probationary contract to a term contract

This exemption is specifically for teachers who have taught in at least 5 of the last 8 years in public education. In addition to a one year probationary contract, the district **MAY** recommend a second year probationary contract. An extension to a second-year probationary contract is to recognize that, at times, even experienced teachers new to the district need more than one year to learn the DeSoto ISD system and the district's educational improvement models. A one-year probationary

period may not allow the teacher or administrator time to evaluate the teacher's capacity or ability to adopt the DeSoto ISD requirements.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will have the option to recommend a second one-year probationary contract to teachers who are new to the district but have taught at least 5 of the last 8 years in public education.
- There are no changes to first time teacher probationary contract terms only teachers who have taught in public education in at least 5 of the last 8 years.
- There are no changes to continuing or term teaching contracts.
- The second-year probationary contract is **NOT** automatic but at the discretion of Human Resources and the campus administrator.
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy DCA.

III. Earliest Possible School Start Date

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §25.0811	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.
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Exemption Rationale:

The DeSoto ISD Calendar Committee will have the flexibility to start school earlier than the fourth Monday in August for the entire District. Starting earlier will balance the two semesters with a natural Winter Break, set course, district, and state assessments before Winter Break, and create more instructional time before STAAR/EOC/AP exams. The balanced semesters will align with college semesters as well, allowing more opportunities for summer school, internships, and industrial certification opportunities. Starting earlier will also accommodate educational models such as summer bridge programming.

Local Guidelines:

- The DeSoto ISD Calendar Committee will receive parent and staff input, then decide, subject to Board of Trustees approval, whether the entire District will start school earlier than the fourth Monday in August.

IV. Class Size In K-4th Grade

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §25.112	CLASS SIZE. (a) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a
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	prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class.
Sec. §25.113	NOTICE OF CLASS SIZE. (a) A campus or district that is granted an exception under Section <u>25.112(d)</u> from class size limits shall provide written notice of the exception to the parent of or person standing in parental relation to each student affected by the exception.

Exemption Rationale:

Schools begin the school year with staff based on projections of student enrollment. Often, enrollment will exceed projections for one school while under projections for another school. As a result, teachers and students must be moved from class to class or school to school to meet the 22-to-1 requirement. As a result, students leave behind friends and teacher relationships that have already formed. Being exempt from the inflexible 22-to-1 requirement will allow students to remain with the teacher and classmates that they began the year with, fostering continuity and stability which will support increased student achievement. Incoming students can remain in their preferred or neighborhood school rather than have to be transported to a different campus. Additionally, the District will not be forced to hire new teachers not accounted for in the Local Board's adopted Budget.

Local Guidelines:

- The Human Resources Department will develop the procedure for this exemption in collaboration with the district level administrator who oversees elementary campuses. The district fully intends to continue its practice of maintaining reasonable class sizes in kindergarten through grade four. Those standards include staffing at a maximum K-4 class size of 24:1. District staff will further delineate these local guidelines of this exemption in light of any necessary COVID-19 related restrictions.
 - Additional personnel in the form of a substitute MAY be brought in for assistance at 25:1. Campus administration will work with HR to ensure appropriate support is provided.
 - At 25:1, classes will be leveled and additionally FTE will be hired as needed.
 - Parent notification of class size changes will occur at the end of the leveling process.
 - Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy EEB.

V. Kindergarten Start Age

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §29.151	FREE KINDERGARTEN. The board of trustees of each school district shall establish and maintain one or more kindergartens
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	for the training of children residing in the district who are at least five years of age on September 1 of the school year.
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Exemption Rationale:

Children mature and demonstrate readiness for school at varying rates, and their social/emotional development can be affected by a wide range of factors. The September 1st deadline for entering public kindergarten does not provide the flexibility needed for the district to serve students who are ready for school slightly earlier than the established date. Parents of students who are ready for kindergarten curriculum and learning environments are enrolling their children in private kindergarten, and then requesting to skip ahead to first grade once they enter public schools the following year, thus they have not participated in any district kindergarten program.

Local Guidelines:

- The Leading and Learning Department, with support from the Research, Evaluation, and Design Department will develop the assessment tool and procedures for this exemption to determine if a child is ready both academically and socially. Testing will take place the summer before the start of school. Parents will be notified of the option for students who will be age 5 by December 31 of the year. Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy EHDC and DeSoto ISD Board Policy FD

VI. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §37.0012	<p>DESIGNATION OF CAMPUS BEHAVIOR COORDINATOR. (a) 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.</p> <p>(b) The campus behavior coordinator is primarily responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of this subchapter.</p> <p>(c) Except as provided by this chapter, the specific duties of the campus behavior coordinator may be established by campus or district policy. Unless otherwise provided by campus or district policy:</p> <p>(1) a duty imposed on a campus principal or other campus administrator under this subchapter shall be performed by the campus behavior coordinator; and</p>
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	<p>(2) a power granted to a campus principal or other campus administrator under this subchapter may be exercised by the campus behavior coordinator.</p> <p>(d) The campus behavior coordinator shall promptly notify a student's parent or guardian as provided by this subsection if under this subchapter the student is placed into in-school or out-of-school suspension, placed in a disciplinary alternative education program, expelled, or placed in a juvenile justice alternative education program or is taken into custody by a law enforcement officer. A campus behavior coordinator must comply with this subsection by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) promptly contacting the parent or guardian by telephone or in person; and (2) making a good faith effort to provide written notice of the disciplinary action to the student, on the day the action is taken, for delivery to the student's parent or guardian. <p>(e) If a parent or guardian entitled to notice under Subsection (d) has not been reached by telephone or in person by 5 p.m. of the first business day after the day the disciplinary action is taken, a campus behavior coordinator shall mail written notice of the action to the parent or guardian at the parent's or guardian's last known address.</p> <p>(f) If a campus behavior coordinator is unable or not available to promptly provide notice under Subsection (d), the principal or other designee shall provide the notice.</p>
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Exemption Rationale:

DeSoto ISD believes that school discipline is best administered and managed within a team concept and should not be limited to one school administrator being responsible for contacting and the documentation requirements to parents. DeSoto ISD will use all school administrators to manage student behavior effectively and consistently monitor school discipline and parental contact.

Local Guidelines:

- The district will maintain all the duties and responsibilities outlined for a Campus Behavior Coordinator and allow the role to be fulfilled by more than one administrator per campus. DeSoto ISD is not seeking an exemption for the parental notification procedures listed in subsection (d), (e) and (f).
- Refer to DeSoto ISD Board Policy FO.

VII. Limitations on Student Suspensions

Texas Education Code:

Sec. §37.005	<p>(c) A student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade three may not be placed in out-of-school suspension unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off of school property, the student engages in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Section <u>46.02</u> or <u>46.05</u>, Penal Code; (2) conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense under Section <u>22.01</u>, <u>22.011</u>, <u>22.02</u>, or <u>22.021</u>, Penal Code; or (3) selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of any amount of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (A) marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Chapter <u>481</u>, Health and Safety Code, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et seq.; (B) a dangerous drug, as defined by Chapter <u>483</u>, Health and Safety Code; or (C) an alcoholic beverage, as defined by Section <u>1.04</u>, Alcoholic Beverage Code.
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Exemption Rationale:

There are times when students engage in behaviors that do not necessarily fit into the categories of weapons, violent offenses or being under the influence, but warrant removal from the instructional setting. Currently students in these situations sometimes fail to understand the seriousness of their behaviors due to administrative limitations in responding to their behaviors.

School and student needs will be best met by allowing some discretion in assigning limited out-of-school suspension days. This innovation area will allow the campuses to utilize out of school suspension for students below grade 3 within clear parameters allowed at all other grade levels.

It is foreseeable that elementary campuses and students could be adversely affected by the strict limitation on suspensions. If a student's behavior reaches a level of such disruption that the school cannot function properly, immediate action should be taken to maintain the effectiveness and safety of the educational environment for all students.

Local Guidelines:

- The Superintendent and their designee(s) will establish a district protocol to facilitate appropriate disciplinary steps to address the behaviors of students in grades three and below. The protocol might include consideration of such student behaviors by campus administration in collaboration with district support staff.