

## News from Dripping Springs ISD

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### **District of Innovation Opportunity for Input**

Dripping Springs ISD has identified an opportunity available to school districts in Texas that aligns with the new strategic plan and increases local control. During its last session in 2015 (House Bill 1842), the Texas Legislature created the designation “Districts of Innovation”; districts can pursue this status through a process that includes public hearing, development of a plan, and review by a committee.

On March 28, the DSISD Board of Trustees approved a resolution starting the process of exploring and potentially pursuing this designation. A public hearing to gather public input on this concept will be held Monday, April 18, starting at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room at the DSISD Administration Building. The next steps in the process then would be appointing a committee to develop an innovation plan, posting the plan online for at least 30 days, the District Advisory Committee approving the plan, and the plan going back to the Board for consideration.

What Is a District of Innovation?

A District of Innovation is a concept passed by the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842 giving traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to the state’s open enrollment charter schools. Any district with an academic performance rating of at least Academically Acceptable is eligible.

The idea behind Districts of Innovation is that a local school district may want to pursue specific innovations in curriculum, instruction, governance, parent or community involvement, school calendar, or other areas. An innovation plan allows a district to gain exemption from many Texas Education Code requirements, thus gaining more local control. Each innovation plan is expected to be unique to each school district, allowing for local values and goals to be incorporated into the plan.

Some areas where Districts of Innovation can gain flexibility are: school start date, minimum minutes of instruction, class size ratio, 90-percent attendance rule, teacher certification and contracts, teacher appraisal system and student discipline provision. Each district may

identify different areas where their plans would take advantage of the flexibility that is available.

Requirements that Districts of Innovation cannot be exempted from are: elected Boards of Trustees, PEIMS reporting, criminal history checks, curriculum and graduation requirements, bilingual education, special education, pre-K programs, academic accountability including student assessments, financial accountability, open meetings and public records rules, and purchasing regulations.

Being classified as a District of Innovation would not impact school funding, although depending on the innovation plan, there may be some flexibility in the use of compensatory education funds.

More information about Districts of Innovation can be found from the following sources:

Texas Association of School Boards Q&A:

[https://www.tasb.org/Services/Legal-Services/TASB-School-Law-eSource/Governance/documents/districts\\_of\\_innovation\\_jan16.pdf](https://www.tasb.org/Services/Legal-Services/TASB-School-Law-eSource/Governance/documents/districts_of_innovation_jan16.pdf)

Proposed Rules on Districts of Innovation:

<http://www.moakcasey.com/email/viewemailarticle.aspx?emid=4c07395d-584d-478d-aa6a-9d7ad0a3a95d&emaid=9588>

Text of House Bill 1842:

<https://legiscan.com/TX/text/HB1842/2015>