

# Kress Independent School District Plan of Innovation

Adopted on  
July 11, 2017

**Districts of Innovation and Exemptions from  
Provisions of the Texas Education Code under House Bill 1842**

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. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of students and community.

As a District of Innovation, Kress ISD will be able to implement our District Improvement 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.

KISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute.

- **Uniform School Start Date**
- **Minimum Minutes of Instruction and School Day Length**
- **Class Size Ratio**
- **90 Percent Attendance Rule**
- **Teacher Certification**
- **Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator**
- **Length of Teacher Contracts**

## **District of Innovation Committee**

The members of the District Innovation Committee are the members of Kress Independent's District Educational Improvement Committee.

|                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Kristi Crump</b>     | <b>Parent</b>                |
| <b>Will Fish</b>        | <b>Community Member</b>      |
| <b>Angie Gauntt</b>     | <b>Counselor</b>             |
| <b>Gloria Guzman</b>    | <b>Community Member</b>      |
| <b>Yvonne Hernandez</b> | <b>Teacher</b>               |
| <b>Kenny Hughes</b>     | <b>Community Member</b>      |
| <b>Sarah Langston</b>   | <b>Teacher</b>               |
| <b>Shawn Langston</b>   | <b>Elementary Principal</b>  |
| <b>Jonathon Ramirez</b> | <b>Teacher</b>               |
| <b>Sheri Warren</b>     | <b>Teacher</b>               |
| <b>Mary Walker</b>      | <b>Teacher</b>               |
| <b>Chassidy Woodard</b> | <b>Teacher</b>               |
| <b>Leah Zeigler</b>     | <b>Superintendent</b>        |
| <b>Phil Zolman</b>      | <b>High School Principal</b> |

## Timeline

### Thursday, April 13, 2017 - Board Meeting

- Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation.

### Thursday, May 16, 2017 - Public Hearing and Board Meeting

- Public Hearing - Conduct a public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation.
- Board Meeting
- Approve a motion to pursue local “District of Innovation” plan.
- Board of Trustees approve the members of the District of Innovation (DOI) Committee.

### Conduct District of Innovation Committee Meetings

- May 23, 2017 - 1<sup>st</sup> District of Innovation Committee Meeting
- May 25, 2017 - 2<sup>nd</sup> District of Innovation Committee Meeting meet to write the plan.
- June 1, 2017 Post the proposed District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days
- Notify Commissioner of Education of the board’s intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan
- July 11, 2017 - District of Innovation Public Hearing and Board Meeting
- July 10, 2017 - DOI Committee conducts a Public Hearing regarding the proposed DOI Plan July 10, 2017
- DOI Committee takes final vote to approve the DOI plan July 10,2017
- July 11, 2017 7:00 pm - Board Meeting
- July 11, 2017 District of Innovation Committee presents final committee approved District of Innovation Plan to the School Board
- Board consider/ approve the District of Innovation plan - 2/3rd vote to approve July 11, 2017
- Notify the Commissioner of Education of the board approval of the DOI Plan July 12, 2017

July 13, 2017 - Begin the process of updating all policy changes with Texas Association of School Boards (TASB)

## **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.

Kress 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.

### **Term**

In accordance with TEC § 12A.006, this Comprehensive Local Innovation Plan shall remain in effect for a period of five years (2017 through 2022 school years) beginning August 2017 and ending August 2022 UNLESS terminated by the commissioner pursuant to TEC § 12.A.008. Following adoption by the Board of Trustees, the Kress 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**

(TEC § 25.0811) (TEC § 25.0812)

Board Policies affected [EB(LEGAL) EB(LOCAL)]

### **Currently**

Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August or end prior to May 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 KISD 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.

This Plan gives the District the flexibility to change the date of the first and last days of school.

Local control of the instructional calendar affords the District the following advantages:

- It allows the District to determine locally, on an annual basis, what start and end dates best meet the needs of students, the school, and the community.
- It allows for the alignment of the school calendar with college semester exams and STAAR/EOC timelines
- It allows the District to better align its start date with the start date of colleges, which the District uses for dual credit courses
- It allows the District to look at starting classes in the middle of the week as opposed to the first day of the week in order to provide a short first week of school, which can ease the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school.
- It gives the District the ability to better balance the amount of days in each semester.

### **Minimum Minutes of Instruction and School Day Length**

(TEC §25.081 , TEC §25.082 )

Board Policies affected [EC(LEGAL) EC(LOCAL)]

#### **Currently**

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction or 7 hours each day (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity.

The bill also requires a district to provide a minimum of 210 minutes per day to student's eligible for Pre-Kindergarten. KISD is currently on a one-year waiver (2016-17) that allows us to offer less than 210 minutes for the Pre-Kindergarten program. This is the final year the Pre-Kindergarten waiver is allowed.

#### **Proposed**

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. This Plan gives the District the flexibility to reach the annual goal of 75,600 minutes of instruction for funding purposes but without being limited by the "420 instructional minutes" and "seven hour day" requirements of the statutory provisions listed above.

Local control of the length of the school day affords the District the following advantages:

- It provides the District with the flexibility needed to alter the length of the school day on selected days, as locally determined to be necessary or beneficial to the District and its stakeholders.
- It gives the District a significant amount of local control over scheduling and would, in turn, give the District added flexibility to work non-instructional days into the schedule to allow for teachers to analyze student data and engage in targeted, relevant, professional development.

Kress ISD does not have any intention to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without

specific purpose, but reserves the right to shorten days as may be required or permitted by law and as the Board determines to be in the best interest of the District and its students, staff, and the community. To the greatest extent possible, "early release" days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the District calendar, which is approved by the Board and published and distributed to stakeholders in advance of the school year and continuously published using school media. The District would not schedule early release days under this exemption that were shorter than 240 minutes (4 hours), except in accordance with law.

### **Class Size Ratio**

**(TEC § 25.112, TEC §25.113)**

Board Policies affected [BFLEGAL) EEB(LEGAL)]

### **Currently**

Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. Many times soon after the waiver is submitted, students move out of the district and we are below the 22:1 ratio.

### **Proposed**

While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, this must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff, and the best teacher-to-student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. We do not believe it has a negative effect when a district adds only one or two more students. Many times it is not the number of the students but the makeup and chemistry of the classroom which influence the learning environment. Most importantly, research clearly shows it is the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on student learning, not absolute class size.

In the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten – 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes the following procedures would be followed.

1. A Texas Education Agency waiver will not be necessary.
2. The principal will notify the superintendent of enrollment over 22 in any class (k-4<sup>th</sup> grade) and the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval.
3. The campus principal will notify the parents of the students in the classroom of the enrollment ratio.

This exemption only allows KISD the local control over class size ratios, not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements. Communication with parents is key in protecting the intent of the ratio requirements.

This plan also emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passions and needs. This grants flexibility in class size at all times-regrouping for success, small groups, large groups, etc. It also works to minimize paperwork requirements in order to free up time to place additional focus on student success. An exemption in meeting Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.112, will allow the ability to group students based academic, social, and emotional needs without adding ongoing filings of waivers when the need arises.

## **90 Percent Attendance Rule**

**(TEC§ 25.092)**

Board Policies affected [FEC(LEGAL)(LOCAL)]

### **Currently**

State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on *content mastery*.

### **Proposed**

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow KISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they've attended a certain number of school days.

The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. KISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption.

This exemption supports overarching goals in the District Education Improvement to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alters existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.92 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

## **Teacher Certification**

**(TEC § 21.003)**

Board Policies Affected [DBA( LEGAL) (LOCAL), DK (LEGAL)( LOCAL) (EXHIBIT)]

### **Currently**

Currently, section 21.003 of the Texas Education Code states, "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." In the event the District cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or where a teacher will teach a subject outside of his or her certification, the District must submit a request to TEA.



The current certification requirements inhibit the District from hiring professionals with industry experience to teach Career and Technology Education (“CTE”), Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (“STEAM”), and foreign language courses.

Within the focus area of providing engaging and challenging learning the KISD District Education Improvement Plan sets forth specific goals under the initiative to improve college and career readiness options. Three of these goals – 1) development of post high school plans, 2) improvement of workforce skills, and 3) expansion of dual credit programs are inhibited by the Texas Education Codes shown above. These laws limit the District’s ability to hire teachers to fill hard-to-fill, high demand dual credit, career and technical/STEAM (applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts & Mathematics) and hard to fill content area teachers courses when high quality certified teachers are not available.

### **Proposed**

Kress Independent School District is committed to placing the right teacher in every classroom. In order to best serve KISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of dual credit courses, and career and technical course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements for such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law.

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements for career and technical teachers, the District will have the flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors, university professors in specific content areas in order to afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades and vocations to teach the crafts of those trades and vocations (such as welding, fine arts, etc.) in career and technical courses if certified teachers are not available.

- The campus principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a certified teacher to teach one subject out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the certified teacher possesses which qualify this individual to teach this subject.
- The district will have the flexibility to hire credentialed community college instructors or university professors in specific content areas in order to afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. The campus principal will submit the request to the superintendent to allow the hiring of the credentialed community college instructor or university professor.
- An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual’s credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. Local teaching certificates will be for one year. The employee will be at-will.

The District shall establish local criteria for training and locally certifying individuals rather than

adhere strictly to mandates outlined in Section 21.053. In doing so, parental notification of “inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers” under Section 21.057 would no longer be necessary. The exemption would also allow internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area to be considered. This exemption directly supports the move from “highly qualified” requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

**Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator  
(TEC § 37.0012)**

Board Policies Affected: [FO(LEGAL)(LOCAL)]

**Currently**

Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

**Proposed**

The proposal is for the District to seek exemption from the statute requiring each school to have a designated campus behavior coordinator. The relationships that are established between the campus administrator, counselor, student, and parent are the foundation for promoting and maintaining positive behavior. Utilizing a local district process allows the administrator who currently has a relationship with the parent and student to be the person to make parental contact. The administrator notifies the parent of discipline or behavior concerns, rather than having contact by a campus behavior coordinator, who may not know all the students, providing a much more individual and personal approach.

**Length (number of days) of Teacher Contracts  
(TEC § 21.401)**

Board Policies Affected [DC(Legal)]

**Currently**

Under current education law, a teacher’s contract is 10-months or more specifically, 187 days in length.

**Proposed**

Kress ISD would like to have the flexibility to set its teacher contract days from a range of 177 to 187 days with no negative effect on teacher salaries. This reduction in contract days would make our salaries more competitive.

- This plan will increase the daily rate of district teachers.
- This plan should enhance our ability to recruit teachers to our district.
- This plan will provide our teachers more flexibility during the summer months to find professional development opportunities that, personally, benefits them.
- In each year of the plan, the exact number of days (up to 187) a teacher’s contract may be will be determined by the calendar planning committee. The minimum number of days a 10-month teacher’s contract will be is 177 days, and the maximum it will be is 187 days.

## **Summary**

The direction provided by this District of Innovation Plan is an important step forward to ensure KISD 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, KISD 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 KISD policies. KISD 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 Kress Independent District's Education Improvement Plan.; a similar process will occur with the District of Innovation Plan and it will be seamlessly implemented as part of the Kress Independent District's Education Improvement 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.

