



# District of Innovation Plan

Approved by the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees  
March 8, 2022

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## I. Introduction

The 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session produced House Bill 1842, which included the District of Innovation (DOI) concept. This concept gives traditional independent school districts the opportunity to implement some of the flexibilities available to current open-enrollment charter schools. In order to utilize outlined flexibilities, a district must create a plan in collaboration with stakeholders that identifies innovations the district is seeking to implement in order to improve the delivery of district services. DOI allows districts to be exempt from specific laws while implementing identified innovations. Benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include increased local control to decide which flexibilities should be used in the implementation of the innovations. The DOI plan must be approved by the local Board of Trustees.

In October 2016, the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees approved a resolution, which directed District leadership to study the District of Innovation process for possible implementation in Aldine ISD. The DOI plan was approved by the Aldine ISD school board on May 17, 2017 and is set to expire in May 2022. To continue to utilize the exemptions and to review new ones, a committee of parents, guardians, community members, and campus and district leaders were convened to begin the process of reviewing the district's current DOI plan for renewal.

## II. Timeline

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| May 17, 2017      | Original District of Innovation Plan Approved by Board of Trustees                |
| November 16, 2021 | Board of Trustees Notified of Renewal Process                                     |
| December 6, 2021  | Committee Convened to Review Current Plan for Amendment and Renewal               |
| December 15, 2021 | Draft plan completed and distributed to committee for feedback                    |
| January 15, 2022  | Feedback review from stakeholders   |
| February 3, 2022  | Notify TEA of Intent to Vote on Renewal   |
| February 4, 2022  | Plan posted for 30-day Public Feedback  |
| February 28, 2022 | District Advisory Committee Holds Open Meeting for Plan Approval by Majority Vote |
| March 8, 2022     | Vote by Board of Trustees   |

### III. Length of Plan

The Aldine ISD DOI Plan will be effective March 9, 2022 through March 9, 2027. Aldine ISD will continually monitor the plan's effectiveness and will recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications. The DOI plan may be amended, rescinded or revised by the Board of Trustees at any time during the term.

### IV. Comprehensive Educational Plan

As required by Texas Education Code 11.1511, the Board of Trustees adopts comprehensive goals, which are documented in the District and Campus Improvement Plans. The DOI committee established a framework of innovative strategies that support the district improvement plan and directly impact the local initiatives to prepare each student to graduate with choices and opportunities. Prior to the implementation of any exemption, the internal committee will seek approval from the Board of Trustees to determine the need for the exemption, develop parameters and address changes to any impacted board policy.

#### A. Aldine ISD Vision

All Aldine ISD students will receive a dynamic and unparalleled education that guarantees choices and opportunities today and in the future.

#### B. Aldine ISD Mission

Aldine ISD will provide a rigorous and enriching educational experience that prepares every student for success in college, career, and life.

#### C. Strategic Priorities

**Student Achievement:** Accelerate student learning to dramatically increase the number of students who perform on or above grade level.

**School Culture:** Create safe and secure learning environments that focus on the social, emotional, and cultural needs of every student.

**Mission-Driven Leadership:** Develop the capacity of every teacher, leader, and staff member to deliver rigorous, enriching learning experiences to every student.

**Organizational Efficiency:** Align data, financial, technology, and operations systems to enhance student performance.

**Community Engagement and Outreach:** Elevate district pride by strengthening partnerships with families, communities, and the business community.

## Aldine District of Innovation Committee

Facilitated by the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Accountability

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Dawn Rodriguez</b><br>Chief of Strategic Initiatives and Accountability | <b>Sheleah Reed</b><br>Chief of Staff  |
| <b>Adrian Bustillos</b><br>Chief Transformation Officer                    | <b>Dr. Xochitl Rodriguez</b><br>Associate Superintendent School                      |
| <b>Dr. Sara Jones</b><br>Director of Research and Program Evaluation       | <b>David Lindeen</b><br>Community Member   |
| <b>Candis Houston</b><br>Aldine AFT  | <b>Rebecca Abu-Sanu</b><br>Parent  |
| <b>Jennifer Carrington</b><br>Parent                                       | <b>Alex Gonzales</b><br>Parent   |
| <b>Erik Torres</b><br>Principal - Ermel Elementary School                  | <b>Andrea Cain</b><br>Principal - Plummer Middle School                              |
| <b>Diana Delpilar</b><br>Principal - Avalos P-TECH School                  | <b>Brooke Martin</b><br>CTE Program Director   |
| <b>LaMeka Martin</b><br>Director of Human Resources                        | <b>Marla Slaughter</b><br>Director of Human Resources                                |
| <b>Yvonne Lopez - Taylor</b><br>Teacher - Carter Academy                   | <b>Lelis Simmons</b><br>Teacher - Nimitz Ninth Grade School                          |
| <b>Maritza Cordova</b><br>Parent   | <b>Aurelia Fernandez</b><br>Assistant Principal - Raymond Elementary School          |
| <b>Phoebe Pruitt</b><br>Assistant Principal - Hambrick Middle School       | <b>Rachel Haller</b><br>Director of Testing  |
| <b>Dr. Susan Pelezo</b><br>Executive Director Advanced Academics           | <b>Dr. Matt Warford</b><br>Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning         |
| <b>Alexia Rogers</b><br>Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance   | <b>Scott Corrick</b><br>Director of Human Resources                                  |
| <b>Grace Delgado</b><br>Executive Director of Multilingual Services        | <b>Dr. Martha Escalante</b><br>Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement |

## VII. Innovations

The DOI committee and the internal team reviewed current innovations, investigated innovations used in comparable and surrounding districts, and explored additional innovations. The innovations are organized according to Aldine's strategic priorities.

### Student Achievement

#### i. Minimum Minutes of Instruction

Aldine ISD seeks to develop a calendar that includes additional days for teacher professional development. This can be accomplished through the development of daily instructional schedules that exceed the minimum minutes of instruction requirements. In addition, adjusting the school calendar will provide time for training and for collaborative planning in grade-level and content-area groups. Embedded professional collaboration allows teachers to have continual training on curriculum implementation and on the best instructional practices.

#### Exemption:

TEC 25.081 states (a) Except as authorized under Subsection (b) of this section, Section 25.084, or Section 29.0821, 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.

#### ii. First Day of Instruction

Aldine ISD seeks the opportunity to continue having the option of an early start. This flexibility allows the district to build a calendar that optimizes instruction time and teacher professional development days based on the unique needs of the students in the district. The flexibility also allows the district to work with in-district charters and local partner institutions to align resources and course schedules. This is especially beneficial for dual credit classes with local community colleges and universities. Aldine ISD will develop and implement flexible instructional schedules to meet students' needs as individuals and as student groups.

This option would also allow the district to balance the semester schedules and improve the instructional program.

#### Exemption:

TEC 25.0811 states a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

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

Aldine ISD seeks the opportunity to allow students who are academically proficient and meet the content requirements of a course to demonstrate mastery and receive course credit if students have not attended 90 percent of the days classes are offered. Attendance remains an issue for Aldine students focusing on COVID. Many parents and students experience hardships, which create challenges with school attendance. While attendance is important, course credit should be determined by content mastery rather than seat time. Exemption from this requirement will provide additional opportunities for students to obtain and recover credits which would reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rates.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 25.092 provides conditions for credit or a final grade for a class based on student attendance for at least 90 percent of the days a class is offered. The law also provides provisions for students who are in attendance at least 75 percent of the days a class is offered, in that he or she may be given credit or a final grade if the student completes a plan approved by the principal that meets the instructional requirements of the class.

## **School Culture**

### **i. Visits to Accredited Institutions of Higher Education**

Aldine ISD is seeking to expand the number of days that a can be excused for visits to institutions of higher learning. Visits to these institutions play an important role in the students' decision on where to attend college. Allowing for up to three days for institutions of higher education visits during the student's junior year and three days during the student's senior year, with administrator approval, communicates the importance of pursuing higher education to Aldine students which may increase the college, career, and/or military readiness rate for the District. The Committee understands that exemption from this Section cannot alter the State's funding provisions aligned with this Section and that excusing students for additional days may impact funding. The District, however, is not seeking exemption from adopting a policy under 25.087 (b-2) (2) (A) to determine when an absence will be excused for this purpose nor is the District seeking exemption from creating a procedure to verify the student's visit at the institution of higher education under 25.087 (b-2) (2) (B).

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 25.087 (b-2) provides that a district may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that: (1) the district may

not excuse for this purpose more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year.

## **Mission-Driven Leadership**

### **i. Teacher Certification**

The District specifically seeks flexibility to hire professionals who are not certified teachers but have experience and a related degree in the content area to supply the needed teachers. The District would like the opportunity to expand the number of candidates that will be recruited and trained for positions of need.

The District will determine the areas and programs for this opportunity based on staffing needs. Aldine ISD will provide local qualifications and training requirements for professionals and experts to teach courses in lieu of traditional state requirements. All other teachers would not be exempt from TEC 21.003, and the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees would monitor the implementation of this exemption.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 21.003 mandates that districts that wish to hire an uncertified staff member must submit a request to TEA and wait on approval or denial. Section 21.0031 provides that an employee's probationary, continuing or term contract is void for failure to maintain certification in certain circumstances. Section 21.051 provides that before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities.

### **ii. Teacher Appraisal System**

Aldine seeks to continue use of a locally chosen teacher appraisal system. The district used a locally chosen appraisal system from 2013 to 2020. While we are currently using the TEA required appraisal process and performance criteria, the district would like to retain the flexibility to choose the best appraisal system for its teachers and students. Teacher appraisal system changes will be approved by the Board.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 21.352 states in appraising teachers, each school district shall use: (1) the appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner.

TEC 21.353 states a teacher who directs extracurricular activities in addition to performing classroom teaching duties shall be appraised only on the basis of classroom teaching performance and not on performance in connection with the extracurricular activities.



### **iii. Probationary Contract**

Aldine ISD is seeking to extend the probationary period for contract employees who are new to the district but have been employed in public education in Texas for at least five of the eight previous years to up to two full school years. Currently, experienced employees may only have a probationary period that does not exceed one year. However, this time period is not sufficient to evaluate an employee's effectiveness.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 21.102b states that the probationary contract may be renewed for two additional one-year periods, for a maximum permissible probationary contract period of three school years, except that the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.

### **iii. Planning and Preparation Time**

Aldine ISD is seeking flexibility in the scheduling of teacher planning and preparation. The district does not seek to reduce the total planning and preparation time for teachers, but rather seeks the flexibility to schedule planning and training when it is best needed. As the district continues to roll out new curriculum, academic programs and approaches, the ability to have sustained periods of shared planning time is crucial for fidelity of implementation. This exception allows the district and campuses to allow for that time.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 21.404 states that teachers are entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two week period for preparation for teaching, conferencing with parents, and evaluating student work.

### **iii. Staff Development**

Aldine ISD is seeking the ability to have more district-based professional development. As the district continues to roll out new curriculum, academic programs and approaches, the ability to train teachers on shared initiatives and curriculum is important for ensuring success of all students at all campuses. Aldine does not seek to centralize all staff development, but needs the flexibility to provide district level staff development for its newest employees as well as during the rollout of new curriculum, initiatives, and technology.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 21.451 prescribes staff development described by Subsection (a) must be

predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives established under Section 11.253 , and developed and approved by the campus-level committee established under Section 11.251.

## **Organizational Efficiency**

### **i. Class Size Waiver**

Aldine ISD is seeking autonomy to address class size with innovative strategies and report class sizes greater than 22:1 to the Board of Trustees. Aldine supports the concept of appropriate class size to deliver quality instruction and the district seeks to recruit and hire the number of teachers needed to meet the 22:1 requirement for grades preK-4. Over the years, Aldine ISD has sought waivers for classrooms with more than 22 students being served in a single classroom. Students in the elementary grades are often served in various groupings and settings throughout the day. Teachers are trained in flexible grouping and small group instruction in order to differentiate to meet students' needs. By providing this exemption, the Board of Trustees would have local control over class size ratios.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 25.112 states (a) Except as otherwise authorized by this section, a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, or fourth grade classroom.

### **ii. Teacher Ratio Waiver**

Aldine ISD is seeking autonomy to address teacher ratios with innovative strategies and to report ratios greater than 20:1 to the Board of Trustees. Aldine supports the concept of appropriate class size to deliver quality instruction and the district seeks to recruit and hire the number of teachers needed to meet the 20:1 requirement for all grade levels. However, when students participate in special programs there may be a situation when the ratio exceeds state requirements. Additionally, the ratio waiver allows the district to explore non-traditional and innovative teaching arrangements to maximize students' learning. Teachers are trained in flexible grouping and small group instruction in order to differentiate to meet students' needs. By providing this exemption, the Board of Trustees would have local control over class size ratios.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 25.111 states except as provided by Section 25.112, each school district must employ a sufficient number of teachers certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to maintain an average ratio of not less than one teacher for each 20 students in average daily attendance.

## Community Engagement and Outreach

### i. Early Release

Aldine ISD is seeking an exemption to the minimum school day of seven hours. This would allow the district to build a flexible schedule that allows early release days for parents teachers conferences and for shared planning and/or professional development time. Aldine knows that prioritizing family engagement is key to the success of students. Early release days give teachers the opportunity to meet to discuss student progress and goals with parents and guardians so that they can reinforce key skills and behaviors in the home. Additionally, shared planning time is essential for teachers to collaborate and learn from one another to improve their craft. The option of early release days allows Aldine the flexibility to engage in these connections throughout the year.

#### **Exemption:**

TEC 25.082(a) states that a school day shall be at least seven hours each day, including intermissions and recesses.