Arlington ISD District of Innovation
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Introduction

In August 2026, the Arlington ISD Board of Trustees adopted the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. This plan was collaboratively developed with valuable input from students, staff, parents, and community stakeholders across the district and established system priorities to guide our focus over the next five years.
These include:



With the intended emphasis on these five priorities, the district examined the opportunities provided in the Texas Education Code Chapter 12A to accelerate the innovative work of the strategic plan in order to increase opportunities and educational benefits for our students, staff, and families.

Overview

In the spring of 2015, the 84th Legislative Session passed HB 1842 creating TEC Chapter 12A. This law was designed to promote the development and implementation of innovative practices
by providing traditional independent school districts with increased flexibility through statute exemptions typically reserved for open enrollment charter schools. Districts who choose to capitalize on this opportunity must collaboratively develop a local innovation plan that articulates the statute from which the district is seeking an exemption and the identified innovative practice that will be implemented as a result. Although statues pertaining to academic and financial accountability, graduation requirements, and the teaching of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are ineligible for exemption, local innovation plans provide districts with a variety of benefits including:

- Increased local control
- Increased flexibility to meet the unique learning needs of the students being served including accelerated learning

- Relief from unfunded state mandates that divert local tax payer dollars to practices that have minimal impact on student achievement
- Increased opportunities to be innovative and transformational in programming design to ensure that students are prepared for college, career and citizenship

Proposed Innovation: Board Meeting Operations

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §26.0071

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Current law requires board meetings to be held outside typical work hours. Arlington ISD seeks flexibility to hold certain meetings (e.g., superintendent evaluations or interviews) during the workday when necessary.
- Current law requires public comments at the beginning of board meetings. Arlington ISD seeks flexibility to place public comments on the agenda immediately before the related agenda item is addressed, and prior to any action being taken.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- The Arlington ISD Parental Engagement Policy will be revised to align with these revised practices.

Proposed Innovation: Class Size Ratio

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §25.111
- TEC §25.112
- TEC §25.113
- TEC §25.114

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Pre-Kindergarten - 4th Grade class sizes are required to remain at or below a 22:1 student-to-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 completed at the start of a school year as well as any time a child enrolls in an elementary school at a grade level where the ratio is already maintained according to staffing projections the previous year.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Arlington ISD seeks to locally monitor and maintain appropriate class sizes without the necessity of waivers. This exemption allows Arlington ISD to utilize a more flexible class size approach based on student needs and the time of year. Arlington ISD staffing ratios for Pre-Kindergarten - 4th Grade are based on a 22:1 student-to-teacher ratio. Additional teacher allocations for Pre-Kindergarten - 4th Grade will be considered once a grade level reaches a student-to-teacher ratio of 24:1, and parents will be notified if class sizes exceed this threshold. This exemption would allow minimal disruption to the learning and address population fluctuation.

Proposed Innovation: Designation of Campus Behavior Coordinator

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

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- TEC §37.0012

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Flexibility with regard to the designation of a campus behavior coordinator allows for greater collaboration when addressing the social and emotional needs of students. School discipline is best administered and managed within a team concept and should not be limited to one school administrator being responsible for contacting parents and maintaining documentation requirements

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- By eliminating the designation of a single campus behaviour coordinator at each campus, Arlington ISD will be able to create a system where the duties are shared among the campus administrative staff. The district may delegate the designation of the Campus Behaviour Coordinator to campus administrators (all campus principals and assistant principals) to fulfill the discipline and behavior duties. All certified campus administration will serve as joint behavior coordinators and work collaboratively with campus and district staff to promote campus goals.
- Any responsibility or duty of parental/guardian notification shall be exercised by appropriate school officials. This will allow Arlington ISD to increase efficiency and continue with a collaborative approach with students and parents since campus administrators shall notify parents/guardians of disciplinary infractions/actions either in person, by telephone, or by providing the student with a hard copy of the disciplinary referral.

Proposed Innovation: Expenditure of Local Funds

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §44.908

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- The state requires local funds from vending machines, rentals, gate receipts, or other local sources of revenue to be related to the district's education purpose. Arlington ISD exempts itself from this section and shall determine its own local use for such funds while still complying with the law.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- The expenditure of local funds will be determined by the District's administrative regulation and accounting procedures. The exemption streamlines the process by allowing local discretionary funds to be deployed faster without waiting for policy revision cycles.

Proposed Innovation: Failure to Obtain Certification; Contract Void

TEC CODE REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC § 21.0031

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Arlington ISD proposes exemption from the requirement that the determination whether to terminate; suspend the employee with or without pay; or retain employees whose certificates have lapsed to be left to the administration and not the board of trustees.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- This will expedite the decision when a certificate lapses as needed.

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Proposed Innovation: First Day of Instruction

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §25.0811

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- The state requires that school districts not begin instruction for students for a school year prior to the fourth Monday in August. This creates challenges, including significant disparities in the number of instructional days provided in each of the two school year semesters as well as potential challenges related to the effective pacing of instruction within the school calendar. This exemption will provide the opportunity to develop a school calendar that promotes improved balance in the number of instructional days each semester in order to positively impact the academic performance and outcomes of students. This would provide instructional flexibility, stakeholder input, and alignment with postsecondary calendars.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- The Arlington ISD calendar committee will convene annually to collaboratively develop and recommend a district calendar that is designed to promote the effective delivery of classroom instruction and school/district operations.

Proposed Innovation: Grievance Policy

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC § 26A.001
- TEC § 26A.002
- TEC § 26A.003
- TEC § 26A.004
- TEC § 26.011

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Senate Bill 12, from the 89th Legislative Session, requires districts to change their local policies on grievances in a variety of ways.
    - Our previous process required that someone filing a grievance file it within 15 days of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint. Senate Bill 12 allows for the filing of a grievance within 60 days. As a practical matter, the longer one waits before filing a formal complaint after an event happens, the more difficult it becomes to investigate the matter. We feel that 60 days is too long of a window.
    - Our previous process required the grievance to identify the substantive issues within a decision which they are appealing and limit the appeals to those particular issues.
    - Our previous process allowed for an appeal within 10 days of the grievance being filed. Senate Bill12 allows for the filing of an appeal up to 20 days after receiving the written decision at each level. We feel that 20 days hampers a good faith effort to investigate thoroughly in trying to resolve the complaint. The more time that elapses between the actual event and each step in the process, the harder it is to investigate.
    - Our previous process required that the complaint remain the same throughout all levels, that no new complaints be added to the original filing. Senate Bill 12 allows additional claims to be added to the original complaint throughout the process. We feel that this creates a moving target in terms of a focused, good faith effort to investigate the original matter and work toward a

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resolution. Grievant may still file multiple grievances and when appropriate the grievances can still be consolidated.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Relief from this statute allows the district to revert to previous grievance policy processes, which has worked well for all stakeholders in the past, and will permit Arlington ISD to expedite addressing parent concerns in a more timely fashion.

Proposed Innovation: Incentives for Early Retirement

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §22.007

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Relief from this statute will permit the district to proactively identify those teachers receptive to early retirement incentives and initiate earlier recruitment efforts to fill vacancies prior to the beginning of the new school year.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- It is not the intention of the district to pressure or leverage teacher retirements. It is rather to identify those personal retirement decisions as early as possible through incentives to provide adequate recruitment periods prior to the new school year. The Arlington ISD Human Resources team will partner together with the Office of School Leadership to collaboratively develop and recommend a system that will be equitably applied across the district.

Proposed Innovation: Last Day of Instruction

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §25.0812

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- The state requires that school districts may not schedule the last day of school for students before May 15. This requirement conflicts with the academic calendar for students attending classes at specialized schools such as Arlington Collegiate High School, Arlington College and Career High School, P-TECH programs and the STEM Academy. This exemption provides students attending specialized campuses the ability to align their schedules with the calendar of Tarrant County College (TCC) or other institutions of higher education. Alignment with institutions of higher education would allow students to accelerate academically by completing courses during non-traditional semesters, which may include, winter-mester, May-mester and summer sessions. Students would also have an opportunity to earn college credits, applicable industry credentials and/or an associate degree while completing high school enabling them to pursue courses at a four-year university.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Students enrolled at an Early College High School (including P-TECH) or at the STEM Academy campuses as full-time college students (11th and 12th grade) would be able to align their academic calendar with the institution of higher education.
- Eleventh and 12th graders would have the opportunity to advance academically by taking mini-mester courses in the winter, May and/ or summer. It could also give students access to special programs (occurring during mini-mesters) to be developed in partnership with four year universities.

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- Students enrolled in ninth and 10th grade would follow an academic calendar similar to that of the Arlington ISD.
- There would be no impact on teacher contracts as ECHS, P-Tech and STEM Academy 11th and 12th graders are taught by college faculty. ECHS, P-Tech and STEM academy faculty instructing ninth and 10th graders would still remain on a 187-day contract.

Proposed Innovation: Minimum Attendance for Class Credit of Final Grade

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §25.081
- TEC §25.092

INNOVATIONS WILL APPLY TO DISTRICT APPROVED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, VENTURE HIGH SCHOOL, THE STEM ACADEMY AT MARTIN HIGH SCHOOL, EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS, P-TECH, DUAL-CREDIT, AND CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS AS WELL AS ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS APPROVED BY THE DISTRICT IN THE FUTURE THAT SUPPORT FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING, ACCELERATED LEARNING OR CREDIT ATTAINMENT BASED ON DEMONSTRATED MASTERY:

- TEC §25.081 does not grant transformational programs (e.g. Arlington Collegiate High School, STEM Academy, Venture High School, etc.) the flexibility to schedule students in college, university or accelerated credit recovery courses according to academic need or student interest. Instead, students are bound to seat time for courses that may or may not be available to them at optimum time periods during the day or term (i.e., fall, spring or summer). Students may consequently not be able to attain maximum college semester credit hours, certification or high school credit attainment in a time frame commensurate with their high school graduation plan.
- TEC §25.092 currently restricts students that have been (1) denied credit based on attendance requirements, (2) at risk of dropping out of school, or (3) in need of a flexible schedule due to personal challenges (e.g., disability, work, pregnancy, age, etc.) access to high school remediation or credit recovery coursework through engaging and varied modes of instruction and/or course duration.
- The Venture High School program will offer an opportunity for students to accelerate credit attainment and mitigate credit deficiencies. Venture provides an alternate route to students in a self-paced, Blended Learning setting for students in need. Benefits of the innovation will include increased student access to the Venture program resulting in increased graduation rates, improved instructional quality through the implementation of transformational instructional methodologies, flexible school schedule, etc. Students will acquire credits through mastery rather than a traditional campus semester framework.
- Transformational programs including, but not limited to, the Career and Technical Center, STEM Academy, Early College High Schools, Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools, Teacher Academy, Homebound Program and Workforce Dual Credit will award class credit based on content mastery rather than seat time. Exemption from this requirement will provide students with opportunities to:
    - Have increased flexibility in their course schedules and access to college-level coursework/learning
    - Enroll in college classes that do not meet the 75,600 minutes' seat requirement
    - Master course content in less than the traditional 18-week semester through a variety of modes of instruction including lecture, blended, online or asynchronously in a virtual setting as seen fit and manageable by school principals

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IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Apply flexible school day standards similar to Optional Flexible School Day, which allows the district to use uniquely identified PEIMS coding for average daily attendance (ADA) reporting purposes.

Proposed Innovation: Minimum Minutes of Instruction

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC Code §25.081

INNOVATION FOR PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMMING:

- The state requires 75,600 minutes for full-day programming. Due to this requirement, all half-day programs, such as prekindergarten and PPCD are required to provide a minimum of 37,800 minutes of instructional programming annually. In order to ensure that teachers are provided statutory planning and duty-free lunch periods, adequate instructional minutes are not available to meet this statute without extensive adjustments to the length of the school day or annual calendar. By applying this exemption, pre-K students will continue to have access to the high quality pre-K half-day programming currently implemented in both the morning and afternoon sessions

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Maintain viable and innovative pre-K programming across the District within the Board adopted calendar and established instructional day

Proposed Innovation: Nonrenewals

TEC CODE REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC § 21.203
- TEC § 21.206
- TEC § 21.207
- TEC § 21.208
- TEC § 21.353

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Arlington ISD proposes exemption from the requirement to give notice 10 days before the last day of instruction and to move the deadline to notice on or before June 30. The board of trustees will also alter the procedures and deadlines and be given sixty (60) days to hold a hearing on a proposed nonrenewal and issue a decision, unless the parties mutually agree to an extension. Notice of the proposed nonrenewal may be via hand delivery, registered email, or certified mail return receipt requested. The board of trustees may designate a board committee or an attorney licensed to practice law in this state to hold the hearing on behalf of the board, to create a hearing record for the board's consideration and action, and to recommend an action to the board. For those proposed for nonrenewal who do not timely appeal, the board will not have to take further action and the proposal will automatically become a final decision to nonrenew the contract. Appraisals will be optional but not required if not relevant to the reason for the proposed nonrenewal.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- This additional time to make the proposal will also permit the employee to complete the school year without disruption to education and let the campus make its contract recommendation be based on the full year and not the month before classes end. Providing additional time will permit the parties to have adequate time to prepare for a hearing, provide records requested, and to hold the hearing in a less

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expedited manner. For those not appealing there will not need to be an additional meeting to take a final action.

Proposed Innovation: Planning and Prep Time

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §21.404
- TEC §21.4045

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Under the current statute, teachers cannot voluntarily relinquish their planning period. This exemption would be used in the following circumstances:
    - Scheduled collaborative team (e.g., PLC): This planning takes place during the school day;
    - Supervision of special education students: The special education adult transition program engages students with community based employment related activities. Teachers in this program supervise students when they are off site;
    - Summer school: This will maximize instructional time while students are present during summer school programs longer than 4 hours per day;
    - Innovative learning time: Time varies when providing flexibility in virtual learning and blended learning programs for students;
    - Participate in student intervention activities or non-teaching activities (e.g., attending an ARD);
    - Permit teaching an additional section/course (if appropriate) for a stipend during that former planning period;
    - Any other appropriate professional duty that enhances learning and/or security.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- This exemption allows Arlington ISD to utilize a more flexible approach to teacher planning and preparation time and best serve student needs.

Proposed Innovation: Probationary Contracts

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §21.102

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Under current guidelines, 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. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Relief will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for up to two years for experienced teachers, counselors or nurses newly hired in Arlington ISD. This will allow Arlington ISD to better evaluate a new employee's effectiveness.

Proposed Innovation: Teacher Certification

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC § 21.003
- TEC §21.055

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- TEC § 21.053

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

The certification requirements can and do restrict the district's ability to hire professionals in specialized fields, such as language, CTE, Special Education, etc. Flexibility with regards to these requirements affords the district the following advantages:

- The ability to select from a large and more experienced candidate pool
- The ability to maximize the employee pool to meet students' learning and/or intervention needs
- The ability to provide professionals to teach specialty courses
- The ability to establish realistic requirements for professionals transitioning to education from other careers
- The ability to hire teachers transitioning from other states/US territories
- The ability to hire teaching staff with different certifications, or those not currently certified in accordance with TEA standards

THIS EXEMPTION WILL...

- Provide unique learning experiences to students across grade levels
- Allow classroom instruction led by a highly proficient teacher, regardless of certification
- Increases access to instruction that can provide students career opportunities that reflect the global nature of life in the 21st century
- Provide for the matriculation of students in specialized programs and additional learning opportunities

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Develop local certification criteria
- Strategic plan
- Specialized program offerings

Arlington ISD supports the certification requirements of House Bill 2 (TEC § 21.0032). This exemption will not apply to teachers of foundation curriculum courses (English language arts and reading, mathematics, science, and social studies), who will hold the appropriate certification as required by law. The district will use this flexibility only where state law permits, such as CTE, languages other than English, fine arts, and other specialized courses.

Proposed Innovation: Termination of Probationary Contracts

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC § 21.103(a)

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- Arlington ISD proposes exemption from the requirement that the Board must give notice of termination at least ten days before the last day of instruction. Moving the date to on or before June 30 of each year permits the probationary contract teacher the complete school district to show they have earned the extension of a term or additional probationary contract.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- This additional time will also permit the teacher to complete the school year without disruption to education and let the campus make its contract recommendation be based on the full year and not the month before classes end.

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Proposed Innovation: Transfer of Student

TEC CODE(S) REQUIRING EXEMPTION:

- TEC §25.036

INNOVATION FOR THE ARLINGTON ISD:

- The district maintains a transfer policy under Board Policy FDA(LOCAL) requiring nonresident students wishing to transfer to file a transfer application each school year. In approving transfer requests, the availability of space and instructional staff, availability of programs and services, the student's disciplinary history records, work habits, and attendance records are also evaluated. Arlington ISD is seeking to eliminate the provision of one year commitment in accepting transfer applicants. At times, student behavior warrants suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program or expulsion. In addition, the student attendance may fall below the TEA truancy standards. In these rare cases, the district seeks exemption from the one-year transfer commitment

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Local-nonresident students who have been accepted as inter-district transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the Superintendent at any time during the year if the student is assigned discipline consequences of suspension (in or out of school), placement in a disciplinary alternative program, or expulsions.
- Students not meeting the state's 90% attendance standard may also be subject to immediate revocation of the transfer status.

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