

Poth Independent School District

District of Innovation Plan



District of Innovation Summary

A District of Innovation is a concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session effective immediately, that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open enrollment charter schools. (H.B. 1842) To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code chapter 12A.

District of Innovation Committee Members

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|---------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Laura Kroll | - | Elementary Principal |
| 2. Phillip Zwicke | - | High School Principal |
| 3. Todd Deaver | - | Junior High Principal |
| 4. Jeff Luna | - | Athletic Director |
| 5. Suzie Martinez | - | EC-8 Counselor |
| 6. Nicole Dziuk | - | High School Counselor |
| 7. Julie Dunn | - | Federal Programs |
| 8. Karla Brysch | - | Instructional Facilitator |
| 9. Shawn Nelson | - | Elementary Instructor |
| 10. Kim McClure | - | Junior High Instructor |
| 11. Tara Loeffler | - | High School Instructor |
| 12. Julie Korzekwa | - | Parent |
| 13. Melissa Antuna | - | Parent |
| 14. Denver Kopecki | - | Parent |

District of Innovation Timeline

January 18, 2017	Board of Trustees approve resolution to develop innovation plan
February 08, 2017	Board of Trustees hold a public hearing in accordance with the statute Board of Trustees appoint a committee to develop a local innovation plan
Feb 09 – Mar 07, 2017	District of Innovation Committee will: -Hold initial meeting -Meet to review first draft of plan -Meet to review updated draft of plan
March 08, 2017	Draft to Board of Trustees for review
March 09, 2017	District of Innovation Committee meet to finalize draft of plan with any board recommendations Post proposed plan on the district's website for a minimum of 30 days for staff, parent, and community review Superintendent notifies the Texas Commissioner of Education of intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan
April 12, 2017	Board of Trustees vote to formally approve the innovation plan
April 13, 2017	Superintendent gives formal notification to the Texas Commissioner of Education that plan is adopted

District of Innovation Exemption Plan

1. **Start Date**-(TEC 25.0811)

Current-Provides that students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

Proposed-Flexible start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility of the start date also offers the following opportunities:

- Balance the amount of instructional time per semester
- Allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for staff
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will work with balanced semesters, which align with our local colleges.
- Early start date allows for additional days of instruction prior to testing dates.
- Students will be afforded opportunities to enroll in summer college sessions with finalized official transcripts and staff will be able to attend summer school classes as well.
- Allow for an option to start school with a shorter week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school.

2. **Teacher Certifications**-(TEC 21.003)

Current-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 submit a request for certification to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Proposed-The district will have the flexibility to locally certify applicants/district employees seeking assignments, in a closely related field, outside of their traditional certification areas. The district will also have the flexibility to certify new applicants/district employees to teach CATE courses outside of their certification areas. In addition, this exemption will afford the district the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations if certified teachers are not available to teach courses including, but not limited to the following clusters:

- Fine arts
- Health Science
- Business & Industry
- Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources
- Finance
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections, & Security
- Manufacturing
- Human Services
- Business Management & Administration
- Marketing

3. **Class Size Waivers**-(TEC 25.112, 25.113)

Current-K to 4th grade classes are to be kept at a 22 to 1 student/teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

Proposed-The district will be exempt from filing a waiver with TEA when a K to 4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio. While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, we do not believe it has a negative effect when you only add one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influences the learning environment.

- Poth ISD will attempt to keep all K to 4th core classrooms to a 22:1 ratio.
- In the event the class size exceeds this ratio, the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees.
- In the event a K to 4th core classroom reaches 24:1, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation.

4. **Probationary Contracts**- (TEC 21.102(b))

Current-A probationary contract 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 with the district.

Proposed-Experienced teachers, counselors, librarians and nurses new to Poth ISD 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 two years from the date of district employment.

- Allows for sufficient time to evaluate the teacher effectiveness in the classroom
- Provides an additional year of growth prior to employee being placed on a term contract
- Alleviates necessity of making employment decision prior to release of test data

5. **Contractual Days**-(TEC 21.401)

Current-Education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10 month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed-Reduce teacher contract days from 187 to a decreased length with no effect on teacher salaries.

- Align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students.
- Increase the daily rate the district pays teachers
- Enhance teacher recruitment

- Improve teacher morale
- Provide teachers more flexibility during the summer months to seek out beneficial staff development that relates to their field.

6. **Financial Exemption**-(TEC 45.206)

Current-Depository shall serve for a term of two years and until its successor is duly selected and qualified, except that a district and its depository bank may agree to extend the contract for two additional two year terms. The initial contract term and any extension must coincide with the district's fiscal year.

Proposed-District will be required to bid depository banking services at a minimum of every six years.

- Limited number of banking entities with the interest in serving and/or the ability to serve the financial needs of the district.
- Required bid process uses the time and efforts of district personnel that is better spent on other activities given our limited ability to change banks.