

Local Innovation Plan

Katy Independent School District

District of Innovation



I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Legislative Session, permits Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and to obtain exemptions from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code that are available to open charter enrollment schools.

Katy ISD first became a designated District of Innovation on January 23, 2017 for a five year term beginning with the 2017-2018 school year and ending with the 2021-2022 school year.

On October 27, 2021, the Board of Trustees (“Board”) of the Katy Independent School District passed a Resolution to again initiate the process for designation as a District of Innovation. A public hearing was held during the same Board Meeting on October 27, 2021. At that time, employees, parents, students and community members had the opportunity to share their opinions regarding the District’s pursuit of a designation as a District of Innovation. The Board approved moving forward with the development of a Local Innovation Plan at the conclusion of the public hearing and appointed a Local Innovation Committee (“Committee”) to develop the Plan.

II. TERM

The term of the Local Innovation Plan (“Plan”) is for a period of five years, beginning at the start of the 2022-2023 school year and ending at the end of the 2026-2027 school year, unless the Plan is terminated or amended earlier by the Board in accordance with statute.

III. A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Plan’s comprehensive educational program is guided by and aligned with the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, District Beliefs, and District Goals of Katy Independent School District.

A. Vision Statement

Be the legacy.

B. Mission Statement

Katy Independent School District, the leader in educational excellence, together with family and community provides unparalleled learning experiences designed to prepare and inspire each student to live an honorable, fulfilling life – *to create the future*.

C. District Beliefs

1. We believe that all learners are unique and thrive through personalized learning experiences.
2. We believe that when ideas and individuals are respected, a culture of mutual respect is built that benefits all stakeholders.

3. We believe that collaboration which honors all voices, creates ownership that drives personal accountability.
4. We believe that being open-minded fosters continual improvement.
5. We believe that meaningful relationships are vital to learner success.
6. We believe that effective assessment is a continual process of giving and receiving meaningful feedback that advances learning and supports a system of accountability.
7. We believe that our success is not determined by a single, standardized assessment.

D. District Goals

1. All learning environments will foster engagement by integrating personalized learning experiences.
2. Katy ISD will develop systems where customized resources will ensure equity in response to the needs of a growing district with rapidly changing demographics.
3. Katy ISD will develop meaningful, effective assessments that inspire and inform students and educators toward continuous improvement.
4. Katy ISD will create and sustain best-in-class infrastructure to securely accommodate the current and next generation of digital content and tools for all stakeholders.
5. Katy ISD will attract and support high quality staff members to optimize their impact on student learning and create a culture of staff retention.
6. Katy ISD will address flaws in the state finance and student assessment systems in order to regain local control.
7. Katy ISD will develop intentional strategic partnerships which capitalize on the strengths, resources and talents of all stakeholders in order to engage the entire community.
8. Katy ISD will actively support the emotional well-being of all learners.

IV. INNOVATIONS

1. School Start Date - TEC §25.0811

A. Current Law

Current law prohibits a school district from beginning instruction for students prior to the fourth Monday in August.

B. Benefit of Exemption

Having the flexibility to establish an earlier start date will enable the District to better balance the amount of instructional time available in each semester, providing classroom teachers the opportunity to deliver more equitable learning experiences for students in the fall and spring semesters. Waiver of the required school start date will allow time at the conclusion of the school calendar for instruction prior to summer administration of state assessments required for graduation and will continue to allow seniors to graduate early. Finally, it will also enable the District to give intermittent holidays throughout the

school year, including a full week off at Thanksgiving to alleviate the loss of funding due to student absenteeism.

C. Local Guidelines

The District will continue to seek input from community members, staff, parents, students and the district advisory council when determining calendar selections to recommend for Board approval.

2. Campus Behavior Coordinator - TEC §37.0012

A. Current Law

A person at each campus must be designated to serve as the campus behavior coordinator who is responsible for maintaining student discipline which includes notification to parents of in-school or out-of-school suspension or placement in an alternate education program.

B. Benefit of Exemption

Exempting from this requirement and allowing shared responsibility of discipline among campus principals and assistant principals will minimize the loss of instructional time and ensure the safety of all students as well as provide increased opportunities to build relational capacity with parents and students. All campus administrators engage in comprehensive professional learning to support the implementation of the Katy ISD Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct. Assigning existing professionals the responsibility for maintaining discipline and for notifying parents of disciplinary removals and/or arrests is a much more cost effective means of fulfilling the duties of the campus behavior coordinator; however, the Local Innovation Plan Committee recognizes the importance of discipline oversight to ensure compliance and consistency.

Additionally, Katy ISD employs behavior intervention specialists and Licensed Specialists in School Psychology (LSSP) that can assist students with behavior or discipline issues, decisions regarding student behavior and discipline are often collaborative in nature.

C. Local Guidelines

The District will designate all campus principals and assistant principals to fulfill discipline and behavior duties. Each campus will assign one administrator as the lead contact for student discipline to review data and trends as well as engage in additional professional development.

3. Student Suspension - TEC §37.005

A. Current Law

Students may only be assigned to a maximum of three days of out-of-school suspension at any one time.

B. Benefit of Exemption

Campus administrators work diligently to maintain a safe and orderly learning and working environment. Students who engage in substantial disruptive behavior or threatening behavior may need to be removed from the campus for longer than three days. During an extended suspension campus administrators can fully investigate, set up internal supports or safety plans in addition to determining if placement at a disciplinary alternative education program is appropriate.

C. Local Guidelines

The Superintendent will create internal procedures to ensure that use of extended out-of-school suspension is approved through a district-level committee in order to increase consistency and reduce disproportionality. The district-level committee will review the required considerations of intent, self-defense, discipline history, disability, if the student is under the conservatorship of DFPS or is homeless.

The District will continue to follow Texas Education Code §37.005 regarding restrictions related to suspending students below grade three or who are homeless.

4. Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade - TEC §25.092

A. Current Law

A student in any grade level from kindergarten through grade 12 may not be given credit or a final grade for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered.

B. Benefit of Exemption

Katy ISD believes that a student's mastery of content should be at the forefront of determining class credit or a final grade rather than "seat time." Students obtain absences through co-curricular or extracurricular absences, illnesses, or other extenuating circumstances. Student effort to maintain mastery of content even when there are singular or significant absences should be recognized.

C. Local Guidelines

The Superintendent will develop administrative procedures that monitor student absences to identify students who are struggling with mastering the content of the course due to excessive absences. Procedures will include a process to provide intervention and support for students who are academically struggling. A student's absences in conjunction with a student's mastery of content should be used to determine class credit or final grade as long as the student does not fall below 75% attendance. Consideration for awarding credit for legitimate reasons for student absences through this exemption would aim to reduce the number of student dropouts and increase the number of qualifying graduates. Attendance review committees will still be required to hear student petitions for class credit when students fall below 75% attendance.

Unexcused absences will continue to be monitored in accordance with compulsory attendance laws.

Flexibility within this exemption does not constitute any substantive exemption from compulsory attendance or UIL rules, nor does it limit or modify a teacher's ability to assign or determine grades in accordance with TEC §28.0214 and 28.0216.

5. Excused Absences - TEC §25.087(b-2)

A. Current Law

Attendance laws limit the number of excused absences for visiting institutions of higher education to two visits during a student's junior year and two visits during the student's senior year.

B. Benefit of Exemption

Students are encouraged to show interest to explore career paths after graduation. The limitation of only two days per junior and senior year does not allow enough time for students to travel to an out-of-state location or some in-state locations. Additionally, Katy ISD aims to support career paths that show interest in trade schools as well as joining the military. This exemption would allow greater flexibility for students to explore potential future careers.

C. Local Guidelines

Katy ISD will establish local guidelines to determine the number of days that a student may receive as an excused absence for visiting an institution of higher learning, a technical school visit or a visit to the military.

6. Certification Required - TEC §21.003

A. Current Law

Law states that "a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B."

B. Benefit of Exemption

Exemption from certification requirements for hard to fill positions allows the District to recruit and hire qualified individuals that would normally not be able to fulfill specific teaching roles. The District would benefit through flexible hiring or staffing in the areas of:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Dual credit courses
- Junior high staffing for employees who only hold an elementary (kindergarten through sixth grade) or secondary (seventh through twelfth grade) certification
- Content area teaching certifications required for special education courses where instructional content is significantly modified by an ARD committee

C. Local Guidelines

The Superintendent, after consultation with campus and department leadership and the Human Resources department, will certify candidates that meet local credential guidelines. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to the individual beginning employment.

Exemption from the Texas Education Code §21.003 will require the District to review its policies at DBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the policies at DK (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

Candidate Qualifications may include a combination of:

- Professional work experience;
- Formal training and education;
- Relevant industry licensure, certification, or registration; and/or
- Any combination of work experience, training and education, or industry credentialed related to the subject matter he/she will be teaching.

Internal Professional Development:

Teachers hired under this exemption will be provided with necessary training, professional development, mentorship or other supports to ensure successful acclimation to their role in the district.

Criminal History:

All candidates must complete the criminal background check in compliance with State Board for Education Certification (SBEC) rules mandated by TEC §22.0833 for a non-certified employee. Teachers employed under this certification program will receive pedagogy and classroom management training.