

# District of Innovation and Kilgore ISD

## Introduction

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, provides the opportunity for Texas public school districts to pursue the designation of District of Innovation. This allows local school districts to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code to allow more flexibility and local control for innovative programming.

**Motto:**

Where Every Student Counts

**Vision:**

Igniting life-long learning in all students

**Mission:**

Preparing today's students for tomorrow's opportunities

**Beliefs:**

- Quality Instruction is critical for student success.
- Academic excellence is our cornerstone.
- Education is more than just classrooms or test scores.
- Responsible citizenship is character in action.

On January 23, 2017, the Kilgore Independent School District passed a resolution to initiate the process of designation as a District of Innovation in order to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students in the community.

A committee comprised of 60% teachers and 40% administrators was convened in February and tasked with compiling ideas and input from students, teachers, parents and the community.

## Committee

Name	Campus	Role
Tamara Dean	KPS	Principal
Heather Wimberly	KPS	Teacher
Angelica Navarro	KPS	Teacher
Meggan Clark	KPS	Teacher
Cindy Lindley	Chandler	Principal
Susan Dent	Chandler	Teacher
Shaye Cagle	Chandler	Teacher
Carolyn Franks	Chandler	Teacher
Lindsay Calder	KIS	Teacher
Christian Patterson	KIS	Teacher
John Bryant	KIS	Teacher
Kim Slayter	KIS	Principal
April Cox	KMS	Principal
Tracy Drury	KMS	Teacher
Debby Leppert	KMS	Teacher
Delina Chitwood	KMS	Teacher
Charles Presley	KHS	Principal
Johnna Tritt	KHS	Teacher
Carl Mohn	KHS	Teacher
Benjamin Wood	KHS	Teacher
Zevely Hatcher	Administration	Curriculum
Jennie Good	Administration	Curriculum
Daniel Stanley	Administration	Bilingual Education

Jerry Stuart	Administration	CTE
Mark Lane	Administration	Technology

Facilitator: Superintendent Cara Cooke

Human Resources Advisor: Beth Allen

Business Office Advisor: Revard Pfeffer

## TERM

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning April 10, 2017 and ending April 10, 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Kilgore ISD 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 Texas Education Code, Subchapter 12A, the Kilgore ISD Board of Trustees 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 will not implement two separate plans at any one time.

Under Texas Education Code, Subchapter 12A, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) “that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. . .” Because Kilgore ISD objectives and its local Innovation Plan are comprehensive and impact areas in the TEC, and because Kilgore ISD seeks to maximize local control of educational decisions for each student, Kilgore ISD seeks exemption from the following provisions of the TEC:

# Innovations Recommended

## First Day of Instruction

**Exemption From Portions of:** Texas Education Code §25.0811

**Currently:** The first day of school may not be held prior to the fourth Monday of August.

Texas Education Code §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. A school district may:

(1) begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August if the district operates a year-round system under Section 25.084; or

(2) begin instruction for students for a school year on or after the first Monday in August at a campus or at not more than 20 percent of the campuses in the district if:

(A) the district has a student enrollment of 190,000 or more;

(B) the district at the beginning of the school year provides, financed with local funds, days of instruction for students at the campus or at each of the multiple campuses, in addition to the minimum number of days of instruction required under Section 25.081;

(C) the campus or each of the multiple campuses are undergoing comprehensive reform, as determined by the board of trustees of the district; and

(D) a majority of the students at the campus or at each of the multiple campuses are educationally disadvantaged.

(b) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a school district that does not offer each grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 and whose prospective or former students generally attend school in another state for the grade levels the district

does not offer may start school on any date permitted under Subsection (a) or the law of the other state.

**Proposed:** Rather than simply choosing arbitrary dates, Kilgore ISD seeks to build a calendar to meet the needs of teachers, students and the community. District staff and stakeholders design the KISD academic calendar based on the following criteria:

1. Satisfy legal requirements for required days and/or minutes for teachers and students (teachers will start no earlier than August 1).
2. Maximize instructional time to promote student success, allowing the first and second semesters to be close in number of days of instruction and providing more instructional days prior to state assessments;
3. Strategically allocate holidays and breaks that reinforce our community, cultural and family values;
4. Align with area college and community calendars to maximize the benefit of students and families;
5. Provide time for faculty and staff throughout the school year to develop their professional skills and plan for the highest quality of instruction;
6. Allow for greater flexibility in grading periods; and
7. Improve student attendance and student success through the flexibility in the calendar.

With an exemption from Texas Education Code §25.0811, Kilgore ISD will be able to choose a start date that matches the needs of Kilgore students, families and teachers.

#### ACTION STEPS

1.	District of Innovation (DoI) committee will consider a variety of calendar options, including considering a nine week grading period.
2.	The “draft” calendar will be shared and communicated with District stakeholders for comment and consideration.
3.	Based upon feedback received, DoI committee will revise the draft calendar as appropriate and then submit it as “Proposed” calendar to the public, campuses and the DEIC.
4.	The DEIC may choose to approve, revise or edit as appropriate before recommending a calendar to the Board of Trustees for approval.
5.	The calendar will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

## Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

**Exemption From Portions of:** Texas Education Code §25.083(b), Texas Education Code §25.092

**Currently:** State law currently requires students attend class 90% of the school days the class is offered in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on demonstrated mastery of the learning.

Texas Education Code §25.083

SCHOOL DAY INTERRUPTIONS. (b) The board of trustees of each school district shall adopt and strictly enforce a policy limiting the removal of students from class for remedial tutoring or test preparation. A district may not remove a student from a regularly scheduled class for remedial tutoring or test preparation if, as a result of the removal, the student would miss more than 10 percent of the school days on which the class is offered, unless the student's parent or another person standing in parental relation to the student provides to the district written consent for removal from class for such purpose.

Texas Education Code §25.092

MINIMUM ATTENDANCE FOR CLASS CREDIT OR FINAL GRADE. (a) 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.

(a-1) A student who is in attendance for at least 75 percent but less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered may be given credit or a final grade for the class if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class. A student under the jurisdiction of a court in a criminal or juvenile justice proceeding may not receive credit or a final grade under this subsection without the consent of the judge presiding over the student's case.

(a-2) Subsection (a) does not apply to a student who receives credit by examination for a class as provided by Section 28.023.

(b) The board of trustees of each school district shall appoint one or more attendance committees to hear petitions for class credit or a final grade by students who are in attendance fewer than the number of days required under Subsection (a) and have not earned class credit or a final grade under Subsection (a-1). Classroom teachers shall comprise a majority of the membership of the committee. A committee may give class credit or a final grade to a student because of extenuating circumstances. Each board of trustees shall establish guidelines to determine what constitutes extenuating circumstances and shall adopt policies establishing alternative ways for students to make up work or regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences. The alternative ways must include at least one option that does not require a student to pay a fee authorized under Section 11.158(a)(15). A certified public school employee may not be assigned additional instructional duties as a result of this section outside of the regular workday unless the employee is compensated for the duties at a reasonable rate of pay.

(c) A member of an attendance committee is not personally liable for any act or omission arising out of duties as a member of an attendance committee.

(d) If a student is denied credit or a final grade for a class by an attendance committee, the student may appeal the decision to the board of trustees. The decision of the board may be appealed by trial de novo to the district court of the county in which the school district's central administrative office is located.

(e) This section does not affect the provision of Section 25.087(b) regarding a student's excused absence from school to observe religious holy days.

(f) The availability of the option developed under Subsection (b) must be substantially the same as the availability of the educational program developed under Section 11.158(a)(15).

**Proposed:** The Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade requirement is also referred to as the 90% rule. This requirement is an arbitrary percentage, where it may appear that school districts award credit based on seat time rather than demonstrated mastery of the learning. Kilgore ISD believes that students will generally have more academic success when they are present for at least 90% of the instructional activities of a class.

However, Kilgore ISD also recognizes that there are opportunities for high quality instruction that do not rely solely on "seat time" in a physical space. The Local Innovation Plan encourages faculty and staff to explore innovative options to deliver

instruction and to assess students' mastery of learning. As appropriate and in limited circumstances, the District may choose to exempt certain innovative programs of study from the 90% rule.

#### ACTION STEPS

1.	Committees will be formed as needed to develop specific systems for innovative approaches to earning course credits.
2.	Examine different formats and instructional strategies, such as online coursework, blended coursework, dual enrollment, early college, performance tasks, community-based learning, independent study, mentorships, and credit recovery for optimum student engagement.
3.	In concert with Curriculum Department and campus administration, make recommendation to DEIC and Superintendent for innovative courses.
4.	Provide professional learning for teachers in the implementation of personalized learning tools and strategies.
5.	Monitor student performance and make annual adjustments to improve.

# Personnel

**Exemption from Portions of:** Texas Education Code §21.003(a)

**Currently:** TEC 21.003 requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. Kilgore ISD affirms the standards to hold an appropriate state certification or permit in almost all cases, but there are some limited circumstances where this is not always practical or in the best interests of Kilgore ISD students.

**Proposed:** The district will maintain its current expectations for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire the most qualified individuals with appropriate certifications by the appropriate state agency for the position in question. However, when that is not reasonably possible, the district will have the flexibility to hire the most qualified individuals who are experienced and knowledgeable in the area and equipped to effectively perform the duties of the position in question.

The creation of a KISD District of Innovation Certification will provide the ability to hire professionals with industry or higher education experience to teach Career and Technical Education (CTE) and/or secondary courses to provide the opportunity for students to receive core credit. Additionally, the KISD District of Innovation Certification option could be utilized when a teacher with state certification in another area is the most qualified teacher available for a high-demand position in bilingual education or languages other than English (LOTE).

## Plan of Action

Kilgore ISD will continue its quest for highly effective educators.

1.	In order to best serve Kilgore ISD students, all decisions on teacher certification and assignments will be handled locally. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, fees, notifications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.</li></ul>
2.	Kilgore ISD will allow KISD District of Innovation Certification based on skills and experiences outside the traditional teacher certification pathway. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. A degreed/career certified individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a teacher can be eligible to teach in hard to fill positions including, but not limited to TEA approved shortage areas such as mathematics, science, Languages Other than English (LOTE), Career &amp; Technical Education (CTE), etc.</li><li>B. An employee working under a KISD District of Innovation Certification will receive a non-certified contract. Local teaching certificates will be for one year and must be renewed annually.</li></ul>

	<p>C. An employee working under a KISD District of Innovation Certification will be appraised under the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>In order to ensure the most qualified individuals are hired, Kilgore ISD will implement a local hiring policy for KISD District of Innovation Certification hires.</p> <p>A. The principal must submit to the superintendent and/or the superintendent's designee, a request for KISD District of Innovation Certification .</p> <p>a. Principal request must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Reason for the request including but not limited to emergency or financial situations creating the need for the assignment</li> <li>ii. Outline of all the individual's credentials/qualifications</li> </ul> <p>b. Qualifications for KISD District of Innovation Certification that will be considered include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Professional work experience</li> <li>ii. College degree in recommended or relevant subject/field of study</li> <li>iii. Formal training and education</li> <li>iv. Active professional relevant industry certification or registration</li> <li>v. Demonstration of successful experience working with students</li> <li>vi. Out of state teaching certification</li> <li>vii. Credentials candidate possesses that would qualify to teach the subject/field of study</li> </ul> <p>B. The Superintendent or his/her designee will then approve the request if they believe the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of the position and feel the individual could be an asset to students.</p> <p>C. Final approval will be considered by the Board of Trustees based on Superintendent's recommendation.</p> <p>D. Determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>In order to ensure high quality instruction, Kilgore ISD will provide additional support for candidates hired under a KISD District of Innovation Certification.</p> <p>A. The campus principal and program director will create a personal professional development plan for each locally certified teacher.</p> <p>B. When possible, lesson plans for the locally certified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.</p> <p>C. Locally certified teachers will receive additional professional development and support for classroom management.</p> <p>D. KISD District of Innovation Certified teachers will receive a designated mentor who will provide support (including but not limited to classroom observations and planning support).</p>

