District of Innovation Renewal Plan 2022-2027
INTRODUCTION
HB 1842 was passed during the 84th Texas legislative Session in Spring 2015, and provides Texas public school districts the opportunity to be designated as a District of Innovation. To access these flexibilities, a school district must adopt an innovation plan, as set forth in Texas Education Code Chapter 12A.

Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes and will have the following benefits:
• Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students:
• Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
• Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

Districts are not exempt from statutes including curriculum and graduation requirements and academic and financial accountability.

VISION
A Tradition of Excellence

MISSION
The Pine Tree family champions the relentless pursuit of excellence through a compassionate and safe learning environment empowering all students to develop their unique passions and to make a positive impact in a global society.

CORE VALUES
We believe in:
— Lifelong Learning–We are a learning organization, where students are engaged and leaders grow.
— Innovation Through Collaboration–We foster a culture of innovation: working together, adapting to change.
— Trust & Safety–We provide a trusting and safe environment accountable to the highest standards and most effective tools.
— Respect–We respect each other, embracing diversity and global awareness.
PTISD STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND STRATEGIES

DISTRICT GOALS

Goal 1
All students will reach their full potential.

Goal 2
All students will thrive in a global society.

Goal 3
All students will discover and pursue their unique passions.

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1
We will create a customized learning environment that ensures a culture of innovation.

Strategy 2
We will maximize learning through the use of advanced resources and digital literacy.

Strategy 3
We will boldly support the social and emotional needs of all students.

Strategy 4
We will ensure student leadership is an integral part of our learning culture.

Strategy 5
We will recruit, develop, support, and retain the highest quality staff.
**ORIGINAL PROCESS - 2017**

On February 13, 2017, the Pine Tree Independent School District’s Board of Trustees initiated the process by passing a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation in order to support innovation and improve student learning. On March 6, 2017, the Pine Tree ISD Board of Trustees held a public hearing for public discussion on whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a District of Innovation. With there being no objection from the hearing, the Board of Trustees supported the plan to create a District of Innovation Committee to begin researching and recommending a plan for approval. The Pine Tree ISD District of Innovation committee was approved by the Board of Trustees at the April 10, 2017, regular board meeting. The committee represents various stakeholders across the district including teachers, instructional paraprofessionals, instructional coaches, parents, campus administration, district administration, local higher education, and community members. The committee met initially in March and April 2017 to discuss and develop a plan. The District of Innovation plan followed the development of the Pine Tree ISD Strategic Plan. The options discussed and recommended for consideration in the District of Innovation plan support the goals and strategies of the Pine Tree ISD Strategic Plan.

The District notified Commissioner Morath of its intent to file a plan with the Texas Education Agency after the April 10, 2017, Board of Trustees meeting. The plan was posted on the District website for 30 days before being presented to the Pine Tree ISD Board of Trustees on May 8, 2017. The Pine Tree ISD Board of Trustees unanimously approved the updated plan on May 8, 2017. Pine Tree ISD notified the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District’s final District of Innovation Plan and the plan was submitted the approved plan to TEA on May 10, 2017.

**RENEWAL PROCESS - 2022**

When deciding on the continuation of the DOI process, District administration collected input from campus administrators, teachers and stakeholders to identify priorities to enhance the operations and services to the Pine Tree ISD community. Comments and recommendations were collected and reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team and prioritized based on district-wide impact and student need. The Superintendent of Schools made the final recommendation for revision to the DOI plan. Topics and/or items not addressed in this revision will be reviewed in future renewals for need.
## RENEWAL 2022 TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, February 10, 2022</td>
<td>District Site Base Meeting to discuss District of Innovation Renewal Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, February 11, 2022</td>
<td>Post District of Innovation Renewal Plan to district website.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, February 11, 2022</td>
<td>Notify commissioner the district’s school board intention to vote on renewal plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 21, 2022 – 4:00 PM</td>
<td>District Site Base Committee Public Meeting. Committee must have a majority vote to approve the renewal plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 21, 2022</td>
<td>School Board Approves renewal plan with at least a two-thirds approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 22, 2022</td>
<td>Notify Commissioner of school board approval of plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 22, 2022</td>
<td>Post approved and final copy of renewal plan on district website.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 22, 2022</td>
<td>Send a copy of the link of the renewal plan from the district website to TEA.</td>
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## RENEWAL 2022 TERM

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in June 2022 and will remain in effect for five years, through May 2027, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. The District Improvement Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the Plan and recommend to the Board of Trustees any suggested modifications to the Plan.
DISTRICT LEVEL COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Blake Newman, Tucker Fairman, Kalli VanMeter, Jennifer McBroom, Sara King, Heather Berryhill, Nicole Welch, Todd Yohn, Debbie Terry, Zenoria Baker, Andrea Mabe, Christa Pickett, Krystal Bonner, Bill Irvine, Micah Devendorff, Vickie Childers, Amy Timmons, Jared Cronk, Dr. Valerie Baxter, Whitney Whittaker, Carter Terry, Reddie Rau, Melanie Ferguson, Ashley Duncan, Dana Dowell, Mitzi Willis, Megan Holder, Jody Stark, Jack Irvin, Amy Clugston, Sharon Smith, Stephen English, Jennifer McClanahan, Jorge Hernandez, Misti O’Keefe, Lesly Suarez, Lee Branson, Dr. Lisa Mullins, Dr. Eric Cederstrom, Matt Davenport, Steve Clugston

EXEMPTIONS
§25.0811 Uniform School Start Date
A district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system. A district may not receive a waiver for this requirement.

Proposed
This flexibility of an earlier start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Having the flexibility to establish an earlier start date will enable the District to balance the amount of instructional time available in each semester, providing classroom teachers the opportunity to deliver more equitable learning experiences for students in the fall and spring semesters. Additional benefits are listed below:

- An improved balanced instructional calendar.
- Students participating in Dual Enrollment opportunities will follow a calendar more closely aligned to the local college calendar including the number of days in both the fall and spring semester.
- An early start date permits students an additional week or more of instruction prior to state assessments.
• Students will be afforded opportunities to enroll in summer college sessions with finalized official transcripts and staff will be able to attend summer school classes as well. This is a result of the spring semester ending in late May or very early June.
• Flexibility creates opportunities for the District to pursue other calendar options based on local need.

Local Guidelines
The district will determine, on an annual basis, when each school year will begin.
§21.102 Probationary Contracts

Currently, experienced teachers new to the district have a probationary period that may not exceed one year if the person has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the previous eight years.

Proposed

Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers and counselors who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited time is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the staff member’s effectiveness. Relief from Texas Education Code 21.102 will permit the District the option to issue a probationary contract for a period of up to two years for experienced teachers and counselors newly hired in Pine Tree ISD.

Local Guidelines

At the time of contract recommendation consideration, newly hired teachers and counselors with the District, who have been employed in public education for at least five of the eight previous years and have completed their first probationary year with the District, may receive a probationary contract for the second year in order to continue to evaluate the staff member’s effectiveness.

TEC 21.003(a) 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. TEC 21.057 requires districts to provide written notice to parents when an inappropriately certified or uncertified teacher is assigned to the same classroom for more than 30 consecutive instructional days during the same school year.

TEC 21.0031 (a) An employee's probationary, continuing, or term contract under this chapter is void if the employee: (1) does not hold a valid certificate or permit issued by the State Board for Educator Certification; (2) fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to renew or extend the employee's temporary, probationary, or emergency certificate or any other certificate or permit issued under Subchapter B; or (3) fails to comply with any requirement under Subchapter C, Chapter 22, if the failure results in suspension or revocation of the employee's certificate under Section 22.0831(f)(2).

Proposed

In order to best serve PTISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally unless specifically forbidden so by state law. The current state teacher and principal certification requirements may inhibit the District’s ability to offer and then staff a variety of positions requiring specified criteria even with current District of Innovation exemptions. In order to obtain the best possible educator in all educational settings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own training of professionals in lieu of the requirements set for in law. By obtaining exemption from existing certification requirements, the District, under recommendation of the Superintendent, will have the flexibility to hire educators with expertise for classroom and administrative positions that may not have completed the traditional certification process.

Local Guideline:

The Superintendent, after consultation with campus leadership and the Human Resources leadership, will certify candidates that meet local credential guidelines. The Superintendent will notify the Board prior to the individual beginning employment. Exemption from the Texas Education Code §21.003 will require the District to review its policies at DBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) as well as the policies at DK (LEGAL) and (LOCAL). Although it is the District’s
intent to limit the use of this exemption, the current statute inhibits the District’s ability to recruit and employ highly qualified professionals.

For bilingual certification, the following additional local guidelines would apply:

- A teacher who has a four year degree, fluent in a Language Other Than English, and is able to pass a District assessment will be qualified to teach elementary or secondary Bilingual or Language Other Than English Classes under a local certification.
- The superintendent will approve or deny requests for local certification.
§21.451 Required Professional Development

TEC states a) The staff development provided by a school district to an educator other than a principal must be: (1) conducted in accordance with standards developed by the district; and (2) designed to improve education in the district. Pine Tree ISD faculty are well trained to identify social indicators such as sexual harassment, bullying, and suicide. In addition, the faculty/staff clearly understand the requirements of FERPA. Mandating training in these areas annually only serves to add redundancy to back to school work that can be better utilized in preparing for the students to return.

Proposed

Each year more mandatory training is put into place without the addition of hours or funding to implement them. Pine Tree ISD agrees with the importance of each of these areas of training such as sexual harassment, bullying, suicide prevention, FERPA, etc.). However, the District needs the flexibility to allow our faculty and staff to implement the knowledge they have been given through these repeated training sessions. This will also allow more time for implementation of the training on each campus and allow time for assessing the effectiveness of local plans or preventive programs. It is with that understanding that we seek exemption from annual compliance retraining in the areas listed below. Instead, these trainings will occur during new teacher orientation for new staff to the district as well as a refresher occurring in a preset three-year cycle for all staff, as determined by the district. Future mandatory training sessions that are assigned will be handled in a similar fashion.

Local Guidelines

a) The District will set up and maintain a database for all employees. Employees will participate in formal training every three years in the following areas as mandated by law:

1. Sexual harassment
2. Bullying prevention for teachers, administrators, and staff
3. Child abuse, sexual abuse, and other maltreatment of children
4. FERPA (student privacy)
5. Suicide prevention
6. Anaphylaxis and Auto-Injectors
7. Blood Borne Pathogens
8. Diabetes Overview
9. Illegal Steroid Use

10. Concussions - except for teachers, administrators and staff who are required to have annual training per UIL rules

b) All teachers, faculty, and staff new to the district will complete the compliance training during the first year of employment in the district.

c) District and campus administrators may assign compliance training to an employee or group of employees as needed during the three year cycle.
§21.404 Teacher Planning and Preparation

TEC 21.404 states each classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students’ work, and planning. A planning and preparation period under this section may not be less than 45 minutes within the instructional day. During a planning and preparation period a classroom teacher may not be required to participate in any other activity.

Proposed
By exempting the District from this law, the District will have flexibility for special events/days on campus (state testing, field trips, etc.), will have flexibility for more collaboration during the school day, and will allow for administrative flexibility based on student needs by campus.

Local Guidelines
The number of minutes that a teacher receives for planning and preparation over a two-week period (450 minutes) must not be reduced but flexibility to provide less than 45 minutes per day, due to special events or scheduling, may be implemented. Any schedule designed with less than 45 minutes per day for teachers must be approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee prior to implementation.
§21.401 Teacher Contract Days

Current law defines a teacher contract as a ten-month contract equivalent to 187 days.

Proposed
The Texas Education Code 25.081 changed student instruction from days to minutes thus creating opportunities of community defined flexibility on delivering instruction. Flexibility in teacher contract days allows for a mirroring of student, teacher and community needs. Additionally, the ability to adjust the length of teacher contract days allows for Pine Tree ISD to be competitive in recruiting and retaining quality employees to best serve the students and community thus creating higher teacher morale.

- This exemption would allow for a locally defined contract length for teachers that would be fewer than 187 days.
- Reduction in contract days would not create any adverse effect on salaries or stipends.
- Reduction in contract days allows for Pine Tree ISD to align days with 75,600 minutes of student instruction and still allow for quality instruction and professional development.

Local Guidelines
- The District will determine, on an annual basis, the number of teacher contract days not to exceed 187.
§25.036 (a) Transfer Students

A transfer student shall be notified in the written transfer agreement that he or she must follow all rules and regulations of the District. Violation of the terms of the agreement may result in a transfer request not being approved the following year.

Proposed

Non-Resident students who have been accepted as a District transfer may have such transfer status revoked by the superintendent or designee at any time during the academic year if the student fails to meet and maintain standards of academic, attendance or conduct as outlined in the Pine Tree ISD Transfer form.
§21.351, §21.352 Teacher & Principal Appraisal System

In appraising teachers, each school district shall use: (1) the appraisal process and performance criteria developed by the commissioner; or (2) an appraisal process and performance criteria: (A) developed by the district- and campus-level committees established under Section 11.251; (B) containing the items described by Sections 21.351(a)(1) and (2); and (C) adopted by the Board of Trustees.

Proposed

This exemption allows PTISD the flexibility to modify T-TESS and T-PESS to a locally developed evaluation system to better meet the needs of teachers and administrators. Removing the 20% student growth measure from the teacher appraisal system results in a more equitable and accurate appraisal for teachers across curriculum.
TEC §11.251, TEC §11.252, and TEC §28.004 (d) Site-based Decision Making

The board shall adopt a policy to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process that will involve the professional staff of the district, parents, and community members in establishing and reviewing the district's and campuses' educational plans, goals, performance objectives, and major classroom instructional programs. The board shall establish a procedure under which meetings are held regularly by district- and campus-level planning and decision-making committees that include representative professional staff, including, if practicable, at least one representative with the primary responsibility for educating students with disabilities, parents of students enrolled in the district, business representatives, and community members. The committees shall include a business representative without regard to whether the representative resides in the district or whether the business the person represents is located in the district. The board, or the board's designee, shall periodically meet with the district-level committee to review the district-level committee's deliberations.

Proposed
In place of a Site-based Decision Making Committee, District of Innovation Committee and the School Health Advisory Council, a District Improvement Committee (DIC) will be established to meet, review, analyze, and respond to both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the District's success and most importantly, students' success. This consolidation of committees will yield an opportunity for one council to address multiple needs of the students served by the District as opposed to having multiple committees addressing a more narrow focus of needs. Pine Tree ISD views this Council as a more efficient and effective way to serve our students, parents, and community. This will consolidate the number of meetings and the number of committees required by law and will better serve this community.

Local Guidelines - This Council will convene at least two times per year to guide the general direction of district resources and efforts.
§11.252a-f District and Campus Plan

Currently under Section 11.251, school districts are required to have a district and campus improvement plan that is developed, evaluated, and revised annually, in accordance with district policy, by the superintendent with the assistance of the district-level committee established. The district and campus improvement plans must include provisions for: a needs assessment, performance objectives, strategies for improvement of student performance, suicide prevention, conflict resolution, violence prevention, dyslexia treatment programs, dropout reduction, integration of technology, discipline management, staff development, career education, higher education information, Texas grant programs, needed resources, staff responsibilities, timelines, formative assessments, and the policy under Section 38.0041 addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children.

Proposed
Under the Local Innovation Plan, the more prescriptive District Improvement Plan will be replaced by the Pine Tree ISD Strategic Plan. The PTISD Strategic Plan will target specific needs of the district as determined by a needs assessment and other data review. Additionally, the PTISD Strategic Plan will outline long-range improvement goals. The PTISD Strategic Plan will be submitted to both the District Improvement Committee and the Board of Trustees for approval. Progress toward the Strategic Plan will be assessed formatively each quarter by staff charged with carrying out specific components of the plan.

The PTISD Strategic Plan will streamline components that are redundant. It will be necessary to include federal and state compliance components; therefore, compliance components not specifically addressed within the PTISD Strategic Plan will be compiled in an addendum to the Strategic Plan. This addendum would then be monitored by district employees with direct knowledge of compliance.

Local Guidelines
District and Campus Improvement Plans are often more compliance-driven documents rather than plans outlining strategies targeting campus and district improvement. The development, monitoring, and adjustment of long-term plans (PTISD Strategic Plan) offers Pine Tree ISD flexibility regarding student outcomes. By allowing district employees to focus on long-term
goals, we will be able to pinpoint student needs and address them with meaningful and strategic goals and strategies.
§37.007c, §37.010b Student Discipline while in DAEP

Currently The Texas Education Code states that a student placed in a District Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) who engages in documented serious misbehavior while in DAEP despite documented behavioral interventions may be removed from class and expelled. These “serious misbehaviors” include violent behavior, extortion, coercion (according to Penal Code 1.07), public lewdness, indecent exposure, criminal mischief, personal hazing, and harassment.

**Proposed**

In addition to serious misbehavior, a student placed in a DAEP that engages in documented persistent misbehavior while in DAEP, despite documented behavioral interventions, may be removed from class and expelled.

**Local Guidelines** - The principal of the DAEP shall consult the Superintendent and/or designee to consider the relevant factors prior to recommendation for expulsion action.

§37.105 Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification

Currently a district must maintain a record of each verbal warning issued under §37.105 (a)(2)(A), including the name of the person to whom the warning was issued and the date of issuance. At the time a person is refused entry to or ejected from a school district’s property under §37.105, the district must provide the person written information explaining how to appeal. Each school board must adopt a policy that uses the district’s existing grievance process to permit a person ejected or denied entry to address the Board of Trustees in person within 90 days of the commencement of the appeal, unless the appeal is granted sooner.

**Proposed**

Texas Education Code §37.105 includes a process for ejection or denying entry to a visitor who presents a substantial risk of harm or behaves in a manner inappropriate to the school setting. To better ensure the safety and security of students and staff in Pine Tree ISD, we propose that the District not be required to maintain a record of each verbal warning of potential removal from district property/facilities, nor be required to provide written information explaining the appeal process to those who have been refused entry to district property/facilities or removed from district property/facilities. The District currently attempts to provide written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities.
**Local Guidelines** - Exemption from Texas Education Code §37.105 will not prevent the District from providing written notice to persons who are subject to potential refusal for entry or for removal from district property/facilities in situations where the administrator on site feels it is reasonable and safe to do so. Campus and District administrators, as well as school resource officers, may refuse to allow a person to enter or may eject a person from property/facilities under the District’s control in accordance with law. An appeal notice must be filed with the Superintendent, in writing, and submitted to the Administration Office for review.

Currently all districts, when employing a retired teacher, must pay them based on the Texas Education Agency minimum pay scale as well as an additional TRS surcharge.

Proposed
Pine Tree ISD would employ an eligible retired educator at a rate lower than the Texas Education Agency established minimum pay scale. The District would continue to pay the required TRS Surcharge. The ability to hire a retired teacher at a reduced rate would allow for an experienced teacher to positively influence student success. The experience provided by hiring a veteran teacher at a reduced price is beneficial from both an instructional and fiscal standpoint. By exempting the District from the statutory minimum educator salary scale the District would be acting in the best interest of its tax payers as well as addressing instructional needs.
§21.002. TEACHER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

(a) A school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under: (1) a probationary contract, as provided by Subchapter C; (2) a continuing contract, as provided by Subchapter D; or (3) a term contract, as provided by Subchapter E. (b) A district is not required to employ a person other than an employee listed in Subsection (a) under a probationary, continuing, or term contract. (c) Each board of trustees shall establish a policy designating specific positions of employment, or categories of positions based on considerations such as length of service, to which continuing contracts or term contracts apply.

Proposed
Pine Tree ISD provides legally binding contracts to classroom teachers, librarians, nurses, school counselors and others that allow a mutually beneficial arrangement to the employee and the District. The contracts recognize those rights contained in a traditional Chapter 21 contract to provide for the legally binding nature. The exemption to the contract relates to resignation timelines and the breaking of the legally binding contract. Currently the only recourse for a school district is to recommend sanctions be placed on a certified employee if a resignation is not accepted by the district outside of the designated resignation period. By exempting itself from TEC §21.002 contracts Districts are able to determine incentives and penalties regarding breach of contact on a local level.

Local Guidelines
Pine Tree ISD will utilize the following general procedures to incentivize employees current and future to recognize the urgency of a legally binding contract:

1. Pine Tree ISD will monetarily incentivize employees to sign legally binding contracts at the earliest possible time when presented with the opportunity.
2. Deadlines will be established in which an employee can resign with and without penalty. Employees who choose to break a contract prior to May 31 annually will be required to return the signing incentive without additional penalty.
3. Employees who fail to inform administration of their intent to seek employment elsewhere prior to June 1 annually shall be required to return signing incentive as well as be subject to additional financial penalty determined by the District if a resignation is submitted past that date.
4. Any and all appeals shall be handled individually by the Superintendent or designee.
Summary of the District of Innovation Plan
The direction provided by this local Innovation Plan is a culmination of collaboration among community members, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. This plan provides an opportunity for the Pine Tree community to make local decisions on the best ways to educate our children.