

Austwell-Tivoli
Independent School District



District of Innovation Plan
2020-2025
Adopted July 13, 2020

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION TIMELINE

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| April 13, 2020 | Discuss District of Innovation Plan |
| May 11, 2020 | School Board adopts resolution to consider designation District of Innovation. Committee is formed. |
| May 19, 2020 | Committee Discusses DOI Plan. |
| May 27, 2020 | Committee Continue Discussion with planning. |
| June 8, 2020 | School Board holds a Public Meeting and discusses the possibility of becoming DOI. School Board votes to move forward with the plan. Plan is posted on the website for 30 days. |
| June 30, 2020 | DOI Discussion on finalizing the plan by the committee. |
| July 13, 2020 | School Board approves District of Innovation Plan. |
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Introduction

Overview House Bill 1842, passed during the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides public school districts the opportunity to seek designation as a District of Innovation (TEC §12A.001) to obtain exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. The term of this designation is for five years provided the district continues to meet performance requirements in both academics and finance.

District of Innovation (DOI) Committee

Austwell-Tivoli ISD District of Innovation (DOI) Committee Members composed of District stakeholders, including teachers, campus and district administrators, parents, and community members formed to develop the Local Innovation Plan to designate Austwell-Tivoli ISD as a District.

Local Innovation Committee Members

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|------------------|-------------------------|
| Dolores B. Vela | Superintendent |
| Eric Cortez | PK-12 Principal |
| William Lumpkins | PK-12 Counselor |
| Aimee Barrera | Elementary Teacher |
| Lavenia Diaz | Elementary Teacher |
| Loryn Hernandez | Special Ed. Teacher |
| C.J. Hull | Elementary Teacher |
| Evelyn Lopez | Elementary Teacher |
| Phyllis Neves | Elementary Teacher |
| Cristy Tate | Elementary Teacher |
| Angelina Torres | Elementary Teacher |
| Linda Duenez | High Special Ed Teacher |
| Armand Gonzalez | High School Teacher |
| Jennifer Joslin | High School Teacher |
| Shari Janak | High School Teacher |
| Linda Rojas | High School Teacher |
| Eunice Soliz | High School Teacher |
| Pam Wagner | High School Teacher |
| Adam Wollam | High School Teacher |
| Melissa Hopper | Parent |
| Adrienne DeNava | Parent |
| Jenna Lopez | Business Member |
| Kendra Wright | Business Member |

Exemptions Requested

TEC §25.0811 First Day of Instruction

TEC §21.003 Certification Required

I. Uniform Start Date (TEC 25.0811) (EB LEGAL)

Texas Legislature requires that students may not begin school before the fourth Monday of August. Districts once had the opportunity to apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier, but because of advocacy and resistance from Texas tourism groups these waivers no longer exist. These groups argue that an earlier school start date is detrimental to the Texas Summer tourism business. In order to maximize the tourism business, the current law now prohibits schools from starting before the fourth Monday in August.

Proposed Flexibility:

Austwell-Tivoli ISD may begin school earlier in August than the fourth Monday.

Rationale for Exemption:

The school calendar should reflect the values in the community it serves. Flexibility to start school earlier in August would allow A-T ISD to balance the number of instructional days per semester and maximize instruction before standardized testing. In addition, we would allow our students who take dual credit classes from the local college to begin on the first day of the college semester.

II. Teacher Certification: Texas Education Code 21.003, 21.053 , and TAC Chapter 231 [Related to board policy DBA , DK]:

A school district may not employ teachers unless this person holds an appropriate certificate and an uncertified teacher may not earn a teacher salary until the effective date of valid certificate.

Proposed Flexibility:

Austwell-Tivoli ISD is committed to seeking highly qualified educators in all positions. Challenges in recruitment due to geography and general teacher shortage in all areas of teachers is an issue. In order to provide more students opportunities to take specialized and or advanced courses, the district would like to establish local requirements such as courses in lieu of requirements in the above statute for certified teachers. Flexibility would allow the district to employ high quality educators that might not qualify under traditional teacher certification pathways. Qualifications for local certification would include, but not limited to:

- A). Professional work experience
- B). Formal training/education in the content area
- C). Active/relevant professional industry certification
- D) A combination of work experience, training, and education

The superintendent or designee would approve the request for local certification to employ if the candidate possesses the knowledge, skills, and experience required of the position. Employment would be dependent on school board approval and acceptance of non-Chapter 21 contracts. Exemption does not apply to bilingual/ESL and special education teachers.