



**NORTHSIDE INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**DISTRICT OF INNOVATION PLAN  
2023-2028**

**Amendment, March 2026**

**Dr. John Craft, Superintendent**

**2026  
School Board Members**

- |            |                                  |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| District 1 | David Salcido (Secretary)        |
| District 2 | Dr. Sonia Jasso (Vice President) |
| District 3 | Dr. Karla Duran (President)      |
| District 4 | Robert Blount, Jr. (Trustee)     |
| District 5 | Laura Zapata (Trustee)           |
| District 6 | Dr. Carol Harle (Trustee)        |
| District 7 | Karen Freeman (Trustee)          |

**2026**

**DISTRICT OF INNOVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Parents**

Crystal Rivas, Carlos Coon Elementary School  
Amy Hoffmann, Murnin Elementary School  
Catherine Lazo, Jordan Middle School

**Community Members**

Dr. Caroline Wernli  
Edmund Meyer

**Teachers**

Rose Davila, Thornton Elementary School  
Jeanna Oser, Glenoaks Elementary School  
Olivia Chamberlain, Cole Elementary School  
Jazmine Williams, Straus Middle School  
Leslie Ortiz, Zachry Middle School  
George Hickman, Jay High School  
Holly Robbins, Clark High School

**Principals**

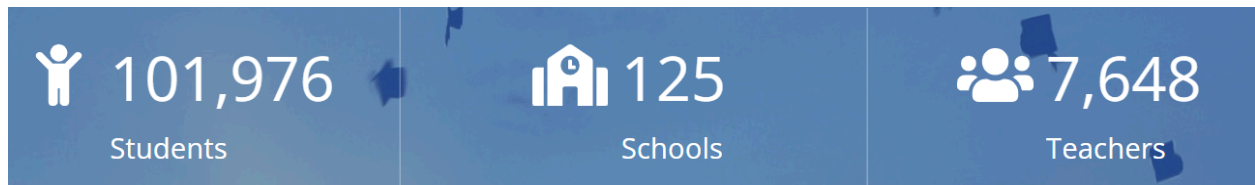
Adam Bock, Hatchet Elementary School  
Rene Esquivel, Tomlinson Elementary School  
Sherry Mireles, Rawlinson Middle School  
Dana Gilbert-Perry, Brandeis High School

**District Staff**

Dr. Jo Ann Fey, Deputy Superintendent of Administration  
Dr. Janis Jordan, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction  
Ben Muir, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources  
Jerry Woods, Assistant Superintendent for High School Curriculum and Instruction  
Sandy Bonnett, Executive Director of Elementary Administration  
Valerie Sisk, Executive Director of Secondary Administration  
Diana Ely, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning  
Kathleen Cuevas, Executive Director of Student Services  
Nicole Franco, Facilitator, Director of Leadership Development  
Debbie Ruel-Schaefer, Director of Career and Technical Education  
Carin Adermann, Director of Testing  
Dr. Suzy Ponton, Director of State and Federal Programs  
Katherine Lyssy, Director of Student Advocacy and School Choice  
Monica Perez, District Compliance Officer

## The Northside Independent School District

Established in 1949 by the consolidation of 12 rural school districts, Northside today is 355 square miles of urban landscape, suburban communities, and rural Texas hill country. As South Texas' largest school system, Northside is the "Destination District" for thousands of families wanting a high quality school system.



### Our Mission

Transform the Learning Experience for Students.

### Our Vision

Every day, every student grows in confidence, curiosity, and capability.

### Our Learner Profile

Every student will be:

Creators	Collaborators	Communicators	Critical Thinkers
Leaders	Learners	Innovators	Solution Finders

### Our Beliefs

- Each student deserves a quality education which honors their voice and prepares them to engage, contribute, and succeed.
- Students' health, safety, engagement, support, and challenge is directly linked to their academic achievement and future success.
- Meaningful relationships among students, families, educators, and the community are vital to student success.
- Classroom teachers have the most impact on student achievement followed by campus principals.
- Public schools are essential to foster community and develop engaged citizens.

## INTRODUCTION

The District of Innovation concept, passed during the 84th Legislative Session in House Bill 1842, gives traditional independent school districts most of the flexibilities available to Texas' open-enrollment charter schools. The flexibility derives from the district's ability to exempt itself from state mandates that may limit its ability to implement innovative ideas. The potential benefits of becoming a District of Innovation include increased local control to decide which flexibilities best suit local needs, freedom in customizing an innovation plan, and autonomy in that the innovation plan does not require state approval.

The term of the Plan is for five years, beginning April 26, 2023 and ending April 26, 2028, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. If, within the term of this Plan, other areas of operations are to be considered for flexibility as part of HB 1842, the Board will appoint a new committee to consider and propose additional exemptions in the form of an amendment to the Plan. Any amendment adopted by the Board will not extend the term of this Plan. The District may not implement two separate plans at any one time.

## Amendment Timeline

### 2026

Date	Forum	Action
February 24	Board Meeting	Approve moving forward with amendment
March 17	DOI Committee	Review draft of amendment
March 24	Board Meeting	Approve amendment
March 26	Submit Northside ISD Amended DOI Plan to TEA	

**2023**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Forum</b>	<b>Action</b>
November 15	Board Meeting	Approve Resolution
December 12	Academics Committee Meeting	Review Public Hearing and Committee
December 13	Board Meeting	Public Hearing; Appoint DOI Committee
Jan 12; 26; Feb 9	DOI Committee Meetings	Draft Plan
February 27	Academics Committee Meeting	Review Draft Plan and provide feedback
February 28	Board Meeting	Present Draft Plan
March 1 - March 31	Post Draft Plan to Website	Garner Public Feedback
March 7	NEIC Committee Meeting	Review Draft Plan and provide feedback
March 23	Academics Committee Meeting	Review Public Feedback
April 25	Board Meeting	Approve Plan
April 26	Submit Northside ISD DOI Plan to TEA	

**Uniform Start Date**  
**Texas Education Code §25.0811**

**Current Statute**

Except as provided by this section, a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August.

**Proposed**

Flexibility in regards to the uniform start date allows the district to designate the first day of school each year to best meet the needs of our students, staff, and community.

Additional advantages may include:

- The ability to assist in retention and hiring
- The ability to align to other districts' academic and UIL calendars
- The ability to balance the two semesters

The District will not implement this exemption for the purpose of altering the language in or application of teacher contracts.

Draft calendars will continue to be developed and feedback will be gathered from NISD stakeholders. This feedback will be used to form the final recommendation presented to the Board of Trustees.

**Affected Regulation and Policy**

(EB Legal/Local)

**Note:**The Board has adopted an innovation plan that affects application of provisions in this legally referenced policy.

**Probationary Contracts  
Texas Education 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.

**Proposed**

Flexibility in regards to the probationary contracts allows the district to evaluate the effectiveness and opportunity for growth of new educators to NISD in order to meet the needs of our students, staff, and community.

Additional advantages may include:

- Additional time to fully determine the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.
  - From 1 year to 2 years
- Aiding the district in growing a highly accomplished faculty
- Retention of teachers
- Additional time to align the teacher to District expectations

This exemption provides additional time to campus leaders to better evaluate an employee's effectiveness and provide an opportunity for professional growth as needed.

**Affected Regulation and Policy**

DCA Legal/Local, DBA Legal / Local  
HR 16 Regulation

**Note:**The Board has adopted an innovation plan that affects application of provisions in this legally referenced policy.

**Educator Certification Requirements  
Texas Education Code §21.003**

**Current Statute**

All teachers paid by a school district must hold the appropriate teacher certificate or permit.

**Proposed**

Flexibility in regards to the educator certification requirements allows the district to hire teachers for hard to fill, high demand secondary courses in order to meet the needs of our students, staff, and community. Due to federal guidelines, this flexibility doesn't apply to special education and bilingual/ESL teachers.

Additional advantages may include:

- The enrichment of applicant pools in specific secondary content areas

More details:

Teachers hired without an existing certification will be required to enroll in and successfully complete an alternative certification program.

Teachers hired with an existing out-of-state certification will be required to pass Texas state exams.

The District and hiring campus will assess appropriate professional learning needs for any teacher hired under this exemption.

The Board can review the District process for assessment of annual needs.

**Affected Regulation and Policy**

DK Legal / DK Local, DK Exhibit, DBA Legal / Local  
HR 24 Regulation

**Note:**The Board has adopted an innovation plan that affects application of provisions in this legally referenced policy.

**Teacher/Administration Appraisal System**  
**Texas Education Code §21.203, 21.352-21.3541**

**Current Statute**

The state issued a teacher appraisal system in 2016-2017 called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS). The domains within these systems are developed by the State to meet the needs of the entire State of Texas.

**Proposed**

Flexibility in regards to the Teacher/Administration Appraisal System allows the district to develop instruments that best meet the needs of our students, staff, and community.

Additional advantages may include:

- Alignment to the NISD Strategic Framework
- Support of the NISD Learner Profile
- Differentiation by professional role

**Affected Regulation and Policy**

DNA Legal / DNA Local  
DK Legal / Local/ Exhibit  
ADM 20 Regulation

DNB Legal / Local  
ADM 21 Regulation

**Note:**The Board has adopted an innovation plan that affects application of provisions in this legally referenced policy.

**Grievance Policy**  
**Texas Education Code §26.002, 26.011, 26A.002, 26A.003**

**Proposed**

Northside ISD has and will continue to adhere to an established grievance policy with procedures and timelines as outlined in its local Board's policies DGBA, FNG and GF. Such policies ensure thorough documentation of each step in the grievance process and provide adequate time for complaints to be filed, and for complaints to be heard. All records related to grievances, including submitted forms, communications, investigations, findings, resolutions, and any corrective actions are systematically maintained at the district level to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal and policy standards. The District is committed to monitoring the legality and appropriateness of every decision and action taken. The District is further committed to hearing, reviewing, and attempting to resolve all complaints, as well as to taking corrective action, where appropriate. Northside ISD's long-standing grievance policy will ensure that all such complaints are carefully reviewed and that district responses are in alignment with state and federal regulations, as well as all other local board policies.

Northside ISD follows established grievance procedures as outlined in district policy, specifically in relation to the timelines for filing an appeal prior to Texas Education Code §26.002 and for hearing such complaints. The district believes that a requirement for complaints to be submitted within 15 district business days from the date the grievant either knows, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action that is the subject of the grievance ensures prompt attention and resolution of concerns. In cases where the grievant does not receive the requested relief at the prior grievance level, or if the response deadline has passed without a reply, the grievant may proceed by submitting an appeal of the previous decision. This appeal must be submitted in writing, using the district-provided form, within ten (10) district business days of receiving the written response. If no written response is provided, the appeal must be submitted within ten (10) district business days following the deadline for the response at the applicable level. The District's current grievance policies also provide for Level Four grievances to go to the Board of Trustees, except for grievances related to extracurricular activities that do not arise from student or parental rights under Chapter 26 of the Education Code. Accuracy of information and access to individuals that are needed to provide necessary information surrounding an issue could be compromised after 60 to 90 days, or more. It is imperative that grievances and complaints are filed in a timely manner to ensure the best prompt response.

Northside ISD therefore requests relief from the timelines, processes and procedures imposed by 26.011, 26A.001, 26A.002, 26A.003 and will maintain its current grievance forms, with amended timelines, as well as processes and procedures for all grievants including employees, students and parents, and the public.

**Affected Regulation and Policy**

DGBA Legal / Local/ Exhibit  
FNG Legal / Local/ Exhibit  
GF Legal / Local/ Exhibit

**Note:**The Board has adopted an innovation plan that affects application of provisions in this

legally referenced policy.