

Kaufman ISD
District of Innovation Plan
2016-2017 through 2021-22

*HB 1842, of the 84th Legislative Session,
allows Texas districts to qualify as a District of Innovation.
Districts of Innovation are able to gain local control of certain operations
that are currently under the control of the Texas Education Agency.*

Goal 1: The Kaufman ISD Board of Trustees and Kaufman ISD Administration will make governance decisions based on the unique needs of the district’s students and community.

1-1. Kindergarten – Grade 4 Class Size

(TEC 25.112a-g) (TEC 25.113a-b) (EEB LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §25.112 requires districts to maintain a class size of 22 students or less for Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes. When any class exceeds this limit, the district must complete and file a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose.

TEC §25.113 requires district to notify parents of waivers or exceptions to class size limits. In many cases, the class has returned to a smaller student to teacher ratio before the waiver is even approved negating the need for this notice.

Innovation Strategies:

- a. KISD will begin each school year with enough teachers to establish a student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per K-4 homeroom class. In the event that any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees and to the parents of the affected students.

- b. In the event that two or more K-4th core classrooms reach 23:1 during the first grading period of the year, another teacher will be hired. If a K-4th core classroom reaches 23:1 after that time, the campus will notify the parents of the students in the classroom and inform them of the situation. A teacher may be hired at any time during the school year if the campus principal and superintendent agree that it is in the best interest of the students to do so.

- c. A TEA waiver will not be filed when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

1-2. School start date

(TEC §25.0811a) (EB LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August.

The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was hurting their tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

Innovation Strategies

- a. Kaufman ISD students will begin instruction no earlier than the 3rd Monday of August.

- b. Teachers work days will begin no earlier than the 2nd Monday of August.

1-3. Student Discipline

(TEC §37.007 (c), §37.010(b))

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §37 (noted above) states that a student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled. "Serious misbehavior" includes: (1) Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; (2) Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat; (3) Conduct that constitutes coercion, as defined by Penal Code 1.07; or (4) Conduct that constitutes the offense of: a. Public lewdness under Penal Code 21.07; b. Indecent exposure under Penal Code 21.08; c. Criminal mischief under Penal Code 28.03; d. Personal hazing under Penal Code 37.152; or e. Harassment, under Penal Code 42.07(a)(1), of a student or district employee. If the student is expelled, the board or its designee refers the student to the authorized officer of the juvenile court for appropriate proceedings under Family Code Title 3 (Juvenile Justice Code).

The Kaufman ISD DAEP has a strong and structured system of discipline. The Texas Education Code makes no allowance for students whose persistent misbehavior disrupts instruction and is detrimental to the educational environment to be expelled.

Innovation Strategies

- a. A student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented serious misbehavior (as defined above) while on the DAEP campus despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled.
- b. A student placed in a DAEP who engages in documented persistent misbehavior while on the DAEP campus, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.
- c. All students expelled from a DAEP campus will be given the option of attending night school one night per week for the term of his/her expulsion in order to gain and/or maintain as many credits as possible during the period of expulsion.
- d. Night school transportation will not be provided.

Goal 2: The Kaufman ISD Board of Trustees and Kaufman ISD Administration will make teacher certification decisions based on district qualifications that meet the unique needs of the district’s students and community.

2-1. Teacher certification - General

(TEC §21.003a) (DK LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. 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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district.

Innovation Strategies

- a. For grades 7-12, the campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request for local certification that will allow a certified teacher to teach one subject in a related field for which he/she is not certified. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses that would qualify this individual to teach the proposed subject. Emergency or financial situations creating the need for this assignment should also be noted.
- b. Whenever possible, lesson plans for the uncertified teacher will be created in partnership with certified teachers in the same field.
- c. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees at the first board meeting following the assignment.
- d. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

2-2. Teacher Certification: Bilingual Teachers

(TEC §21.003a) (TEC §21.057a-e) (DK LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

TEC §21.003(a) states that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the appropriate state agency. 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 request emergency certification from the Texas Education Agency and/or State Board of Educator Certification. This system is burdensome and does not take into account the unique financial and/or instructional needs of the district. In addition, this system (a) makes no provisions for an uncertified individual to be employed in a general education classroom as a teacher, and (b) makes no provisions for a teacher certified in a non-bilingual field to teach bilingual students on a full-time basis.

The passing rate for the state required bilingual certification test(s) is relatively low. Additionally, KISD has filed bilingual certification waivers with TEA for 16 years, due to the scarcity of certified teachers in this field. For the 2015-2016 school year, 16 more teachers were needed to serve the number of ELL who qualified for bilingual instruction in the district. The district currently employs multiple certified, bilingual teachers who have attempted and failed to pass the bilingual exams on multiple occasions.

TEC §21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year. All certification actions of the superintendent will be reported to the Board of Trustees in open session prior to the teacher's employment. The Board Agenda, Meeting, Minutes, and related reports are available to the public and will serve as parent notification.

Innovation Strategies

- a. An individual with certain qualifications who is not certified as a Bilingual teacher may be eligible to teach a bilingual class, provided district requirements are met. Campus principals may submit requests for local teaching certificates for bilingual teachers to the superintendent with the individual's credentials attached. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual possesses the knowledge, skills and experience required of a classroom teacher. In general, a person seeking bilingual local certification should have a bachelor's degree or equivalent, speak and write fluently in Spanish, and have previous successful classroom experience. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- b. The superintendent will report this action to the Board of Trustees in open session prior to the individual beginning any employment. The Board Agenda, Board Meeting Minutes, and related reports will suffice as parental notification.
- c. Local teaching certificates will expire at the end of each school year and may be renewed at the superintendent's discretion. An employee working under a local teaching certificate will not receive a contract but will be employed on an at-will basis. Teachers hired under a local teaching certificate that do not possess a state certificate will receive a maximum of 80% of a contract teacher's salary given the same years of experience.
- d. If currently certified teachers are used to fill bilingual positions a Chapter 21 contract will be issued.
- e. A teacher certification waiver, state permit applications, or other paperwork will not be submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

2-3. Probationary Contracts

(TEC 21.102) (DCA LEGAL)

Manner in which statute inhibits the goals of the plan

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. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom since teacher contract timelines demand that employment decisions must be made prior to state assessment results.

Innovation Strategies

- a. For experienced teachers, counselors, 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 two years from the last date of district employment.