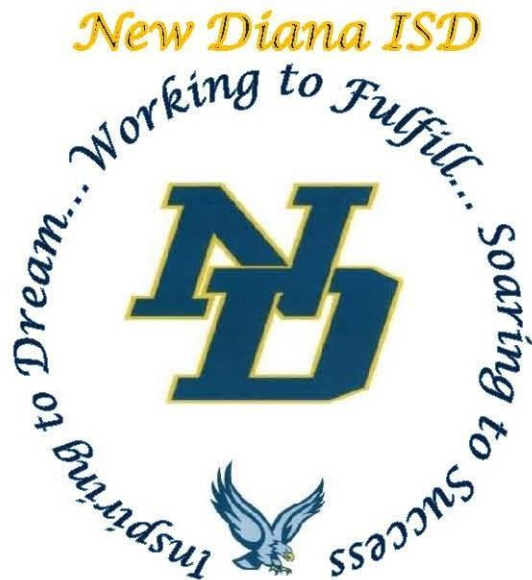


**New Diana ISD**  
**Plan of Innovation**  
**Effective February 15, 2022-February 15, 2027**  
**Amended February 13, 2023**



## FREQUENTLY Asked Questions

### **What is a District of Innovation?**

The District of Innovation concept was passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 and has been codified in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12a. A District of Innovation designation gives traditional school districts most of the flexibility currently available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools. It gives a district more local control and increases a District's ability to decide what best suits the District's needs. Under HB 1842, Districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code "that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the District should exempt on adoption of the plan."

### **What are the benefits to New Diana ISD becoming a District of Innovation?**

A District of Innovation will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools and exercise local control over certain decisions about education and governance that are more appropriate for the individual needs of the District. A District of Innovation is empowered to innovate and think differently based on the unique needs of the school, students, and staff. Becoming a District of Innovation allows a district to customize appropriate plans district-wide, a grade level, or a single campus.

## **What are the proposed areas of innovation for New Diana ISD?**

- First Day of Instruction
- Class Size in grades K-4
- Teacher Certifications
- Probationary Teacher Contracts
- Inter-District Transfers
- Removal of Unwanted Visitors
- Teacher Contract Days

## **What areas are Districts of Innovation prohibited from seeking exemption?**

A District of Innovation cannot seek exemption from state or federal requirements applicable to an open enrollment charter school; state requirements for curriculum or graduation; and academic and financial accountability. Additionally, a District of Innovation cannot be exempt from statutes, including but not limited to, election of board of trustees; powers and duties of school boards, superintendents, and principals; criminal history record checks and educator misconduct reporting; bilingual education; special education; prekindergarten; academic accountability including student assessment; open meetings, open records; financial accountability and related reporting; and nepotism.

## **How long is the District of Innovation Plan effective?**

The plan will be in effect for a term of five years from the date of adoption. The District of Innovation Plan may be amended, rescinded, or renewed only by a majority vote of the DOI Committee and the Board of Trustees in the same manner required for initial adoption.

# Innovation Plan Committee Members

Carl Key	Superintendent
Melissa Ryan	Curriculum and Instruction
John Gross	HS Principal
Justin Verzosa	MS Principal
Ashley Zucosky	Elementary Principal
Bethany Venable	Elementary Counselor
Dana Yount	Curriculum Coordinator
Caroline Eaves	Curriculum Coordinator
Ginger Freeman	HS Teacher
Callie Faul	HS Teacher
Jackie France	MS Teacher
Amanda Tackett	MS Teacher
Mallory Jackson	Elementary Teacher
Taylor Driscoll	Elementary Teacher
Alan Ramos	Parent
Alan Ramirez	Community Business
Cortney Tant	Community Member
Olivia Carder	Student Representative
Edgar Guzman	Student Representative

# Timeline

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Date</u>
Innovation plan committee public meeting	Committee	January 5, 2022
Post proposed local innovation plan on district website	District	January 11, 2022
Commissioner notified of board intent to adopt local innovative plan	Board	January 11, 2022
Board voted to adopt the local innovative plan	Board	February 14, 2022
Commissioner notified of school board approval of innovative plan.	Board	February 15, 2022
Copy of Innovation plan is posted on the district's website.	District	February 15, 2022
Copy of link to the current local innovation plan is provided to TEA	District	February 15, 2022
Amendment approved by DEIC	Committee	January 11, 2023
Board voted to approve amended plan	Board	February 13, 2023

## Innovation Plan

As a District of Innovation, New Diana ISD will seek to maximize local control over educational and governance decisions for students and staff. The District intends to continue to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If amendments to this plan are considered at some point in the future, the District will reconvene the innovation plan committee to initiate the appropriate process, as outlined in Chapter 12a of the Texas Education Code.

## **FIRST DAY OF INSTRUCTION**

(Texas Education Code § 25.0811)

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

Texas Education Code states that a District may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August, unless the District operates a year-round system. A District may not receive a waiver for this requirement. For many years this was the rule; however, Districts had the option of applying for a waiver to begin school earlier. The waiver process was eliminated several years ago. This requirement inhibits the District's flexibility to develop a calendar that best meets the needs and desires of students, staff, Board of Trustees, and community members. It also inhibits the District from creating a calendar that better balances the instructional semesters.

### **Category of innovation**

Modifications to the school year

### **Innovation strategies**

The flexibility of start date allows the District to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best fits the local needs of our students and community. This strategy will provide the District the benefits of additional planning time for staff and learning time for students; additional time for staff to prepare for summer school; an improved balanced instructional calendar; and additional time for staff to participate in professional learning communities (PLC's).

## **CLASS SIZE IN GRADES K-4**

(Texas Education Code §§ 25.112, 25.113)

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

Texas Education Code 25.112 currently limits the number of students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade to 22. When a class exceeds this limit, the District must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). These waivers are rarely rejected by TEA, making the process of applying for a waiver no more than an administrative step of putting TEA on notice. Texas Education Code 25.113 requires Districts to notify parents in each class section that exceeds the class size limit. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the District and the class returns to a size at or below the class size limit, thus negating the need for the waiver or notification to parents.

### **Category of innovation**

Campus governance

### **Innovation strategies**

The District would have the flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation designation and would not be required to apply for class size waivers. The District intends to remain within the guidelines of the current education code. The District seeks flexibility to provide the best learning environment for our K-4 students. Class size must be balanced with the logistics of funding, availability of resources and space, and adding staff. The Superintendent will approve K-4 class sizes and report to the Board of Trustees any classroom size that exceeds the threshold established by the Texas Education Code.

## **TEACHER CERTIFICATION**

(Texas Education Code 21.003 (a), 21.057)

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

The Texas Education Code requires a public school employee to have the appropriate certification for his or her current assignment unless the appropriate permit has been issued. The credentials appropriate to each assignment are set forth in the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) rules at 19 Administrative Code Chapter 231. In the event an appropriately certified teacher cannot be found, the District must request an emergency certification from TEA and SBEC. These rules are burdensome and do not take into account the unique needs and circumstances of the District. Certain subject areas, such as Career and Technology/STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Dual Credit, and other High School Courses are often very difficult to find properly-certified teachers.

### **Category of innovation**

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees

### **Innovation strategies**

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for dual credit, career and technology/STEM, and hard to fill content teachers, the District will have the flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors or university professors in specific content areas, consider out of state teachers as well as currently employed certified teachers who could teach a course outside of their certification area, in order to provide NDISD students more educational opportunities. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations in career and technical/STEM and elective courses if certified teachers are not available. This will also apply to content area teachers for hard to fill positions. The Superintendent will seek the approval of the Board of Trustees for any teacher being considered for local certification.



## **PROBATIONARY TEACHER CONTRACTS**

(Texas Education Code 21.102(b))

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

The Texas Education Code requires that teachers newly-hired by the District who have five years of experience in public education in Texas within the last eight years can only be placed on a one-year probationary contract, and after the first year, must be placed on a term contract. In contrast, newly-hired teachers without the 5 of 8 years of experience can be hired by the District on a one-year probationary contract for a total of three years. This law limits the District's ability to sufficiently assess and determine whether a newly-hired teacher is a good fit for the District. This law limits the District's ability to sufficiently assess and determine whether a newly-hired teacher is a good fit for the District. The one-year probationary period is insufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom because teacher contract renewal timelines demand that employment decisions be made before the end of the school year.

### **Category of innovation**

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees

### **Innovation strategies**

To create equity in new hires, give NDISD the opportunity to serve students better, allow administrators time to evaluate performance, and provide opportunities for improvement, growth and professional development, all new teachers hired in New Diana ISD will be issued a one year probationary contract for a total of up to three years. These teachers may be issued a fourth year probationary contract under the same rules as applied in Texas Education code 22.102©.

## **INTER-DISTRICT TRANSFERS**

(Texas Education Code 25.036)

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

Under Texas Education Code 25.001, a district may choose to accept, as transfers, students who are not entitled to enroll in the district. Under TEC 25.036, a transfer is interpreted to be for a period of one school year. New Diana ISD maintains a transfer policy under FDA (Local) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, the student's disciplinary history records and attendance records are also evaluated by the Superintendent or designee. Transfer students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the District. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare occasions, New Diana ISD seeks exemption from the one year transfer commitment.

### **Category of innovation**

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees

### **Innovation strategies**

Nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsion. In addition, students not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation.

## **REMOVAL OF UNWANTED VISITORS**

(Texas Education Code 37.105)

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

Texas Education Code §37.105, applies to rejecting unruly visitors from campuses and school events. In 2017, the Texas Legislature changed the law on how school administrators can eject unruly guests from school events. This applies to parents and community members, not students. Under the law, the guest must be given a warning before he or she is ejected. Upon ejection, the guest must also be given notice of how he can appeal the ejection.

### **Category of innovation**

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees

### **Innovation strategies**

The flexibility would allow designated staff members the authority to remove guests whose behavior is deemed inappropriate without warning or written notice.

## **TEACHER CONTRACT DAYS**

(Texas Education Code Section 21.401)

### **Manner in which the statute inhibits the plan**

Current education law defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days. A change in school law has converted required student instructional and attendance days to 75,600 minutes. This change has resulted in the possibility of decreasing the number of days students must attend school, but does not address a similar need to decrease the number of days required for teachers.

### **Category of innovation**

Other innovations prescribed by the Board of Trustees

### **Benefit of exemption:**

- The proposal would better align the number of teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- Reduces teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries.
- The proposal would increase the daily rate the district pays teachers.
- Enhance teacher recruitment.
- Improve teacher morale.