

Albany Independent School District



District of Innovation Plan

May 17, 2021–May 17, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill (HB) 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On December 12, 2016, the Albany Independent School District's Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes of the benefit of students and the community.

On January 16, 2017, the Board appointed a 15-member District of Innovation District Advisory Committee comprised of diverse leaders representing a cross-section of the District's stakeholders including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and administrators. The Committee met on February 8, 2017 and February 15, 2017 to discuss and draft the Local Innovation plan. A complete timeline is included.

II. TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning June 1, 2017 and ending May 31, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment. Any amendment adopted by the Board will adhere to the same term as the original plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

TIMELINE

A resolution was adopted at the April 19, 2021 board meeting, which initiates the District of Innovation process.

A public hearing took place at the May 17, 2021 board meeting on District of Innovation.

At the May 17, 2021 board meeting, the school board approved the formation of a Local Innovation Plan Committee.

The Local Innovation Plan Committee met May 18, 2021. These meetings were open to the public to attend and minutes will be posted.

Local Innovation Plan drafted and sent to the Board on May 21, 2021 and made available on the website for public review and comment on May 21, 2021.

Public forum on proposed plan: Scheduled for June 21, 2021 at 7 PM, Board Room.

Board can vote at its June 21, 2021 meeting on its intent to vote on the proposed Local Innovation Plan at the March 20, 2017 regular meeting and notify the Commissioner of Education of its intent.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Member Name	Representation
Tamara Trail	Parent
Leslie Belcher	Parent
Amy Kelly	Business / Community
Donnie Lucas	Teacher / Business / Community
Kristie Smith	Teacher
Michaela Bradford	Teacher
Kelli Kreidler	Teacher
Melanie Turner	Teacher
Jenny Scott	Counselor/ District Librarian
Leigh Lowe	Dir. of Student Services
John Gallagher	Principal
Glen Hill	Principal
Jonathan Scott	Superintendent

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

TEC 21.003; TEC 21.057

(DBA LEGAL/LOCAL); (DK LEGAL/LOCAL)

DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN GOAL 1.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

Currently

TEC 21.003 states that a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or 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 in Subchapter B. TEC 21.057 requires that the District provide written notice to parents if an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to a classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days.

Proposed

In order to best serve Albany ISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing and will enrich applicant pools in specific areas of need. The district's exemption from TEC 21.003 would allow the district to consider part-time professionals to teach courses, allow industry expert professionals to transition to the teaching profession in Career and Technology, and also assist in staffing high need STEM and dual credit course offerings. Teachers certified in other states could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education, and credentials. This would also allow experienced certified teachers to teach a course outside their certification area due to their education, background and/or experience. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs.

Local Guidelines

- I. The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach subjects and/or grade levels out of their field. The principals must specify the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teachers possesses qualifying this individual to teach the subject.
- II. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials.

- III. The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification and will submit approved requests to the Board of Trustees and approval prior to the individual beginning employment.
- IV. Local teaching certificates will be issued for one year and the employee will be at-will.
- V. This plan will provide more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings. Listed below are a few of the outcomes we hope to achieve with this plan:

CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION ALONG WITH COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS.

- Seek partnerships with local Businesses representatives and Community members, and Identify competencies that are essential for workplace success.
 - Offer internships, mentorships, and work-based learning experiences to students who are interested in careers in their fields.
 - Provide time and expertise to CTE programs: Participate in Career Cluster Advisory Committees to help design curriculum frameworks and supportive materials.
 - Participate in a local CTE program advisory committee to enhance the quality of graduating students available to your company and community.
 - Use their power as business and industry professionals to advocate for CTE at the local, state, and federal levels. It is important for business and industry to share with policymakers the value and impact of CTE for our nation's employers.
- Research and identify models to serve as a resource to inform discussions among industry leaders, educators, economic developers, and public workforce investment professionals as they collaborate to:
 - Identify specific employer skill needs
 - Develop competency-based curricula and training models
 - Develop industry-defined performance indicators, skill standards, and certifications
 - Develop resources for career exploration and guidance.

SCHOOL START DATE

(TEC) 25.0811

(EB LEGAL)

District Improvement Goals 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 2.4, 3.2

Currently

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

Albany ISD would like to locally determine the school start date for school. This flexibility would allow the district to determine, on an annual basis, what start date best meets the needs of the students. The start date will not begin before the second Monday in August. It will also offer the following opportunities:

- Allow students to enroll in college classes that start in early June.
- This flexibility allows time in the calendar for staff development and staff collaboration with higher education partners.
- An earlier start permits students additional instruction prior to state assessments.
- Beginning school before the fourth Monday in August gives the ability to help balance semesters.
- This will allow for a calendar that fits the needs of our local communities, staff, and students.
- An earlier start allows school to finish before June which is when our students need to start to work and practice for our biggest local tourism event “Fandangle” which is the last two weekends in June.

CLASS SIZE WAIVER

TEC 25.112; TEC 25.113

EED LEGAL

District Improvement Goals 1.1, 1.2, 3.2, 3.5

Currently

Texas Education Code 25.112 limits the number of students in Kindergarten through 4th grade to 22 students per teacher. While a maximum number of students in K-4 classrooms may be addressed by a state waiver must be applied for annually. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires districts to notify each parent in the class section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio and inform them the waiver has been submitted.

Proposed

While Albany intends to remain within the education code guidelines with regard to class size ratios, we seek local control to manage increases in class sizes to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students. We believe best practice instruction coupled with a well prepared and engaged instructor can be just as successful as the environment of a small classroom. Small class sizes may have a positive effect in the classroom, but must also be balanced with the timing of adding staff, the qualifications of staff available, the makeup and chemistry of the classroom and other classroom influences.

ALTERNATIVE UNIFORM GROUP HEALTH COVERAGE PROGRAM

TEC 21.004(i)

Preclusion from providing Alternative Uniform Group Coverage Program
District Improvement Goals 3.1, 3.2

Currently

TEC 22.004 states that a school district may not make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all Albany ISD employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverages for its employees and at a lower cost.

Proposed

While Albany ISD intends to offer current health insurance coverages, we seek an exemption from the health insurance requirements in TEC 22.004(i). The exemption would provide the district the ability to offer an Alternative Health Plan. One major benefit of any potential employment opportunity is quality medical insurance at the best possible cost. This exemption provides Albany ISD with additional compensation packages to assist in the recruitment of employees.