



**DISTRICT OF**  
**INNOVATION PLAN**  
**2022-2027**

August 15, 2022 - Approved DOI

**Aspermont ISD District of Innovation Committee**

Zach Morris

Superintendent

**District of innovation Board Members**

Lacy English

Community Member

Trent Van Meter

Elementary Principal

Teddye Myers

District Counselor

Kristin Marsh

Elementary Parent

Tiffany Potts

High School Principal

Allison Martin

High School Teacher

Belinda Hecht

High School Parent

Shasta Van Meter

Elementary Teacher

The 84th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1842 in the summer of 2015, allowing public school districts to obtain the designation of District of Innovation and gain exemption from certain Texas Education Code provisions. This designation allows independent school districts to have flexibilities currently available to open enrollment charter schools. During Spring 2017, Aspermont ISD, having met the state's eligibility requirements, began consideration of developing an innovation plan that reflects the unique needs of the district and allows the district to assume greater local control. The plan has served the district well and has provided the flexibility needed to provide the best instructional setting for the students.

### **Uniform School Start Date**

(EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.0811)

Current Statute: Students may not begin school before the 4th Monday of August. In the past, districts could apply for a waiver to start the school calendar earlier to meet the needs of the local community. This waiver opportunity was met with resistance from the Texas tourism groups who lobbied to have the practice ended, because they believed it was detrimental to the Texas tourism business. Therefore, several years ago the legislature took away all waivers and dictated that districts may not begin until the 4th Monday, with no exceptions.

Proposed flexibility: This flexibility of start date allows the district to determine locally, on an annual basis, what best meets the needs of the students and local community. Flexibility to start earlier in August would help our district plan for balanced instructional time in the semesters that would support the semester course curriculum.

### **Teacher Certification**

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.003, 21.057)

Current Statute: In the event a district cannot locate a certified teacher for a position or a teacher is teaching a subject outside of their certification, the district must submit a request to the Texas Education Agency. TEA then approves or denies this request. Texas Education Code 21.057 states that districts must provide written notification to parents if an inappropriately or uncertified teacher is assigned to the classroom for more than 30 days.

Proposed Flexibility: The flexibility in allowing Aspermont ISD to make local decisions about teacher certification would provide a better opportunity to offer innovation in course selections for CTE courses as well as hard to fill, and high-demand dual credit courses. By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community qualified vocational professionals, college instructors, university professors, or

internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. This will enrich applicant pools in specific content areas and afford more students the opportunity to take dual credit courses if certified teachers are not available to teach those courses. With the current teacher shortage, this exemption from teacher certification requirements will enable greater flexibility in staffing. Teachers certified in other states, along with industry certified professionals, could be considered for positions upon a local review of experience, education and credentials. Local decisions outside of state certification requirements would allow innovation and flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs. After thoroughly vetting candidates for hire, Aspermont ISD will consider the instructors hired for these positions to be appropriately qualified and will not provide additional special notification to parents of students in their classes that the instructor does not hold a traditional teaching certificate.

### **Probationary Contracts**

(DCA LEGAL) (Ed. Code 21.102)

Current Statute: Under current guidelines, probationary periods for newly hired teachers who have been in public education for at least five of the previous eight years cannot exceed one year. This limited period is insufficient in some cases to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

Proposed Flexibility: 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, counselors or nurses newly hired in Aspermont ISD. This will allow AISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.