



**Arlington**  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
*More Than a Remarkable Education*



District of Innovation  
Local Innovation Plan

## **2016-2021 *Achieve. Today. Excel Tomorrow.* Strategic Plan**

In January 2016, the Arlington ISD Board of Trustees adopted the 2016-2021 *Achieve Today. Excel Tomorrow.* strategic plan. This plan was collaboratively developed with valuable input from stakeholders across the district and established system priorities with an intentional focus to foster innovative instructional programming opportunities for students.

### **Vision**

The Arlington Independent School District will be a premier school district and a leader in education.

### **Mission**

The mission of the Arlington Independent School District is to empower and engage all students to be contributing, responsible citizens striving for their maximum potential through relevant, innovative and rigorous learning experiences.

### **Goal**

100% of AISD students will graduate exceptionally prepared for college, career and citizenship.

### **Performance Objective Categories**

- Academic Achievement
- College Readiness
- Workforce Readiness
- Leadership, Citizenship and Responsibility

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

## Overview

In the spring of 2015, the 84<sup>th</sup> 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 statutes pertaining to academic and financial accountability, graduation requirements and the teaching of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills 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; and
- Increased opportunities to be innovative and transformational in programming design to ensure that students are prepared for college, career and citizenship.

## Our Process

On Oct. 6, 2016, the Arlington ISD Board of Trustees passed a resolution to initiate the process to become a state District of Innovation in an effort to accelerate the implementation of transformational programming articulated in the 2016-2021 *Achieve Today. Excel Tomorrow.* strategic plan. Following the passing of the resolution, the Board held a public hearing in order to receive input regarding the process to develop the local innovation plan as well as feedback pertaining to areas of strategic focus for potential inclusion in the future plan. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board appointed a committee that included a cross-section of stakeholders and outlined the group's charge and parameters.

The District of Innovation committee consisted of teachers, parents, higher education partners, principals, district curricular directors and specialists, and members of senior staff. This team deliberated and collaboratively considered high leverage areas of the strategic plan that could be effectively accelerated including opportunities to:

- Provide students with increased access to rigorous and innovative coursework;
- Enhance the quality and functionality of partnerships with higher education and workforce entities;
- Increase student access to innovative programming;
- Expand opportunities for teacher collaboration; and
- Promote regulatory flexibility in order to maximize financial resources.

Upon finalizing the local innovation plan draft, the District notified the Commissioner of Education of its intent to seek status as a District of Innovation and posted the plan online for public viewing for 30 days as required by law, beginning Wednesday, January 4, 2017. The District notified the Commissioner of Education on Tuesday, January 3, 2017 of its intention to vote on adoption of the proposed plan.

On Tuesday, February 7, 2017, the District-Level Instructional Decision-Making Committee (DIDC) held a public meeting in which the proposed local innovation plan was presented in its entirety and a question/answer session conducted. At the conclusion of the meeting, a vote was called and the plan was accepted by a majority of the DIDC members. The local innovation plan was then forwarded to the Board of Trustees for consideration.

On Thursday, February 16, 2017, the Arlington ISD Board of Trustees held an open meeting. During this meeting, the local innovation plan was presented and adopted with a unanimous vote.

## Proposed Innovations

### *Teacher Certification*

#### TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

- TEC §21.003: Requires that a person may not be employed as a teacher by a district unless the person holds an appropriate certification or permit issued by the appropriate state agency.

#### Innovation for the AISD:

- The certification requirements can and do restrict the district's ability to hire elementary foreign language professionals with proven language proficiency skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Flexibility to establish local teacher certification requirements affords the district the following advantages:

##### *Overall*

- The ability to select from a large and more experienced candidate pool.
- The ability to provide part-time professionals to teach specialty courses.
- The ability to establish realistic requirements for professionals transitioning to education from other careers.
- The ability to hire teaching staff with different certifications, or those not currently certified in accordance with TEA standards.

##### *Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES)*

Exercising this exemption will...

- Provide unique foreign language learning experiences to students across all elementary grade levels.
- Expose students to foreign languages, which improves student academic performance, creativity, citizenship and cultural awareness.
- Allow classroom instruction led by a highly proficient teacher, regardless of certification, and leading to effective foreign language acquisition.
- Increases access to foreign language instruction in diverse languages and can provide students career opportunities that reflect the global nature of life in the 21st century.
- Provides for the matriculation of FLES students and the opportunity to expand secondary learning pathways, allowing the vertical K-16 articulation of effective foreign language acquisition.

#### Implementation Considerations:

- Develop local certification criteria that include establishing language proficiency standards focused on identified critical world languages poised for curricular inclusion.
- Align implementation to strategic plan strategy 1.13 - "Expand world languages programs, including dual language and languages other than English."

## Proposed Innovations

### *Minimum Attendance for Class Credit or Final Grade*

#### TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

- TEC §25.081: For each school year, each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students.
- TEC §25.092: 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.

#### Innovations for Venture High School, STEM Academy and Dual-Credit Programs:

- 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 who have not been successful in the traditional school due to special challenges. These challenges include but are not limited to parents or parenting students, over-age students, family hardships created by economic situations that result in the student having to work instead of attend school, being credit deficient for various reasons, and students with social-emotional challenges. 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.
- Transformational programs including, but not limited to, the Career and Technical Center, STEM Academy, Early College High School, Teacher Academy, 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; and
  - Master course content in less than the traditional 18-week semester through a variety of modes of instruction including lecture, blended and online.

**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 Innovations**

### ***First Day of Instruction***

#### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption:**

- TEC §25.081 I: Requires that a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

#### **Innovation for the AISD:**

- 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.

#### **Implementation Considerations:**

- The AISD 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 Innovations

### *Last Day of Instruction*

#### TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

- TEC §25.0812: Requires that school districts may not schedule the last day of school for students before May 15.

#### Innovation for the AISD:

- 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 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 acquire an associate's degree in less than four years, enabling them to pursue courses at a four-year university.

#### Implementation Considerations:

- Students enrolled at ACHS as full-time college students (11th and 12th grade) would be able to align their academic calendar with the institution of higher education.
- 11th 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.
- Students enrolled in ninth and 10th grade would follow an academic calendar similar to that of the AISD
- There would be no impact on teacher contracts as ACHS 11th and 12th graders are taught by TCC faculty. ACHS faculty instructing ninth and 10th graders would still remain on a 187-day contract.

## Proposed Innovations

### *Relief from Term of Depository Contract*

#### TEC Code Requiring Exemption:

- TEC §45.205: Requires that depository bank contracts not exceed a two-year term. This section provides school districts the authority to extend a depository contract for two additional two-year terms.

#### Innovation for the AISD:

- The current statute requiring a Request for Proposal (RFP) promotes disruption to campus and district operations.
- At least once every two years, the district will evaluate the performance of the current depository bank. Should the district determine that the contracted services are provided effectively and the quality of service is acceptable, the district will seek to negotiate terms to extend the contract for one additional two-year period.
- Relief from TEC §45.205 allows the district to ensure that its resources are concentrated on student achievement and campus operations are not disrupted.

#### Implementation Considerations:

- No later than 60 days prior to the current contract expiration, AISD finance administrators, including the chief financial officer, executive director of finance, director of budget and cash management, and treasurer will formally evaluate services provided by the current depository bank. Items to be evaluated will include:
  - Bank's compliance with terms of the current contract
  - Customer service
  - Timeliness responding to district inquiries
  - Earned interest credit
  - Reasonableness of bank fees
  - Quality of electronic banking systems
  - Fraud prevention and notification services
  - Additional services offered
  - Access to bank branches
- Upon satisfactory evaluation, district finance staff will formally request that the depository bank submit a proposal for fees and services for the following two-year period.
- District finance staff will formally evaluate the depository bank's proposal, specifically rating the proposal on the items noted above.
- AISD's legal counsel will review the draft contract extension and negotiate changes as appropriate.
- If the proposal is satisfactory, administration will recommend approval of a contract extension to the Board of Trustees.
- Upon board approval, the contract extension will be executed by the board president and appropriate bank officer.
- AISD finance administration will file the depository contract with the Texas Education Agency.

- Should district administration or the Board determine that an extension of the current depository contract is not in the district's best interest, the district will initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) process as prescribed in TEC §45.206–45.209.

## **Proposed Innovations**

### ***Minimum Minutes of Instruction***

#### **TEC Code Requiring Exemption:**

- TEC Code §25.081: For each school year, each school district must operate so that the district provides for at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, for students.

#### **Innovations 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, prekindergarten students will continue to have access to the high quality prekindergarten half-day programming currently implemented in both the morning and afternoon sessions.

#### **Implementation Considerations:**

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