



Leander ISD Innovation Plan

Districts of Innovation Introduction

The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842 amending Chapter 12 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) by adding Chapter 12A entitled "Districts of Innovation". Districts of Innovation (DOI) provided traditional school systems flexibilities from some specific mandates, thus expanding opportunities for local control.

LISD Process

The Leander Independent School District Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to study the Districts of Innovation process on November 16, 2017. On December 7, 2017 the Board of Trustees unanimously approved a motion to form an Innovation Committee from the Districtwide Educational Improvement Council (DWEIC). In the same motion, the Board of Trustees outlined the parameters for the Innovation Committee, specifying that the only flexibility the district will seek is the start date of the academic school year. Currently, per TEC 25.0811, a district may not start instruction prior to the fourth Monday in August.

The Innovation Committee was formed on December 12, 2017 and is comprised of the Chief of Staff and fourteen members of the Districtwide Education Improvement Council (DWEIC). The fourteen members from DWEIC were randomly selected from volunteers to fill seven staff vacancies and seven parent/community member vacancies.

Innovation Committee Members:

Matt Smith, Chief of Staff
Angela Haas, Wiley Middle School
Jessy Hanshaw, Running Brushy Middle School
Monette McIver, Community Representative
David Morgan, Parent Representative
Amber Patrick, Reagan Elementary
Catherine Robinson, Steiner Ranch Elementary
Amber Ryder, Parent Representative
Chris Simpson, Leander High School
John Tomaszewski, Parent Representative
Susan Whisenant, Parent Representative
James Williams, Community Representative
Amanda Willim, Reed Elementary
Sylvia Wood, Rouse High School
Mei Xu, Parent Representative



Innovations - First Day of Instruction

Leander ISD proposes flexibility with its calendar, including exemption from TEC 25.0811. Several years ago, the Texas Legislature required that school start no earlier than the fourth Monday in August. This state law resulted in an imbalance in the school calendar, with the fall semester significantly shorter than the spring semester. The state mandated start of school also pushed graduation later, limiting student opportunities to enroll in local summer college courses due to the overlap of the LISD school year with the summer calendar of local colleges.

LISD Innovation Plan

Given the challenge with *TEC 25.0811 - First Day of Instruction*, the Innovation Committee recommends the development of an academic calendar that allows for instruction to begin prior to the fourth Monday of August. This flexibility would allow LISD to:

1. Develop the academic calendar to help achieve the LISD Vision and Goals.
2. Balance semesters more evenly and expand college and career learning opportunities.
3. Ensure the academic calendar allows for quality professional learning opportunities for teachers and staff.

Potential Benefits from LISD Innovation Plan

Students: A better balance of instructional days in the semesters may aid students in terms of subject knowledge and retention. In addition, students taking college level courses such as dual enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes may have additional time in the curriculum, thus increasing their chances to earn college credits. Beginning the school year earlier may also enable high school students the opportunity to pursue additional college courses immediately after the LISD academic year ends.

Staff: By improving the balance of semesters, teachers have a better opportunity to ensure students are mastering key concepts necessary in the grading periods for students. This allows LISD to examine the placement of strategic professional learning opportunities for staff.

Families: Through the LISD Innovation Plan, the Board of Trustees has more local control of the academic calendar. This allows the Board of Trustees and LISD Administration to design a calendar that better reflects the desires of the LISD community.

Term of Plan

The Innovation Plan may have a term of up to five years beginning from the date of adoption unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law.



LISD Districts of Innovation Timeline

November 16, 2017	The LISD Board of Trustees approved a resolution to initiate the Districts of Innovation process in LISD.
December 7, 2017	The Board of Trustees held a public hearing on Districts of Innovation and directed an Innovation Committee to study and develop a LISD Innovation Plan.
December 12, 2017	The Districtwide Educational Improvement Council (DWEIC) convened to hold a random drawing from the DWEIC volunteers for seven LISD staff representatives and seven Non-LISD staff representatives to serve with the LISD Chief of Staff on the Innovation Committee.
December 18, 2017	Two additional volunteers from the DWEIC parent/community group were selected through a random drawing to fill the final open positions on the Innovation Committee.
December 19, 2017	The Innovation Committee met to study and craft a LISD Innovation Plan based on the Board of Trustee parameters.
January 9, 2018	The Innovation Committee met a second time to continue the development of a LISD Innovation Plan.
January 11, 2018	The LISD Innovation Plan was presented to the Districtwide Educational Improvement Council (DWEIC).
January 12, 2018	The Innovation Plan is posted on the LISD website.
February 8, 2018	A Public Meeting was held on the Innovation Plan and DWEIC voted, passing with a vote of 57-15.
February 12, 2018	The Commissioner of Education was notified of LISD's intent to vote on the adoption of the Innovation Plan.
February 15, 2018	Board of Trustees voted on the adoption of the Innovation Plan, passing the motion 6-0 (one absent).*

***Update:** The Board of Trustees approve the LISD Innovation Plan on February 15, 2018, with the following motion: "I move the Board approve the LISD Innovation Plan as presented and specifically state that the District make no changes to this Innovation Plan without restarting the entire approval process, which includes a Board resolution, public hearing and a 30-day period of public comment."