**Introduction**
The 84th legislature passed House Bill 1842 which allowed traditional independent school districts the ability to access flexibilities which had previously been reserved for Texas’ open enrollment charter schools. In order for an independent school district to obtain these flexibilities, districts must seek designation as a “District of Innovation.” On Monday, October 17, 2016, the Palestine ISD Board of Trustees initiated the process by adopting a resolution to pursue a “District of Innovation” designation.

**Timeline of Events for DOI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September, 2016</td>
<td>Begin planning process for District of Innovation status</td>
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<tr>
<td>September, 2016</td>
<td>Create DOI Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 11, 2016</td>
<td>Community Meeting (TACE event)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 3-12, 2016</td>
<td>Campus meeting for each campus via Lunch in the Lounge</td>
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<td>October 19, 2016</td>
<td>DOI Meeting</td>
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<td>October 24, 2016</td>
<td>Public Hearing at October Board Meeting</td>
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<td>November 2, 2016</td>
<td>DOI Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 9, 2016</td>
<td>District Action Team Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 10, 2016</td>
<td>DOI Plan posted on the PISD Website</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 14, 2016</td>
<td>Present final plan to PISD Board of Trustees</td>
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</tbody>
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**Committee Members**

- Jason Marshall  
  Superintendent
- Suzie Eiben  
  Human Resource Department
- David Atkeisson  
  Finance Department
- Tammy Jones  
  Instructional Services
- Dr. William Stewart  
  High School Principal
- Stephen Cooksey  
  Junior High Principal
- Jaime Clark  
  Story Principal
- Melissa Molandes  
  Southside Principal
- Barbara Dutton  
  Northside Principal
- Sheila Bradley  
  Washington Principal
- Dyna Tutt  
  School Board Member
- Tiffany Durham  
  PHS Parent
- Tracie Ratliff  
  PJH Parent
- Tammy Wedin  
  AM Story Parent
- Laura Looney  
  Southside Parent
- Rachel Menjivar  
  Northside Parent
- Carolina Dominquez  
  PHS Teacher
- Olivia Henry  
  PJH Teacher
- Chad Everhart  
  Story Teacher
- Melanie Meza  
  Southside Teacher
- Dru Forward  
  Southside Teacher
- Stacy Britt  
  Northside Teacher
- Ashley Hudson  
  Washington Teacher
1. **Student Discipline Provisions**

**Currently**
Senate Bill 107 requires the designation of a campus behavior coordinator on each campus. This designee is responsible for maintaining student discipline and the implementation of Chapter 37, Subchapter A.

**Proposed**
The proposal is for the District to abstain from the state requirement that each school have a designated campus behavior coordinator. PISD’s approach to discipline is becoming more collaborative, with multiple people providing emotional and social support to students, rather than just one person. Exemption from this requirement will allow the option of increasing collaboration in regard to student discipline, as outlined in the PISD Student Code of Conduct.

2. **Probationary Contracts**

**Currently**
For experienced teachers new to the district, the probationary period 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. This time period is not sufficient to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom.

**Proposed**
For experienced teachers, counselors, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two years from the last date of district employment. For any teacher returning to PISD that was previously employed by PISD, the same rules will apply for the length of the probationary contract. A teacher hired to return to the district would be on a probationary status for two school years.
3. **School start date**

   **Currently**
   TEC §25.0811 states that a school district may not begin student instruction before the 4th Monday of August. For many years this was the rule; however, districts had the option of applying for a waiver to start earlier, even as early as the 2nd Monday in August. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of annual calendars to fit the needs of the community or the wishes of the local Board of Trustees who represent community interests in this matter.

   **Proposed**
   PISD students will start class no earlier than the 2nd Monday in August. Our primary goal is to create flexibility in our calendar which will be beneficial to all stakeholders.

4. **Class Size Ratio**

   **Currently**
   Kindergarten – 4th Grade classes are to be kept at a 22 student to 1 teacher ratio according to state law. When a class exceeds this limit, the district must complete a waiver with the Texas Education Agency. These waivers are never rejected by TEA. This is a bureaucratic step that serves no purpose. Along with the waiver, it is required that a letter is sent home to each parent in the section that exceeds the 22:1 ratio, informing them the waiver has been submitted. There are times when the classes are below the 22:1 ratio after the waiver process has been completed due to students moving out of the district.

   **Proposed**
   PISD has filed for waivers on a yearly basis because of our unpredicted growth. While we certainly believe that small class size plays a positive role in the classroom, this must be balanced with the logistics of the timing of adding staff, and the best teacher to student ratio that can be achieved given the total number of students. While our goal will be to maintain the 22:1 ratio, in the event the class size exceeds the 22:1 ratio for Kindergarten – 4th grade classes, a TEA waiver
will not be necessary, but the superintendent will report to the Board of Trustees for approval. The board will be provided an update of class size numbers at the end of the 1st six week and at the end of the 4th six weeks. This exemption only allows PISD the local control over class size ratios, not a disregard for the intent of the ratio requirements. This plan also emphasizes the importance of flexible learning environments and student learning based upon student driven passions and needs. This grants flexibility in class size at all times-regrouping for success, small groups, large groups, etc. It also works to minimize paperwork requirements in order to free up time to place additional focus on student success. An exemption in meeting Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.112, will allow the ability to group students based upon academic, social, and emotional needs without adding ongoing filings of waivers when the need arises.

5. **Teacher Certification**

*Proposed*

PISD is committed to placing a life changer in every classroom. In order to best serve PISD students, decisions on certification will be handled locally. The current state teacher certification requirements inhibit the District's ability to hire teachers to teach hard to-fill, high demand dual credit, and career and technical/STEAM (applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts & Mathematics) courses. In order to enable more students to obtain the educational benefit of such course offerings, the District seeks to establish its own local qualification requirements and its own requirements for training of professionals and experts to teach such courses in lieu of the requirements set forth in law. This exemption directly supports the move from “highly qualified” requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire internal applicants seeking assignments outside of their traditional certification area. 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.

6. **90 Percent Attendance Rule**

**Currently**
State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days in order to earn credit. The law currently requires the District to award class credit to students based on "seat time" rather than based on content mastery.

**Proposed**
The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Abstaining from the requirement means the district won’t have to penalize students who miss class due to extra/co-curricular activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances. This exemption will allow the District to promote student engagement, as well as social and emotional development, by encouraging more students to participate in such activities. It will also allow PISD administrators to award credit to students because they can show they understand the concepts, rather than because they’ve attended a certain number of school days. 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. Exemption from this requirement will provide educational advantages to students of the District by promoting learning through innovation in the methods, locations, and times instruction may be delivered to students, thereby accommodating students with legitimate scheduling conflicts, reducing dropouts, and increasing the number of qualifying graduates. PISD will also explore other innovative ways to demonstrate mastery, given this exemption. This exemption supports overarching goals in the strategic plan 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 28,214, nor does it
restrict or alter a teacher's right to assign grades in accordance with Texas Education Code Section 28.0216.