

Argyle ISD is a District of Innovation 2022-2027

Districts of Innovation and Exemptions from Provisions of the Texas Education Code under House Bill 1842.

Argyle ISD will continue to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas except for the specific exemptions outlined in this plan. If at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, as per the Districts of Innovation process, the district will reconvene the District of Innovation Planning committee to explore the request.

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations, in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. As a District of Innovation, Argyle ISD implements our strategic plan with the increased flexibility and freedom necessary to personalize learning experiences. An essential tenet of personalization is that every child experiences school differently. In a way, personalization provides a unique “school” for every child. Thus, we must have the ability to make important educational decisions for our students at the local level.

We must also be able to maximize our responsiveness to our district’s vision for the future. In the initial development of our strategic plan and this innovation plan, our community was involved throughout the process, giving ongoing feedback on what they wanted for their children in order to prepare them to be positive contributors to the world, a world that is constantly changing. As we begin to transform our community’s dreams for their children into reality, we must be positioned to maximize the opportunities and minimize the barriers that could otherwise preclude us from doing our best work on their behalf. A community forum was held before work began on the strategic plan. A public hearing was initially held before the Board approved the formation of a DOI committee.

Our strategic plan requires AISD to evolve and think about such critical systemic components as how we are organized, how we deliver instruction, how we recruit and retain top talent, how we engage and support our families, what instructional and extracurricular experiences we provide, and how we grow continually as a learning organization. Leveraging the limited freedom and flexibility afforded by the Districts of Innovation designation will ensure we are empowered to do so.

Under HB 1842, 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 the adoption of the plan...” Because AISD’s strategic plan and its local innovation plan are comprehensive and touch numerous areas in the TEC, and because AISD seeks to maximize local control of educational decisions for students, AISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute:

Uniform School Start Date (EB LEGAL) (TEC 25.0811)

This flexibility of the start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. This empowers AISD to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. In addition, by having flexibility with the start and end of the school year, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also let the AISD start classes as a short week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for staff members.

Teacher Certification (DK Legal, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (TEC 21.003)

AISD is committed to placing a dynamic instructional leader in every classroom. In order to best serve AISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard-to-fill, high-demand dual credit and career and technical/STEAM (Applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts and Mathematics) courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirement set forth in law. This exemption directly supports the move from highly qualified requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

By obtaining an exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, or internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. 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 (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, sign language, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

Probationary Contracts (DCA LEGAL) (TEC 21.102)

For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the District who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract will be issued for each of the first two years of employment with the District.

School Health Advisory Council (BDF Legal)(TEC 28.004)

Texas Education Code 28.004 states that a district shall establish a local health advisory council (SHAC) to assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction. [See EHAA regarding duties of the SHAC.] The law requires the Health Advisory Council to meet at least four times each year. Additionally, the law requires that the district post a meeting notice, meeting minutes, and a recording of the meeting.

Argyle ISD seeks exemption from the statutory provisions by consolidating the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law. This will allow for members of the District Leadership Team (district-level planning and decision-making committee) to address the district's health education needs. The District Leadership Team will meet four times each year. This exemption directly supports the District's commitment to health education and instruction without overburdening designated council members. The district will adhere to BQA (Legal) and BQA (Local) concerning the district-level planning and decision-making process.

Mandatory DAEP Placement FOC (LEGAL) [TEC 37.006(a)(2)(c-2)]

Texas Education Code 37.006(a)(2)(c-2) specifies that a student shall be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program if the student (c-2) "possesses, uses, sells, gives, or delivers to another person an e-cigarette, as defined by Section 161.081, Health and Safety Code.

Argyle ISD seeks exemption from the statutory provisions and will continue to use the discipline matrix in place at the campus level. The campus will partner with parents to provide education on the dangers of e-cigarettes and similar products.

Transfer of students who are children of Peace Officers Transfer of students who are children of Service Members

FDA (LEGAL) [TEC 25.0344]

Texas Education Code TEC 25.0344 requires that school districts transfer children of Peace Officers and Service Members who live in an adjoining district to the district and school of their choice.

Argyle ISD seeks exemption from the automatic transfer of the children of Peace Officers and Service Members, and will require them to follow the transfer policy as stated in Argyle ISD Board Policy FDA (LOCAL) Admissions and Interdistrict Transfer.

"In approving transfers, the Superintendent or designee shall consider availability of space and instructional staff, and the student's disciplinary history and attendance records."

Summary:

The direction provided by the District of Innovation Plan is an important step forward to ensure AISD develops and supports our students, employees, and families in a more personalized, more effective, and strategically aligned way. Moving our system toward the more personalized environment our students deserve will enable us to better prepare them according to their individualized needs and their unique passions, gifts, and talents. Through HB 1842, AISD will be positioned to leverage increased flexibility to make the best decisions for our children because we will be able to make them locally.

In most cases, activation of exemptions from the TEC will require the revision of AISD policies. AISD will implement an enhanced local policy development process that is rigorous, transparent, and inclusive of stakeholder input through the District Leadership Team. The district is developing and communicating a detailed Strategic Plan for implementation for the time period July 1, 2022- June 30, 2027. This District of Innovation Plan will be seamlessly implemented along with and as part of the Strategic Plan.

AISD personnel and community are grateful to the legislators who championed Districts of Innovation through HB 1842 and to Commissioner Morath and his team for expediting rules to help implementation. AISD is committed to the children of the community and pledges to implement this plan with their best interests in mind.