



**Benavides Independent  
School District**

**District Innovation Plan  
2017 – 2022**





**BENAVIDES I.S.D.**  
***District of Innovation Plan***  
***2017 – 2022***

## ***I. Introduction***

### ***What is a “District of Innovation”?***

The District of Innovation concept, passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas’ open-enrollment charter schools.

### ***Why choose a District of Innovation?***

Benavides ISD will have the freedom to make decisions at the local level. A local school district may want to pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, budgeting, or other ideas. Essentially, innovation plans are about local control. Benavides ISD’s innovation plan will be unique to our school district and community.

Potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include:

**Local control:** Districts decide which flexibilities best suit their local needs.

**Customization:** Districts can create an innovation plan for a level of school (e.g., only high schools), grade level, or a single campus.

**Autonomy:** Districts must submit a district of innovation plan to the commissioner of education, but approval is not required.

**Flexibility:** Districts will have the flexibility to implement practices similar to charter schools, including exemptions from mandates such as:

- o School start date
- o 90% attendance rule
- o Class-size ratios
- o Site-based decision-making processes
- o Certain student discipline provisions
- o Use of planning and preparation periods
- o Teacher appraisal requirements

Not all of these possibilities will be the right fit for Benavides ISD. It is us up to the District of Innovation (DOI) committee to determine what laws to exempt Benavides from and which to leave in place.

## ***II. Process***

On February 13, 2017, the Benavides 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 local initiatives to improve student learning.

On February 21, 2017, the Benavides ISD Board of Trustees will hold 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 will appoint the District Educational Improvement Committee (DEIC) to discuss and draft this District Innovation Plan. This committee represents various stakeholders across the district, including teachers, parents, campus administration, district administration and local business owners. The committee will meet initially on February 23, 2017, to discuss and develop the plan. A follow up meeting to finalize the plan will be held on March 9, 2017.

The plan will be posted on the District website for 30 days before being presented to the DEIC on April 10, 2017. Benavides ISD will notify the Texas Commissioner of Education of the District's final District of Innovation Plan and the plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for final approval on April 18, 2017.

Committee meetings will be open to the public, and Benavides ISD invites all members of our community to be part of this process.

<b>District of Innovation Committee</b>	
Sandra Perez,	BES Principal
Elliana Lopez	BES Counselor
Beatriz Alaniz	BES SPED Teacher
Belinda Everett	BES Teacher
Aracelis Pena	BES Teacher
Venessa Saucedo	BES Teacher
Clara Utley	BES Teacher
Marco Ramirez	BSS Principal
Leticia Cervantes	BSS Counselor
Rosa Ruiz	BSS SPED Teacher
Gilbert Perez	BSS Teacher

Micah Charping	BSS Teacher
Ovidio Arevalo	BSS Teacher
Alma Vera	BSS Teacher
Clarissa Pena	DW Parent
Christina Perez	Business Manager
Marissa Dimas	DW Community Member
Adell Cueva	Superintendent (Chairperson)

### ***III. Term***

#### ***How long does an innovation plan stay in effect?***

Under current law, the plan may have a term of up to five years, and it may be amended, rescinded, or renewed during that time period. BENAVIDES ISD’s Innovation Plan will begin with the 2017-2018 school year and conclude at the end of the 2021-2022 school year unless the plan is terminated or amended by the BENAVIDES ISD Board in accordance with HB 1842. If at any time within this 5-year plan, other areas of exemptions are to be considered, the Board will nominate a new committee to consider new exemptions. Any future amendments will adhere to the same term of the original plan.

BENAVIDES ISD is exercising this opportunity to gain more local control and will request innovations (exemptions) from the Texas Education Code.

### ***IV. Innovations***

BENAVIDES ISD proposes and seeks an exemption in the following areas:

<b>Uniform School Start Date</b>	
Texas Education Code <i>§25.0811, §25.0812</i>	<i>EB (Legal)</i>
<b>Rationale:</b>	
By exempting the District from this law, the District: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will have the flexibility to design an annual calendar that fits the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.</li> </ul>	
<b>Innovation:</b>	
This exemption of this flexibility of start date allows Benavides ISD to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. This allows us to personalize learning, increase college and career readiness, and	

balance the amount of instructional time per semester. In addition, by having the flexibility in the start and end of the school year, students will be able to enroll in college courses that start in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness.

The District Education Improvement Committee will receive staff and community input to build the school calendar. The recommended school calendar is subject to Board approval.

### Certification - General

Texas Education Code §21.003a §21.044, §21.053

*DBA (Legal), DPA (Legal)*

#### **Rationale:**

By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- will have the flexibility to hire experts in their field even if they don't yet have a teaching certificate.
- will have the flexibility in hiring "hard to fill" positions.
- will have the flexibility to hire those with industry expertise (e.g. HB 5 courses).

#### **Innovation:**

This exemption from the current state teacher certification requirements that inhibit Benavides ISD's ability to hire teachers for hard-to-fill teaching positions will allow the district to establish local qualification and training requirements. This exemption directly supports the move from "highly qualified" requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). BISD will have the flexibility to hire external or internal applicants that do not have traditional state certifications. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. In addition, this exemption will afford the District the flexibility to hire professionals in certain trades or vocations to teach the crafts of those trades or vocations (such as welding, fine arts, health sciences, law, etc.) if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses.

1. In order to best serve the needs of the campus and students of Benavides ISD, decisions on certification will be handled locally.
2. The principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.
3. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials.

The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. The employee will be at-will.

4. This plan will provide more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

Teacher Contract Days	
Texas Education Code <i>§21.401</i>	<i>DCB (Legal), DCB (Local)</i>
<p><b>Rationale:</b> By exempting the District from this law, the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will increase the daily rate the district pays teachers</li> <li>• Enhance teacher recruitment</li> <li>• Improve teacher morale at Benavides ISD</li> <li>• Provide teachers more flexibility during the summer months</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Innovation:</b> This exemption provides Benavides ISD flexible contract days that reduce the number of days of service for educators under a 10-month contract. This plan reduces teacher contract days from a minimum of 187 to a minimum of 182 with no effect on teacher salaries. This reduction in contract days at the current salary schedule would make the districts salaries more competitive by increasing the daily rate the district pays teachers, and enhance teacher recruitment, therefore putting the district on a more level playing field with neighboring districts.</p>	

Minimum Minutes of Instruction	
Texas Education Code <i>§25.081, HB 2610</i>	EB (Legal)
<p><b>Rationale:</b> By exempting the District from this law, the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will have the flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction that will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Innovation:</b> This exemption will provide Benavides ISD the flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction which will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. Exempting from the 420-minute day requirement would allow BISD the flexibility needed to alter the school day schedule on selected days whenever it was locally determined as necessary or beneficial to the district and its stakeholders. While there is already a waiver process available to request exemption from this requirement, the waiver is limited to a 6-day maximum</p>	

number for the school year. Exempting completely from the 420-minute requirement would give the district a significant amount of local control over scheduling (above and beyond the 6-day maximum as needed) without the fear of diminishing state funding or losing credit for instructional time that might cause the district to fall out of compliance with annual minute requirements.

This provides the added benefit of allowing the possibility of an altered length of school day. BISD does not intend to shorten the school day on a regular basis, or without specific purpose. To the greatest extent possible, “early release” days would be planned ahead of time and noted in the district calendar, which is approved by the Board of Trustees and published/distributed to district stakeholders in advance of the school year.

The district would not schedule early release days under this exemption that were shorter than 240 minutes (4 hours).

### 90% Rule for Class Attendance

Texas Education Code §25.092

FEC (Legal)

#### Rationale:

By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- Provide flexibility for local board to set higher expectations while promoting student engagement by encouraging students to participate
- Provide educational advantages to students by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students
- Provide the administrator opportunities to award credit based on understandings of the concepts instead of number of school days Provide the flexibility of the district to ensure dropout prevention measures are in place for all students’ PK-12

#### Innovation:

The exemption from the 90 percent attendance rule will allow the district to establish local criteria regarding student attendance requirements. Benavides ISD will not have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. It will also allow BISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts. The proposal would allow counselors and administrators to refocus efforts on students who are truly at risk, while simultaneously providing rigor and relevance in the curriculum. BISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption. This exemption supports overarching goals to implement tools, resources, and training that support personalized learning for both students and teachers.

Relief from Section 25.092 does not in any way impact or alter existing compulsory attendance requirements or University Interscholastic League ("UIL") rules. Moreover, opting out of Section 25.092 in no way limits or modifies a teacher's right to determine the finality of a grade in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0214, nor does it restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.

### Class Size Waiver/Parent Notifications

Texas Education Code §25.112a-g, §25.113a-b

EEB (Legal)

#### Rationale:

By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- will have small classes
- will have the flexibility of not having to file a waiver when going over ratio
- will have the flexibility to hire (or not) by campus/district level personnel

#### Innovation:

This exemption allows Benavides ISD the time to staff campuses with effective teachers by granting local control over class size ratios. At the beginning of each school year, Benavides ISD will meet the suggested student to teacher ratio of 22:1 per K-4 homeroom class. In the event that any class size exceeds this ratio during the school year, the superintendent will report this information to the Board of Trustees and to the parents of the affected students. Having the latitude and time to seek and hire teachers enables us to best serve students with an effective student-teacher ratio. The determination of whether to add another teacher to bring the class under the 22:1 mandate will be made by the campus administration and this recommendation will be reported to the Board of Trustees.

A TEA waiver will not be filed when a K-4th classroom exceeds the 22:1 ratio.

### Term of Depository Contract

Texas Education Code §45.205

FOB(Legal)

#### Rationale:

By exempting the District from this law, the District:

- Will allow district to ensure that its resources are concentrated on student achievement and operations are not disrupted

#### Innovation:



This exemption will provide Benavides ISD with relief from the current law to ensure that the district's resources are utilized in such a way as to not disrupt the campuses operations.

No later than 60 days prior to the current contract expiration, BISD 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.
- BISD'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.
- BISD 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.

## ***V. Implementation and Policy Expectations***

### ***What impact could designation as a District of Innovation have on district policy?***

This District Innovation Plan is designed to create parameters within which the Benavides ISD will operate in order to provide improved student opportunities. This Plan sets out the laws from which BISD seeks relief so that it can develop more innovative programming and better meet the needs of its stakeholders. While this Plan sets out those parameters, it does not and cannot establish the full scope of innovative practices within the Benavides ISD. Specific implementation plans will be developed by the appropriate campuses, departments, and committees in order to fully realize the work of the Innovation Committee.

Policy changes will correlate with innovation plan changes. As a DOI, revisions to local policies may be required as well as adjustments to legal policies to reflect that some legal provisions may be affected by the District's innovation plan. Adjustments to Board Policy will be researched, developed, and presented to the Board of Trustees where appropriate. It is the expectation of the Innovation Committee that all Board Policy language will reflect the spirit of the Committee work and honor the parameters and limitations expressed in this Plan. Policy development resulting from this District Innovation Plan will be provided to the Committee for review and feedback before the policies are presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration. After policies resulting from this Plan are adopted, it is the expectation of the Committee that future revisions to these specific policy provisions, if any, will be reviewed by Committee members prior to Board review to ensure alignment with the work of the Committee.

Any and all changes that arise from the District of Innovation work will be accompanied by a comprehensive communication plan for students, families, and the community.

## ***VI. Summary***

Through HB 1842, Benavides ISD will be provided the opportunity and flexibility to make local decisions for our district and community. Through the District of Innovation Plan, the district will be able to provide more effective and aligned decisions necessary for our students and community. The district will update and revise policies in Board Policy to reflect the changes recommended from the District of Innovation Plan. Benavides ISD is committed to the children of our community and pledge to implement the District of Innovation plan in the best interest of our students and community.



## District of Innovation Timeline

### **Friday, February 3, 2017**

Initial meeting with administrative staff to discuss preliminary thoughts and discuss possible members of the District of Innovation Team.

### **Monday, February 13, 2017**

6:00 P.M., Special Board Meeting

- Board of Trustees approve resolution to hold a public hearing to discuss the possibility of using HB 1842 to become a District of Innovation

### **Tuesday, February 21, 2017 @ 5:30 P.M., Public hearing**

- Public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation.

### **Wednesday, February 22, 2017 @ 6:00pm, Regular Meeting**

- Approve a motion to pursue local "District of Innovation" plan.
- Board of Trustees approve the members of the District of Innovation Committee.

### **Tuesday, February 28, 2017 – 4 P.M. at Benavides Elementary Workroom**

- Initial meeting of the District of Innovation Committee

### **Thursday, March 2, 2017 – 4 P.M. at Benavides Elementary Workroom**

- 2nd meeting of the District of innovation Committee

### **Wednesday, March 8, 2017**

5:00 P.M., Public hearing @ Benavides Elementary

- Public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation.

6:00 P.M., Public hearing @ Benavides Secondary

- Public hearing to explain and discuss the possibility of becoming a District of Innovation.

### **Thursday, March 9, 2017 – 4 P.M. at Benavides Elementary Workroom**

- 3rd meeting of the District of innovation Committee

### **Friday, March 10, 2017**

Post the Final Version of District of Innovation Plan on the district website for 30 days  
Notify Commissioner of Education of the board's intention to vote on adoption of proposed plan

### **Monday, April 10, 2017**

Public Hearing and District of Innovation Committee votes on Final Version of District of Innovation Plan

### **Tuesday, April 18, 2017**

Present Final District of Innovation Plan to the School Board  
Approve the District of Innovation Plan

### **Wednesday, April 19, 2017 – Update all policy changes with TASB**



## Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation

WHEREAS Education Code 12A.001 provides that a district is eligible for designation as a district of innovation if the district's most recent performance rating under Section 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance, and that consideration of designation as a district of innovation may be initiated by a resolution adopted by the board of trustees of the district; and

WHEREAS the Benavides Independent School District's most recent performance rating under Education Code 39.054 reflects at least acceptable performance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Benavides Independent School District by adoption of this resolution initiates the process under Education Code Chapter 12A to become a district of innovation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after this resolution is signed by the Board, a public hearing shall be held to consider whether the District should develop a local innovation plan for the designation of the District as a district of innovation and that after the public hearing the Board of Trustees of Benavides Independent School District shall appoint a committee to develop a local innovation plan or decline to pursue designation as a district of innovation.

Adopted this 13th day of February, 2017, by the Board of Trustees.

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Presiding Board President

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Vice-President

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Secretary



***Once an Eagle, Always an  
Eagle!***