

WEST OSO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



DISTRICT OF INNOVATION
EDUCATING STUDENTS TO BE FUTURE READY!

DISTRICTS OF INNOVATION AND EXEMPTIONS FROM PROVISIONS OF THE TEXAS EDUCATION CODE UNDER HOUSE BILL 1842

This plan is specific to the exemptions as outlined. The district intends to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas. 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, West Oso ISD will be able to implement 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. As we developed our Strategic Plan our community has been involved throughout the process, giving ongoing feedback on what they want for their children in order to prepare them to be positive contributors to the world, a world which is constantly changing. The same process will be followed as we prepare to be a District of Innovation. 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.

Our Strategic Plan requires WOISD to evolve and think radically differently 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 experiences we provide, and how we grow continually as a learning organization. To think differently, we must be able to respond differently. Leveraging the limited freedom and flexibility afforded by the Districts of Innovation designation will assure 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 adoption of the plan. . .” Because WOISD’s Strategic Plan and its local Innovation Plan are comprehensive and touch numerous areas in the TEC, and because WOISD seeks to maximize local control of educational decisions for students, WOISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute.

- *Uniform School Start Date*

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE

NAME		POSITION/ROLE IN DISTRICT OR COMMUNITY
1	Margaret Dechant	Associate Vice President for School and Community Relations Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
2	RJ Alvarado	West Oso ISD Executive Director of Safety, Security & Student Services
3	Korinne Caruso	Assistant Professor Del Mar College
4	Marcy Davis	West Oso Elementary School Principal
5	Belinda Gamez	West Oso ISD Director of Human Resources
6	Rhonda Garcia	West Oso ISD Assessment, Accountability & Advanced Academic Coordinator
7	Gregorio Garza	West Oso Elementary School Paraprofessional
8	Kimberly Hamling	West Oso Elementary School Teacher
9	Olga Mendez	West Oso ISD Business Manager
10	Dana Moore	West Oso Junior High School Principal
11	Kimberly Moore	Superintendent of Schools
12	Dr. Roana Rivera	West Oso ISD Special Education Director
13	Luis Rodriguez	Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend Career & Education Outreach Specialist
14	Pauline Teran	TCOM Regional Project Manager, AEP
15	Ann Vlach	Director of Programs and Operations, Education to Employment Partners

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE

DATE	ACTIVITY/ACTION
Tuesday September 19, 2023	Initial District Advisory Team meeting to discuss District of Innovation. Process, timeline, and review of proposed plan will be reviewed.
Monday October 23, 2023	Board Meeting Presentation Public Hearing to consider the proposed local Innovation Plan. Board votes to pursue the designation and appoints an advisory committee to develop the plan.
Monday October 30, 2023	District of Innovation committee meeting held
Tuesday October 31, 2023	Post District of Innovation Plan on WOISD website (30 days) West Oso ISD notifies TEA about proposed innovation plan.
Monday, December 4, 2023	District Advisory Team holds a public hearing. DAT votes to approve the posted Plan of Innovation after public meeting.
Monday, December 18, 2023	Board of Trustees vote to approve the District of Innovation Plan.
Tuesday, December 19, 2023	Approved District of Innovation Plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

The District of Innovation (DOI) concept was passed into law by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, which created Texas Education Code chapter 12A.

West Oso ISD is pursuing the DOI designation due to the following benefits:

- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to open enrollment charter schools, including exemptions from certain mandates including the uniform school start date and required minutes of instruction.
- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.

Autonomy: Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the Texas Education Agency, but approval is not required.

What is a “District of Innovation”?

An exciting opportunity! A District of Innovation (DOI) is a concept passed by the 84th Texas Legislative 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. To create a DOI, a school district must adopt an innovation plan for its district.

Why choose a District of Innovation?

Freedom to make decisions about West Oso ISD at the local level. A local school district may want to pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, budgeting, or other ideas. Essentially, innovation plans are about local control. West Oso ISD’s innovation plan will be unique to the school district and the community.

What impact could designation as a District of Innovation have on district policy?

Policy changes will correlate with innovation plan changes. As a DOI, revisions to local policies may be required as well as adjustments to legal policies to reflect that some legal provisions may be affected by the District’s innovation plan. As the innovation plan is sculpted by the committee, the District will evaluate necessary changes to West Oso ISD policies.

How long does an innovation plan stay in effect?

Hopefully as long as it benefits the District! Under current law, the plan may have a term of up to five years, and it may be amended, rescinded, or renewed during that time period.

Term

In accordance with TEC §12A.006, this Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan shall remain in effect for a period of five years (2024 through 2029 school years) unless terminated by the commissioner pursuant to TEC §12.A.008. Following adoption by the Board of Trustees, the West Oso ISD Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan for District of Innovation designation will be reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

EXEMPTIONS REQUESTED

UNIFORM SCHOOL START DATE

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Currently

Students may not begin school 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. The vast majority of districts applied for the waiver and would begin the 3rd Monday, some even going as early as the 2nd Monday. The Texas tourism groups lobbied to have this stopped because they believed it was detrimental to the 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.

Proposed

This flexibility of 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 us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and balance the amount of instructional time per semester. In addition, by having the flexibility in 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 WOISD 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 our staff.

The direction provided by this District of Innovation Plan is an important step forward to ensure WOISD 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, WOISD 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 WOISD policies. WOISD will implement an enhanced local policy development process that is rigorous, transparent, and inclusive of stakeholder input through the District Education Improvement Committee (DEIC). The district has developed and communicated a detailed implementation plan for the current Strategic Plan; a similar process will occur with the District of Innovation Plan and it will be seamlessly implemented as part of the Strategic Plan.

We 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. We are committed to the children of our community and pledge to implement this plan with their best interests at heart.