

Tuloso-Midway Independent School District



District of Innovation Plan

District Leadership Team

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Paul Mostella	President
Kimberly Boone	Vice-President
Stephen Hoelscher	Secretary
Jan Mostella	Vice-Secretary
Ben Benavides	Trustee
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Janice Sykora	Interim Superintendent
Dr. John White	Assistant Superintendent for Leadership & Learning
Patrick Hernandez	Assistant Superintendent for District Operations
Phillip Carroll	Chief Financial Officer
Holly Alderson	Director of Educational Services
Ana Elizondo	Director of Staff Services
Yolanda Alvaro	Director of Special Education
Trish Panknin	Director of Technology & Digital Learning
Kris O'Neal	Director of Athletics

Table of Contents

1	Title Page
2	District Leadership Team
3	Table of Contents
4	District of Innovation Planning Committee Members
5	Timeline of Events
6	Overview
7	Comprehensive Educational Program
8-16	Local Innovation Plan Summary

District of Innovation Planning Committee Members

Representation	Name	Role in TMISD
Primary School	Felicia Trevino	Teacher/Librarian
	Andrea Prichard	Teacher/GT
	Liliana Rivera	Parent
	Melissa Mata	Teacher/Bilingual
Intermediate School	Terry Ramon	Teacher
	Serena Carranza	Teacher
	Amber Watkins	Parent
Middle School	Lanisa Yates	Teacher
	Analisa Wood	Teacher
	April Patino	Parent
	Larissa Mares	Teacher/Special Education
High School	Laura Grey	Teacher
	Sarah Walker	Teacher
	Alexis Gutierrez	Parent
ACC	Camille Lister	Counselor/Teacher
District Members	Yolanda Alvaro	Director of Sp. Education
	Trish Panknin	Director of Technology
	Holly Alderson	Director of Educational Services
Community Members	Raymond Gonzalez	Community Member
Chairperson	Dr. John White	Assistant Superintendent for Leadership & Learning
Interim Superintendent	Janice Sykora	

Timeline of Events

Date	Event	Action Taken
12 October 2021	Administrative Team Meeting	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District of Innovation (DOI) Overview.
18 October 2021	Regular School Board Meeting	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOI Overview.
3 November 2021	District Planning Committee Meeting	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOI Overview. Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOI Potential Exemptions Claimed.
1 November 2021	Regular School Board Meeting	Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Potential DOI Exemptions Claimed Survey.
13 December 2021	Regular School Board Meeting	Resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TMISD School Board adopted Resolution to consider becoming a District of Innovation.
17 January 2022	Public Hearing Regular School Board Meeting	Public Hearing Notification Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TMISD School Board appointed the District Planning Committee to serve as members of the District of Innovation (DOI) Planning Committee to develop the District of Innovation (DOI) Plan.
15 February 2022	District of Innovation Planning Committee Meeting	Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write the DOI Plan
21 February 2022	Regular School Board Meeting	Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress toward becoming a District of Innovation.
9 March 2022	District of Innovation Planning Committee Meeting	Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize the DOI Plan.
22 March 2022	Administrative Team Meeting	Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Final Draft of DOI Plan.
25 March 2022	Required Notifications	TEA Notification Letter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TEA Commissioner has been notified of the DOI Plan being posted to the district website for 30 days and of the school board's intent to vote on the DOI Plan.
5 April 2022	Public Hearing	TMISD DOI Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOI Planning Committee presented and adopted final version of the proposed TMISD DOI Plan.
25 April 2022	Regular School Board Meeting	TMISD School Board adopted the TMISD DOI Plan.
26 April 2022	Required Notifications	TEA Notification Letter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TEA Commissioner has been given a copy of the adopted TMISD DOI Plan and DOI Checklist.

Overview

I. Definition

The District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislature through House Bill (HB) 1842 that gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to open enrollment charter schools, including exemption from many requirements mandated in the Texas Education Code. As a District of Innovation, Tulosso-Midway ISD will have:

- greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming;
- power to innovate and think differently.

HB 1842 does not allow for exemptions from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements or academic and financial accountability. This innovation plan was initially developed by a diverse group of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, community and business partners. The plan was shaped by additional input from principals, teachers, district staff, parents, and community members and designed to meet the needs of our community.

II. Term

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning 04-25-2022 and ending 04-25-2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the 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 HB 1842, the Board will nominate a 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. Tulosso-Midway ISD may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

III. Innovations

Tulosso-Midway ISD proposes flexibility in the following areas.

- I. [State Certification Requirements for Teachers and Other Educators](#)
- II. [Teacher Probationary Contracts](#)
- III. [Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator](#)
- IV. [Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Grade](#)
- V. [Class Size and Student/Teacher Ratio](#)
- VI. [Inter-district Student Transfers](#)

IV. Implementation

This Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which Tulosso-Midway ISD will operate, in order to provide additional student opportunities. Specific implementation plans have been developed by the appropriate campuses and departments. Adjustments to Board Policy will correspond with the adopted innovation.

Comprehensive Educational Program

The Local Innovation Plan is guided by and aligned with the School Board's Mission, Goals, Beliefs, and Priorities for Tuloso-Midway ISD.

A. Mission

The Tuloso-Midway Independent School District educates every student to be a lifelong learner, a person of integrity, and a positive contributor to society.

B. Goals

1. The percent of 3rd grade students that score meets grade level or above on STAAR Reading will increase from 49% in June 2019 to 60% by June 2024.
2. The percent of 3rd grade students that score meets grade level or above on STAAR Math will increase from 42% in June 2019 to 57% by June 2024.
3. The percent of graduates that meet the criteria for CCMR will increase from 63% in June 2019 to 74% by June 2024.
4. The number of students successfully completing a TEA-approved Industry Based Certification will increase from 4.5% in June 2019 to 51% by June 2024.
5. The number of students meeting TSIA(2) criteria in both reading and math will increase from 31% in June 2019 to 33% by June 2024.

C. Beliefs

- Student success is a shared responsibility of the family, school, and community.
- High achievement is the expectation for all students.
- Cultural diversity enriches the learning experience.
- Technology is an integral part of the learning process.
- Good character is a measure of success.
- Lifelong learning is vital for all members of the school community.
- Continuous improvement and adaptability are essential in our ever-changing world.

D. Priorities

1. Design and implement a rigorous instructional learning system that is data driven, fosters student engagement, and produces college and career-ready students.
2. Remain efficient, trustworthy, and transparent in our practices.
3. Align the budget process to achieve district goals.
4. Recruit, develop, and retain highly effective and engaging employees in a student-focused, family-first environment
5. Provide a safe, efficient, healthy, and orderly learning environment.
6. Foster an environment of respect, cooperation, and open communication with parents, community partners, and educational stakeholders.

Local Innovation Plan Summary

I. State Certification Requirements for Teachers and Other Educators

Texas Education Code

[§21.002 Teacher Employment Contracts](#)

[§21.003 Certification Required](#)

[§21.0031 Failure to Obtain Certification; Contract Void](#)

[§21.053 Presentation and Recording of Certificates](#)

[§21.057 Parental Notification](#)

Board Policy

[DBA\(LEGAL\)](#)

[DBA\(LOCAL\)](#)

Rationale for Exemption

The Texas Education Code requires a public school employee to hold appropriate certification for his or her current assignment unless the appropriate permit has been issued. This system does not take into account the unique instructional needs of the district, especially for Career and Technical Education (CTE) and innovative classes. This system also requires many professionals to complete certification requirements during their first year of employment as they complete alternative certification or transfer teacher certification from out of state. The current certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire professionals with industry experience to teach CTE courses and limit the ability to expand career readiness programs.

Proposed Innovation

Tuloso-Midway ISD will maintain its current expectation for employee certification and will make every attempt to hire highly-qualified teachers with appropriate certification for the position in question; however, where that is not possible, the District will have the flexibility to hire teachers who have knowledge and life experiences in the area and are able to perform the duties assigned to that position.

Currently, teachers hired under an Intern or on a (1) year Out of State Certification are only allowed one year to complete the certification requirements. Often, teachers struggle to complete this in the one-year time frame.

Intern/Out of State Certification Teacher Hirees District of Innovation Plan:

- Will be expected to complete all certification expectations within the 1 year allotted time.
- However, if the hiree does not complete certification within the one year afforded, conditions of their continued employment will be reviewed by the District of Innovation Certification Committee (see below) for a possible one-year extension.
- There is a maximum of two years that a teacher may be employed by the District without standard certification.

To the extent possible, this Committee will review each District of Innovation hiree as needed to determine if the applicant should be retained, despite not having completed their teacher certification. Ultimately, it will be the Superintendent's decision whether to recommend retention of the employee.

The District of Innovation Certification Committee shall be composed of:

- Campus Principal or Designee
- Human Resources Representative or District Designee
- Content Specialist or Coordinator

When a vacancy for a qualifying Career and Technical Education (CTE) non-core teaching position emerges, the District will ensure the vacant position has been advertised for, at minimum, two weeks, and applications will be gathered. The District will make every effort to hire individuals with appropriate certification in the position in question. If a certified, qualified applicant is not available to fill the position, non-certified, but otherwise qualified persons may be considered using the District of Innovation hiring criteria listed below.

CTE District of Innovation Hiring Criteria:

- Valid and Current Certification, Licensure, or Documented Expertise in the Subject; and
- Work Experience exceeding (2) years of full-time employment in the industry; and
- Associates Degree or higher from an accredited college or university (preferred).

All non-certified hires will be:

- Required to participate in at least 20 hours of professional development within the first year of employment. These hours will focus on classroom management, components of effective instruction, and differentiating instruction for learners.
- Assigned a mentor teacher with a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience who will assist them with their instructional planning.
- Required to meet the same professional development requirements as all certified teachers.

Furthermore, a certified classroom teacher may teach (1) CTE / innovative class period outside of their certification area if they:

- Seek to teach the course; and
- Have a minimum of 12 undergraduate or graduate school course credits in the content; or
- Hold documented experience in the content area for (1) year or more.

Individuals hired under the TMISD DOI Plan exemption will:

- Be issued a District of Innovation Permit;
- Receive a one-year, Non-Certified contract that must be renewed annually; and
- Be appraised using the same teacher appraisal system as required of all certified teachers.

The qualification to serve as a CTE classroom teacher outside of one's teacher certification content area shall be determined by the Principal in conjunction with Human Resources and the District Administrator for CTE. Notification of parents/students being taught by a teacher not certified as referenced in this section will not be required.

Note: Certification requirements for teachers of special education and bilingual students cannot be exempted.

II. Teacher Probationary Contracts

Texas Education Code

[§21.102 Probationary Contract](#)

Board Policy

[DCA\(LEGAL\)](#)

Rationale for Exemption

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. The district may recommend a second year probationary contract for experienced teachers to be approved by the Board of Trustees. An extension to a second-year probationary contract is to recognize that, at times, even experienced teachers new to the district need more than one year to learn the District's expectations for teaching, learning, and continuous improvement. A one-year probationary year may not allow the teacher or the administrator time to evaluate the teacher's capacity or ability to adopt the District's requirements.

Proposed Innovation

Tuloso-Midway ISD proposes an exemption from TEC §21.102 for the flexibility to extend the time period to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, administrators, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the District that have been employed as a teacher for at least five of the last eight previous years. This limited time is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. This also addresses the fact that contracts for teachers are renewed in early spring which demands that employment decisions must be made without the benefit of an entire school year to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Relief from TEC §21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a second-year probationary period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses newly hired in Tuloso-Midway ISD.

III. Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

Texas Education Code

[§37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator](#)

Board Policy

[FO\(LEGAL\)](#)

[FO\(LOCAL\)](#)

Rationale for Exemption

A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the Campus Behavior Coordinator. The person designated may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal. Duties include, but are not limited to, promptly notifying parents by telephone and in writing when a student is suspended, removed from DAEP or taken into custody by the law enforcement.

Proposed Innovation

This exemption is to only allow for the interpretation of the role and responsibilities of a Campus Behavior Coordinator to be fulfilled by multiple administrators as it is unrealistic to have only one person in this role to serve all students.

The District will:

- Maintain all the duties and responsibilities outlined for the Campus Behavior Coordinator and allow those duties to be fulfilled by more than one administrator per campus.
- Provide campuses the opportunity for campus administrators to develop rapport with students and to educate them on how to more effectively monitor their own behavior in the future. Each campus should have the freedom to designate more than one campus behavior coordinator to best meet the needs of their students.
- Address student discipline as delineated in the Student Code of Conduct.

IV. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

Texas Education Code

[§25.092 Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Grade](#)

Board Policy

[FEC\(LEGAL\)](#)

[FEC\(LOCAL\)](#)

Rationale for Exemption

Tuloso-Midway ISD believes that 90% is an arbitrary percentage emphasizing “seat time” over content mastery. By claiming exemption for TEC §25.092, the district can abstain from penalizing students who miss class time due to extra- and co-curricular activities, academic activities, and/or other extenuating circumstances, enabling the district to accommodate students with legitimate scheduling conflicts while reducing dropouts and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. Note that relief from TEC §25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. Furthermore, in no way does this exemption limit a teacher’s right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with TEC §28.214 nor does it restrict or alter a teacher’s right to assign grades in accordance with TEC §28.216. Regardless of whether any adjustments or changes are made, the minimum attendance for class credit or final grade laws, the District believes this issue to be a local decision as opposed to a state mandate.

TEC §25.092 currently restricts students that have been (1) denied credit based on attendance requirements, (2) at risk of dropping out of school, or (3) in need of a flexible schedule due to personal challenges (e.g., disability, work, pregnancy, age, etc.) access to high school remediation or credit-recovery coursework through engaging and varied modes of instruction and/or course duration.

Proposed Innovation

Tuloso-Midway ISD will offer an opportunity for students to accelerate credit attainment and mitigate credit deficiencies. Tuloso Midway will provide an alternate route to students who have not been successful in the traditional school due to special challenges. These challenges include but are not limited to parents or parenting students, over-age students, family hardships created by economic situations that result in the student having to work instead of attend school, being credit deficient for various reasons, and students with social-emotional challenges. Benefits of the innovation will include increased student access to innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement. Exemption from this requirement will provide the district with the flexibility it needs to consider instruction and credits in ways that make sense for students, especially our students who have unique needs.

Exemption from this requirement will also provide master course content in less than the traditional 18-week semester through a variety of modes of instruction including lecture, blended and online opportunities.

Eligible students must meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate 80% mastery prior to application for exemption.
- Have a history of 90% attendance that is now impacted by a catastrophic event (e.g., illness, injury, financial burden)
- Present an application for a *temporary* exemption from the 90% seat time requirement due to catastrophic event with a defined start and end date.

Submitted applications will be reviewed and approved or denied after presentation to the attendance committee. Campus attendance committee will consist of educators and administrators.

V. Class Size and Student/Teacher Ratio

Texas Education Code

[§25.111 Student/Teacher Ratios](#)

[§25.112 Class Size](#)

[§25.113 Notice of Class Size](#)

[§25.114 Student/Teacher Ratios in PE Classes; Class Size](#)

Board Policy

[EEB\(LEGAL\)](#)

Rationale for Exemption

TEC §25.111 requires the school district to employ the number of teachers necessary to maintain an average ratio of no less than one teacher for each group of 20 students.

TEC §25.112 requires Pre-kindergarten through 4th Grade classes to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio (22:1). If the ratio of 22:1 is extended the school board must approve a waiver within 30 days of class sizes being extended. The waiver request must then be filed with the Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency.

TEC §25.113 requires that a letter be sent to each parent notifying them that the class ratio has been extended and a waiver has been submitted.

Proposed Innovation

By seeking an exception from TEC 25.112, the district would have flexibility for all campuses and classrooms for the duration of the District of Innovation Designation and would not be required to seek waivers annually.

The District will strive to keep class sizes at or under 22:1 in grade PK-4 classes. If the ratio exceeds 22:1, it must have both principal and superintendent approval. No class in grade PK-4 should exceed 24:1. If the student/teacher ratio across the grade level reaches 24:1 for a semester, the school board will be notified along with the parents of students within that classroom. If classes are projected to continue to exceed the 24:1 ratio, placing another adult in the classroom and other alternatives would be considered in consultation with the Board of Trustees or as approved by the Board of Trustees.

This flexibility will allow the District to improve student success by not having to potentially split a class mid-year which disrupts instruction. In addition, TMISD will not be forced to hire new teachers not accounted for in the current Local Board's adopted budget.

By removing the cap, schools would be able to create smaller class sizes for Emergent Bilingual or inclusion students while other classes can increase to a higher ratio. Removing the 22:1 cap should increase student achievement at the campus.

VI. Inter-district Student Transfers

Texas Education Code

[§25.036 Transfer of Student](#)

Board Policy

[FDA\(LEGAL\)](#)

[FDA\(LOCAL\)](#)

Rationale for Exemption

Tuloso-Midway ISD maintains a transfer policy 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, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Transfer students are expected to follow the attendance requirements, rules, and regulations of the district.

TEC §25.036 has been interpreted to establish the acceptance of a transfer as a one-year commitment by the district. The District is seeking to eliminate the provision of a one-year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. On rare occasions, student behavior or other considerations warrant suspension (i.e., in-school or out-of-school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program (i.e., DAEP), or expulsion. In addition, student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standard. In these rare cases, Tuloso-Midway ISD seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment.

Proposed Innovation

This exemption is to allow transfer status to be revoked at any time for students who do not meet standards and requirements set forth in the Tuloso-Midway ISD Non-Resident Student Transfer Agreement and in the best interest of the District. This also includes students who do not attend required interventions (if needed).