

Van Alstyne ISD District of Innovation Plan



Plan Approved

District Improvement Team 1/19/22

VAISD School Board 3/28/22

Introduction

The 84th legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allowed traditional independent school districts the ability to access flexibilities which had previously been reserved for Texas’ open enrollment charter schools. In order for an independent school district to obtain these flexibilities, districts must seek designation as a “District of Innovation.”

Mission

Van Alstyne ISD will be a premier school district providing a well-rounded, safe school experience that prepares our graduates to discover and attain their life goals.

Process

The District Advisory Committee, which is composed of administrators, teachers, parents, and community representatives, met in an open public forum on January 19, 2022 to discuss and renew the VAISD District Of Innovation (DOI) plan, which is set to expire at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. The proposed plan was posted on the District webpage for public review and input on January 20, 2022, and was also placed in the digital newsletters for all campuses for parents to review and submit feedback. The TEA Commissioner was notified on January 20, 2022 that our District plan was proposed for renewal and scheduled to go before the VAISD School Board. The Board of Trustees voted to approve the plan on March 28, 2022. The Commissioner was once again notified of the Board adoption and was sent a copy of the plan with a list of the exemptions claimed on March 30, 2022, and the finalized plan was posted on the District website the same day.

Committee Members

David Brown, Ed. D.	Superintendent
Ryan Coleman	Assistant Superintendent
Jamie Martinez	Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Rachel Sevarino	Elementary Curriculum Coordinator
Ted Beal	Secondary Curriculum Coordinator
Renee Chote	Business Manager
Kenneth Daniel	Technology Director
Lannie Barnes	Maintenance Director
Lisa Harrelson	Instructional Technology Specialist
Craig Dennis	High School Principal
Debbie Fine	High School Assistant Principal
David Singleton	High School Teacher
Barrow Hamilton	High School Teacher
Holly McRae	High School Teacher
Kary Cataldie	High School Parent
Kelly Moore, Ed. D	Middle School Principal
Shanda Timpanaro	Middle School Assistant Principal

Amy White
Shelly Langsdorf
Krystle Harbert
Alyssa Burlison
Britni Cady
Kristi Odom
Jaime Tracey
Kristen Gentzler
Afton Wood
Emily Freeman
Brad Abercrombie
Tiffany Bietz
Mary Foster
Jenn Fink
Melody Bolton
Jeremy Pryor
April Adams
Jim Atchison
Randy Pettit

Middle School Teacher
Middle School Teacher
Middle School Teacher
Middle School Parent
Middle School Counselor
Partin Elementary Principal
Partin Elementary Assistant Principal
Partin Elementary Teacher
Partin Elementary Teacher
Partin Elementary Teacher
Partin Elementary Parent
Sanford Elementary Principal
Sanford Elementary Assistant Principal
Sanford Elementary Teacher
Sanford Elementary Teacher
Sanford Elementary Teacher
Sanford Elementary Parent
Community Member
Community Member and Business Owner

Timeline of Events

Thursday, January 6, 2022

Notice sent to principals to include in their next newsletters informing parents about the public hearing regarding the DOI on January 19, 2022.

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

District Advisory Committee meeting/ public hearing to discuss and recommend updates to the plan.

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Notified the Commissioner of Education of the Board's intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan

Recommended plan posted on the District website (30 days), and notification sent to parents and staff members.

March 28, 2022 Regular Board Meeting

Plan approved by the VAISD School Board

March 30, 2022

Updated all policy changes with TASB

Notified Commissioner of Education of approval of Local Innovation Plan

Term of Plan

The term of the District of Innovation plan, as constituted by the Texas Education Agency, will be five years. Therefore, this plan will begin with the 2022-2023 school year and conclude at the end of the 2026-2027 school year unless terminated sooner by the Board of Trustees. The District Improvement Committee will annually monitor the plan and provide feedback to the Board on the effectiveness of the plan.

Innovations

Calendar (EB Legal, Local) (TEC §25.0811)

Under current Texas state law, “a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August” (TEC 25.0811).

Innovation Strategy School start dates is an area in which the district should be able to determine locally, and on an annual basis, what is best for our community. Having the ability to modify the start date of school allows us the flexibility to balance semester days, align classes to college courses, and ease transitions by beginning school on a shortened week.

Class Size Waiver (EEB Legal) (TEC §§25.111, 25.112, §25.113)

State law requires that a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade class. If classes are going to exceed this cap, a waiver is required from the Texas Education Agency. If approved, the district must then notify parents by “specifying the class for which an exception from the limit imposed by Section 25.112(a) was granted; (2) state the number of children in the class for which the exception was granted. (§25.113, 1-2).

Innovation Strategy Van Alstyne ISD is a growing district with two elementary campuses that are growing very quickly. As we look to build a new facility, the number of students per class is anticipated to exceed the 22:1 ratio dictated by law. In the event the cap of 22:1 is exceeded, the superintendent will report these findings to the board. If class sizes reach a 25:1 ratio, the superintendent will report to the board and the district will notify parents. Van Alstyne ISD is committed to keeping class sizes at or below the current 22:1 ratio. Therefore, we will continue to look at avenues to reduce class sizes, but need to have the flexibility to exceed this cap during the expansion process.

Teacher Certification (DK Legal, Local, Exhibit) (TEC §21.003, §21.053)

Van Alstyne ISD believes school district leadership should decide what is best for our students in determining the best suited candidate to teach certain positions. When a quality applicant is unavailable, it

occasionally becomes necessary for a teacher to teach outside their certified teaching field. In order for a teacher to teach outside their teaching field, the district is required to submit a request to TEA. TEA then approves or denies this request.

Innovative Strategy The district fully intends to maintain its commitment to hire certified professionals and will continue to seek employees with appropriate certifications. However, this exemption will permit district leadership to have the flexibility to establish its own criteria in hiring quality personnel who may have knowledge in hard-to-fill areas but lack the traditional certifications. The District would consider criteria, such as years of teaching/ work experience, qualifications, educational experiences, and industry certifications to qualify for a local (district) teaching certificate. All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught. In order to meet the criteria above, the following procedures would be implemented:

- a) The campus principal will make a request to the superintendent and make all credentials available.
- b) The Superintendent will determine whether it is in the best interest of the district to locally certify the individual.
- c) The Superintendent will notify the Board of Trustees prior to beginning employment.
- d) Our Board will be able to issue a school district teaching permit for an individual based on qualifications certified by the superintendent.

Before issuing a school district teaching permit to an individual, the district would ensure that the individual completed the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education (SBEC) rules. In addition, the individual would be required to complete assigned professional development activities, and work with a mentor teacher the first year of employment. The individual would be employed on an at-will basis with the district. In utilizing this process, parental notification of “inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers” under Sec. 21.057 would no longer be necessary.

Teacher Contract Days (DCB Legal, Local) (TEC §21.401)

Current education law in Chapter 21 requires a teacher who is on a 10 month contract to work an equivalent of 187 days.

Innovation Strategy In an attempt to align the teacher days to the 75,600 minutes required of students, the district would have the option to reduce the amount of contract days with no effect on teacher salaries.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation (DNA Legal, Local) (TEC §21.203, §21.351, §21.352, §21.354, §21.3541)

The state of Texas has issued a new teacher appraisal system called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) as well as a new principal evaluation system called the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). Under current law, “the employment policies adopted by a board of trustees must require a written evaluation of each teacher at annual or more frequent intervals” (TEC §21.203).

Innovation Strategy A committee initiated by the district would have the option to develop a local instrument and/or process to evaluate teachers and principals which meets the needs and goals of Van Alstyne ISD. This committee would also have the authority to determine the frequency of both teacher and principal evaluations. After development of the local instrument, the Board of Trustees would approve the use of the local instrument in lieu of the instrument directed by the Texas Education Agency.

Probationary Contracts (DCA Legal) (TEC §21.002, §21.102)

For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years. A one year probationary period is not a sufficient amount of time to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. Currently, contracts for Van Alstyne ISD employees occur in March, which demands that employment decisions must be made with very little time for evaluating teacher effectiveness and prior to state assessment results.

Innovation Strategy For experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to three years from the first day of employment with Van Alstyne ISD.

School Day Interruptions - Tutoring/ Test Prep Time (TEC § 25.083) (EC LEGAL, EC LOCAL)

The Texas Education Code limits the ability to 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 a parent otherwise provides written consent. While the District recognizes the importance of keeping students in regularly-scheduled classes, this restriction imposes limitations on otherwise critical support and teaching necessary for students who may be struggling or in need of more individualized support and assistance.

Innovation strategy VAISD will allow for a waiver of the ten percent cap when a student’s RTI

committee, 504 committee, ARD committee, language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC), accelerated instruction committee, or attendance committee determines such intervention outside of the regular classroom is necessary and appropriate. Parents must receive notification of the type of support or intervention the student will be receiving.

Suspension of Students in Grades Below 3rd (TEC §37.005) (FOB LEGAL)

The Texas Education Code restricts a campus administrator's ability to place a student in a grade below third in out-of-school suspension, unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property the student engages in certain dangerous conduct (weapons, violent offenses, or drugs). This limitation prohibits campus administrators from taking the sometimes necessary action of removing a student from the campus, regardless of age, for the safety of the student, other students, and/or the staff.

Innovation strategy To best serve the students of VAISD and provide a safe and high quality learning environment for all students, VAISD will allow campus administrators to exercise their own professional judgment when assigning discipline to students and place students of any grade in out-of-school suspension when the administrator determines that such action is necessary for safety and/or in order to maintain an orderly learning environment for all students. This flexibility will allow for school-based decision making and allow administrators to more effectively ensure the safety and security of all students and staff.

Ejection of Individuals from Facilities (Texas Education Code §37.105) (GKA LEGAL, GKA LOCAL, GF LOCAL, FNG LOCAL)

The Texas Education Code allows a school administrator, school resource officer, or school district peace officer to refuse to allow a person to enter on or may eject a person from district property if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and either (1) the person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person or (2) the person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and persists in the behavior despite being given a verbal warning.

Under current law, the administrator, resource officer, or peace officer must maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from a school facility that is issued, including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district's property, the district shall provide to the person written information explaining the appeal process. And, under the commissioner's rules adopted under the authority granted in the Education Code, the person refused entry or ejected from the facility must be given the opportunity to appeal the decision to the board of trustees within 90 calendar days. These additional, administratively burdensome requirements are impractical and potentially impossible to fulfill when an individual is dealing with an unruly individual. It is reasonable to believe that requesting such information could also escalate a situation that is already proving to be disruptive, and it is impractical to provide written notice of an appeal process at many events, like athletic events or public meetings, when the removal is only for

the immediate event and there is not ready access to forms or a computer or printer. Furthermore, the district already has a process for taking grievances to the board of trustees and there is no justified need for a unique process or timeline.

Innovation strategy VAISD administrators or school resource officers will retain their authority to refuse to allow a person to enter on or may eject a person from district property if they fall under the criteria above. However, the following requirements will no longer be applicable:

- Maintaining a written log of verbal warnings
- Providing written notice of the appeal process at the time of ejection
- Internet posting of the requirements and appeal process
- The ability to appeal the decision to the board of trustees within 90 calendar days.

Exemption from these requirements will allow the district to exercise appropriate authority and processes related to unruly individuals in an effective and efficient manner, but do so without conducting the unnecessary and administratively burdensome requirements and avoiding potential escalation of already difficult situations. If an individual is banned from returning to VAISD property for an extended period of time, the individual will receive written notification.

Revocation of Inter-District Transfers Before the End of the School Year (FDA Legal, FDA Local) (TEC 25.036)

Current law states 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.

Innovation Strategy Non-resident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfers may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student:

- displays persistent misbehavior
- is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), is placed in a disciplinary alternative education program, or is expelled
- is not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard or is frequently tardy
- regularly fails to do assigned work

In addition, if a student's parent(s) and the district do not have a good working relationship, the student may also be subject to immediate revocation of their transfer status.

Planning and Preparation (DL Legal)(TEC §21.404)

Texas Education Code dictates that each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating student work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day.

Innovation Strategy As a district we need to have the flexibility in developing teacher schedules and planning time. In order to meet the needs of our students, some teachers may have the need to have multiple preparation periods which adds up to a minimum of 45 minutes per day and 450 minutes per two-weeks. This flexibility is especially convenient for our staff who commute to multiple campuses.

Summary

The direction provided by this Local Innovation Plan is a culmination of collaboration between community members, parents, teachers, administrators and board members. This committee investigated the needs of our faculty and students and formulated a plan which allows our district to provide a premier education for all students. This plan provides an opportunity for the Van Alstyne community to make local decisions on the best way to educate our children. We are thankful for the support of the Van Alstyne Board of Trustees, local and state legislatures, and the Texas Education Agency for making this process possible.

The VAISD District of Innovation Plan will be in effect beginning with the 2022-2023 school year and continue through the 2026-2027 school year. During that time, additions or deletions can be proposed and approved by the District Improvement Team.