
DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN



REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

2021-2026

(2021-2022 school year and conclude at the end of the 2025-2026)

BOARD APPROVED 04/19/2021

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I. District of Innovation Overview

The District of Innovation concept, passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

- **Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.
- **Customization:** Districts can create an innovation plan for a level of school (e.g., only high schools), grade level, or a single campus.
- **Autonomy:** Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.
- **Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from mandates such as:
 - o School start date
 - o 90% attendance rule
 - o Class-size ratios
 - o Use of planning and preparation periods
 - o Instructional minutes
 - o Professional development
 - o Some financial requirements
 - o Assessments
 - o Site-based decision making processes (to the extent required by state law)

The Refugio Independent School District believes this level of local control will add flexibility and empower our district to think and act in innovative ways.

II. District of Innovation Term

The term of Refugio ISD's Innovation Plan will be five years. The plan will become effective upon approval of the Board of Trustees. This plan will go into effect with the 2021-2022 school year and conclude at the end of the 2025-2026 school year unless eliminated by the Refugio ISD Board of Trustees. The District Innovation Committee will annually assess the effectiveness of the plan. If recommendations are made to amend the plan it would be done as required by law that includes public posting, approval by the committee, and the Board of Trustees.

III. District of Innovation Timeline

Date

2/27/2020

- 1) Process begins- Refugio ISD Board of Trustees approves a resolution to begin the process of becoming a District of Innovation (DOI). The board

2/25/2021

- 2) Following the resolution, a Public Hearing by the school board is conducted and opportunity given for attendees to respond.

2/25/2021

- 3) The school board formally decides to pursue the opportunity to become a District of Innovation and appoints a DOI committee to begin the work on the DOI plan.

- 4) Plan committee meetings to work on plan.

3/4/2021

- a. The DOI Committee held their first meeting at 4:00 pm in the Refugio ISD District Learning Center. The members will develop a comprehensive plan of educational programs with innovations and a list of education code provisions for which Refugio ISD is seeking exemption.

3/9/2021

- b. The DOI Committee holds their second meeting at 4:00 pm in the Refugio ISD District Learning Center. The Committee will further evaluate proposed areas of innovation.

3/10/2021

- 6) The final version of the proposed plan is posted on the District's website. The plan will remain posted on the District's website for 30 days.

- 3/10/2021 7) Board notifies the Commissioner of intent to adopt a plan and includes a copy of the proposed plan.
- 4/19/2021 8) The REIC district-level committee will hold a public hearing at 4:00 pm in the Refugio ISD District Learning Center to approve the final version of the proposed plan. A majority vote will be needed to submit the plan to the school board for consideration.
- 4/19/2021 9) The Refugio ISD Board of trustees will meet during a regularly scheduled Board meeting to consider and approve the final DOI Plan as submitted by the DOI committee by a 2/3 majority vote.
- 4/20/2021 10) Within 15 days of board approval the district notifies the Commissioner of Education that the plan has been approved and will provide notice of the approved exemptions. (notification includes Figure 19 TAC §102.1307(d) list and a link to the adopted plan.
- 4/20/2021 11) Refugio ISD posts the approved plan on the district website in a prominent location.

TERM OF APPROVED PLAN: Five Years (2021-2022 school year and conclude at the end of the 2025-2026)

IV. District of Innovation Committee Members

Refugio Elementary

Malaise Williams, Teacher
Melissa Linney, Teacher
Vicki Hanson, Teacher

Refugio Junior High School

Hannah LaFond, Teacher
Karen Lawson, Teacher
Nancy Keyes, Teacher

Refugio High School

Alicia Pursch, Teacher
Julianne Wood, Teacher
Meaghan Hunt, Teacher
Justin Southern, CTE Teacher

Non-Teaching Professional

Judy Klare
Angie Galvan, RES Counselor
Samantha Meza, Counselor

Administration

Melissa Gonzales, Superintendent
Lisa Herring, Director of Finance (Ex-Officio)
Dr. Linda F Garza, School Improvement
Coordinator (Ex-Officio)
Twyla Thomas, Principal (Ex-Officio)
Olivia DeLeon, Asst. Principal (Ex-Officio)
Chris Hawthorne, Principal (Ex-Officio)
Brandon Duncan, Principal (Ex-Officio)

Business Representatives

Gerald Morgan
Debra Moore
Cody Walker

Community Members

Celeste Walker

RISD Parents

Shanna Bass
Kelley Solomon

V. Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation Plan

INNOVATION DISTRICTS

AF
(EXHIBIT)

RESOLUTION TO CONSIDER DESIGNATION AS DISTRICT OF INNOVATION

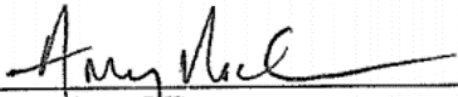
WHEREAS Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district's most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

WHEREAS the Refugio School District's most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

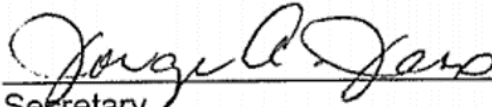
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Refugio School District by adoption of this resolution initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a District of Innovation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held within 30 days to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that within 30 days of the public hearing the Board of Trustees of Refugio School District shall appoint an innovation plan committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 27 (date) day of February (month), 2020 (year), by the Board of Trustees.



Presiding Officer



Secretary

VI. District of Innovation – Areas of Focus

Calendar (EB Legal, Ed. Code 25.0811):

Currently, students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August.

Teacher Contract Days (DCB Legal, DCB Local, TEC 21.401):

Current education law in Chapter 21 defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Teacher Certification (DK Legal, DK Local, TEC 21.003, 21.053):

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 submit a request to TEA.

Probationary Contracts (Subchapter C; TEC 21.102):

Current education law moves experienced teachers who are new to employment with a district to a term contract in year two, following a one-year probationary period.

Minimum Attendance for Class Credit (TEC 25.092):

Currently, state law requires students to attend class 90% of the school days in order to earn credit.

Class Size Waivers Exemption (TEC Sections 25.111, 25.112 and 25.113) (EEB Legal)

Currently, grades K-4 classes must be kept at a 22 to 1 teacher ratio. When class sizes exceed this limit, districts must submit a waiver to TEA.

District-Level and Site-Based Decision-Making (TEC 11.252, 11.253):

Currently, state law requires the establishment of both district-level and campus-level site-based decision-making committees for the purpose of guiding staff in the improvement of student performance in order to attain state standards.

A. First Day of Instruction

Exemption from: TEC Section 25.0811 and EB Legal –

A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

This law restricts flexibility in the design of annual instructional calendars to fit the needs of the school district and community.

Innovation Strategy

The flexibility to begin instruction earlier in the month of August will enable the district to develop a calendar that best meets the needs of the students in Refugio ISD. We would propose moving the start date up one week, or no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August. This would allow the first and second terms to be closer in the number of days of instruction. By moving the proposed start date up earlier it would also align our schedule better with our partnering institute of higher education. Teachers would begin no earlier than the 1st Monday of August.

B. Teacher Contract Days

Exemption from: TEC Section 21.401 and DC Legal –

Current education law defines a teacher contract as a 10-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

A recent change in school law has converted required student instructional and attendance days to 75,600 minutes. This change has resulted in the possibility of decreasing the number of days' students must attend school, but does not address a similar need to decrease the number of days required for teachers *if* a district deems it appropriate to do so.

Innovation Strategy:

The reduction in contract days at our current salary schedule would make us more competitive. This plan would increase the daily rate of pay for our teachers, enhance teacher recruitment, and improve teacher morale.

C. Teacher Certification

Exemption from: TEC Section 21.003, 21.053 DBA Legal–

Currently, if the district is unable to find a certified teacher or a teacher is teaching a subject outside their certification, the district has to submit a request to the TEA. The TEA then must either approve or deny this request.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

The statutory certification requirements limit the ability of the district to hire teachers in highly specialized or hard-to-fill areas

Innovation Strategy

An individual with industry experience could be eligible to teach a CTE course through a local certificate. It would also benefit the district to have the flexibility to employ individuals with college teaching experience on a part-time or full-timer certification. It would also benefit the district to have the ability for a certified teacher to be able to teach a subject outside their certification area and will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach crafts of trades and vocations (such as welding, fine arts, etc.) in career and technical courses if teachers are not available to teach these courses.

The principal would submit a request to the superintendent with the individual's credentials. The superintendent would then either accept or deny the request. The superintendent would then report to the board this action prior to employment. The employee would be at-will and the local certificate would be for one year.

All candidates would be carefully considered to ensure the individual has sufficient education and expertise to provide instruction necessary to meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the course(s) to be taught.

Before issuing a school district teaching permit to an individual, the district would ensure that the individual completed the criminal background check in compliance with the State Board of Education (SBEC) rules.

Please note: the district's special education and bilingual teachers will continue to be SBEC certified.

D. Probationary Contracts

Exemption from: TEC Section 21.102 – DCA Legal

Currently, 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.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

This limited time period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. The time restriction may, also, negatively impact a newly hired teacher who may struggle with circumstances beyond his/her control, and who needs an additional year to demonstrate capabilities.

Innovation Strategy:

Provides the flexibility to extend the time period will permit the district the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors, librarians, 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. This provides sufficient time for teacher mentoring and increases retention rates by allowing campus administrators sufficient time to observe teacher effectiveness.

E. Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade (90 Percent Attendance Rule)

Exemption from: TEC Section 25.092 – FEC Legal – Currently, state law requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on seat time rather than based on mastery of the content.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances are penalized by having to make up absences in the evenings or on Saturdays.

Innovation Strategy:

Allows the district flexibility to determine make-up time on an individual basis. It allows students who may miss class due to participation in extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances, but who demonstrate an understanding of concepts and mastery of content not to be penalized. It promotes student engagement, allows counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules. It will in no way limit or modify a teacher’s right to assign grades or to determine final grades.

F. Class Size Waivers

Exemption from: TEC Sections 25.111, 25.112 and 25.113 EEB Legal

Currently, grades K-4 classes must be kept at a 22 to 1 teacher ratio. When class sizes exceed this limit, districts must submit a waiver to TEA. If approved, the district must notify parents by specifying the class for which the exception was granted.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

Prohibits local control to manage increases in class sizes and removes district flexibility based on financial and staffing needs

Innovation Strategy

The class size exemption would allow the district the flexibility based on financial and staffing needs to adjust class size accordingly. Our goal will remain to have small class sizes. However, in the event that it is necessary to exceed this ratio, the superintendent will report to the board of trustees.

G. District-Level and Site-Based Decision-Making

Exemption from: TEC 11.251, 11.252 and 11.253 – BQB Legal BQA Local

Currently, each school district shall have a district improvement plan that is developed, evaluated, and revised annually, in accordance with district policy, by the superintendent with the assistance

of the district-level committee established under Section 11.251. The purpose of the district improvement plan is to guide district and campus staff in the improvement of student performance for all student groups in order to attain state standards in respect to the achievement indicators adopted under Sections 39.053©(1)-(4).

TEC 11.253 states that each school district shall maintain current policies and procedures to ensure that effective planning and site-based decision-making occur at each campus to direct and support the improvement of student performance for all students.

Manner in which the law inhibits:

Currently, a list of compliance measures outlined in TEC 11.251, 11.252 and 11.253 has become burdensome and has caused the campus and district plans to lose relevance. As the list of requirements has grown over the years the process has become bureaucratic in nature, and more a matter of compliance than a practical and meaningful exercise that should involve thoughtful planning.

Innovation Strategy:

Refugio ISD will replace the former district/campus level site-based decision-making committees and processes with a strategic planning process. The district already has established a strategic planning committee to develop goals and action plans for a variety of initiatives. Refugio ISD will expand this concept to include campus level strategic planning committees.

Under the District of Innovation plan, the list of requirements in the district and campus improvement plans will be replaced with a strategic planning process. Compliance items included in TEC 11.251, 11.252 and 11.253 will be replaced by relevant strategic plan components that will directly address the unique needs, talents, and interests of the community and staff of Refugio ISD. The targeted focus will be directed by the vision and mission statements of the district, as well as specific goals developed by the Board of Trustees.

A major benefit will be the consolidation of two separate processes currently in place in Refugio ISD into one meaningful, relevant, and practical plan that will be tailored specifically for each campus and the district with the purpose of empowering and impacting student achievement, and developing partnerships between the school district and our community.

VII. **Figure: 19 TAC §102.1307(d)**

Innovation District

Please submit, on district letterhead, a letter to the commissioner of education stating the date that the board of trustees adopted a resolution to develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the district as an Innovation District.

A local innovation plan must be developed for a school district before the district may be designated as an Innovation District. A local plan must provide for a comprehensive educational program for the district, which may include:

- 1) Innovative Curriculum
- 2) Instructional Methods
- 3) Community Participation
- 4) Governance of Campuses
- 5) Parental Involvement
- 6) Modifications to the school day or year
- 7) Provisions regarding the district budget and sustainable program funding
- 8) Accountability and assessment measures that exceed the requirements of state and federal law; and
- 9) Any other innovations prescribed by the board of trustees.

A local innovation plan must identify requirements imposed by the Education Code that inhibit the goals of the plan from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. The local innovation plan should specify the manner in which a particular statute inhibits one or more goals of the plan. Please use the form below to check the statutes specifically identified in your district's local innovation plan as inhibiting a goal of the plan. Checking a specific statute does not necessarily indicate eligibility for an exemption from all subsections of the statute. The local innovation plan controls with regard to the specific exemptions adopted by a district. The form below provides a reporting mechanism to fulfill the reporting requirements of the statute. Entire sections of code may not be eligible for exemption and each district should consult its legal counsel in developing its innovation plan.

Exemptions claimed for an Innovation District apply only to the specific provision of the Texas Education Code (TEC) cited, which may or may not be governed by a separate legal requirement. The exemption does not relieve the district of any requirement imposed by other state or federal law or a duty imposed under federal regulation, grant compliance, agency rule applicable to a charter school or a local legal requirement. Each district should consult its legal counsel to ensure adoption of necessary local policies to ensure compliance with all applicable legal requirements.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of exemptions

Term of Plan: School Years 21-22 to 25-26

Plan applies to: Entire District
 Campus (list) _____
 Other (please describe) _____

A. Chapter 11 – School Districts

Subchapter D. Powers and Duties of Board of Trustees of Independent School Districts

- §11.1511 (b)(5), (14) Specific Powers and Duties of Board
- §11.162 School Uniforms

B. Subchapter F. District-Level and Site Based Decision-Making

- §11.251 Planning and Decision-Making Process
- §11.252 District-Level Planning and Decision-Making
- §11.253 Campus Planning and Site-Based Decision-Making
- §11.255 Dropout Prevention Review

C. Chapter 21 – Educators

Subchapter A – General Provisions

- §21.002 Teacher Employment Contracts
- §21.003 Certification Required
- §21.0031 Failure to Obtain Certification; Contract Void

Subchapter B – Certification of Educators

- §21.051 Rules Regarding Field-Based Experience and Options for Field Experience and Internships.
- §21.053 Presentation and Recording of Certificates
- §21.057 Parental Notification

Subchapter C – Probationary Contracts

Subchapter D – Continuing Contracts

Subchapter E – Term Contracts

Subchapter H – Appraisals and Incentives

- §21.352 Local Role
- §21.353 Appraisal on Basis of Classroom Teaching Performance
- §21.354 Appraisal of Certain Administrators
- §21.3541 Appraisal and Professional Development System for Principals

Subchapter I – Duties and Benefits

- §21.401 Minimum Service Required
- §21.402 Minimum Salary Schedule for Certain Professional Staff
- §21.4021 Furloughs

- §21.4022 Required Process for Development of Furlough Program or Other Salary Reduction Proposal
 - §21.403 Placement on Minimum Salary Schedule
 - §21.4031 Professional Staff Service Records
 - §21.4032 Reductions in Salaries of Classroom Teachers and Administrators
 - §21.404 Planning and Preparation Time
 - §21.405 Duty-Free Lunch
 - §21.406 Denial of Compensation Based On Absence for Religious Observance Prohibited
 - §21.407 Requiring or Coercing Teachers to Join Groups, Clubs, Committees, or Organizations: Political Affairs
 - §21.408 Right To Join or Not To Join Professional Association
 - §21.409 Leave Of Absence for Temporary Disability
 - §21.415 Employment Contracts
- Subchapter J – Staff Development**
- §21.451 Staff Development Requirements
 - §21.452 Developmental Leaves of Absence
 - §21.458 Mentors

D. Chapter 22 – School District Employees and

Volunteers Subchapter A – Rights, Duties, and

Benefits

- §22.001 Salary Deductions for Professional Dues
- §22.002 Assignment, Transfer, or Pledge of Compensation
- §22.003 Minimum Personal Leave Program
- §22.006 Discrimination Based on Jury Service Prohibited
- §22.007 Incentives for Early Retirement
- §22.011 Requiring or Coercing Employees to Make Charitable Contributions

E. Chapter 25 – Admission, Transfer, and Attendance

Subchapter C – Operation of Schools and School Attendance

- §25.0811 First Day of Instruction
- §25.0812 Last Day of School
- §25.083 School Day Interruptions
- §25.092 Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade

Subchapter D – Student/Teacher Ratios; Class Size

- §25.111 Student/Teacher Ratios
- §25.112 Class Size
- §25.113 Notice of Class Size
- §25.114 Student/Teacher Ratios in Physical Education Classes; Class Size

F. Chapter 37 – Discipline; Law and Order

Subchapter A – Alternative Setting for Behavior Management

- §37.0012 Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator
- §37.002 Removal by Teacher

Chapter 44 –Fiscal Management Subchapter B –

Purchases; Contracts

- §44.031 Purchasing Contracts
- §44.0331 Management Fees Under Certain Cooperative Purchasing Contracts
- §44.0352 Competitive Sealed Proposals
- §44.042 Preference to Texas and United States Products
- §44.043 Right To Work
- §44.047 Purchase or Lease of Automated External Defibrillator

Subchapter Z – Miscellaneous Provisions

- §44.901 Energy Savings Performance Contracts
- §44.902 Long-Range Energy Plan to Reduce Consumption of Electric Energy
- §44.903 Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs in Instructional Facilities
- §44.908 Expenditure of Local Funds

G. Chapter 45 – School District Funds

Subchapter G – School District Depositories

- §45.205 Term of Contract
- §45.206 Bid Or Request for Proposal Notices; Bid and Proposal Forms
- §45.207 Award of Contract
- §45.208 Depository Contract; Bond
- §45.209 Investment of District Funds

H. Other

Please list any additional exemption required for your Innovation District Plan: