

Alamo Heights ISD

District of Innovation Plan 2021-2026



Mission Statement

The Alamo Heights Independent School District, the heart of our community whose passion is excellence, will educate and empower every student to excel academically and as a confident, compassionate citizen with impeccable character and a global perspective through engaging, personally challenging, and relevant experiences that inspire learning for life.

Alamo Heights Independent School District

Profile of a Learner

Alamo Heights Learners:

Develop a Healthy Sense of Self

- Engage in self-reflection to understand one's personal strengths and unique gifts
- Recognize and address personal needs and challenges
- Make thoughtful choices that cultivate fulfillment and a balanced life
- Take responsibility for personal choices, actions and mistakes
- Develop and nurture healthy, loving relationships
- Live a physically healthy life
- Openly express themselves with humility and vulnerability

Alamo Heights Learners make informed and proactive choices in living healthy and balanced lives. Personal responsibility and integrity are acknowledged as the pillars of character and of community. Alamo Heights Learners reflect regularly upon success, failure, and their own learning, as well as on themselves as learners. Strong and stable school relationships and connectedness are key protective factors in the lives of Alamo Heights Learners. Moreover, they see even the most formidable challenges and failures as opportunities for personal growth.

Seek Knowledge and Understanding

- Exhibit intellectual curiosity
- Master a broad, rich curriculum
- Actively construct and demonstrate knowledge and skills
- Inherently value their own learning
- Nurture lifelong enthusiasm for learning
- Maximize resources to expand their learning environment

Throughout their school careers and beyond, Alamo Heights Learners apply the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind of core disciplines and the arts in the quest of understanding. Although the individual pace and path of the curriculum is calibrated to match differentiated student needs, mastery of a rigorous curriculum is developed through active construction of knowledge. Alamo Heights Learners pursue personalized and passion-based learning outside of classroom walls supported by community partnerships and unique time and space configurations.

Think Critically and Creatively

- Approach the world and others objectively
- Evaluate evidence and question assumptions
- Challenge existing mindsets and ways of thinking
- Identify, frame and solve multidimensional problems

Alamo Heights Learners demonstrate intellectual curiosity and resourcefulness and apply imagination and inventiveness in the creative process. Alamo Heights Learners cultivate a moral thoughtfulness

and poses the tenacity and persistence to deeply understand and take action on complex problems. They make objective decisions after considering the potential consequences of their actions and are willing to grow as a result of the experience.

Communicate and Collaborate

- Speak and write with clarity and purpose
- Graciously give and receive constructive feedback
- Listen compassionately to support others
- Listen to decipher meaning
- Assume shared responsibility in collaborative work
- Value the contributions of others
- Balance individual goals with group goals
- Work flexibly as leaders and contributors

Alamo Heights Learners express themselves purposefully, clearly, and creatively in their speaking and writing, as well as in other forms that they personally find effective and rewarding. As a result of their education and experiences, Alamo Heights Learners craft an authentic identity as leaders. They are able to restrain their individual goals to contribute to the collective efforts of a team and do not privilege speaking over listening. Rather, listening is valued as an essential communication tool. Alamo Heights Learners possess the skills to efficiently and responsibly communicate in all phases of daily life, from face-to-face interactions to social media.

Employ Skills for Life

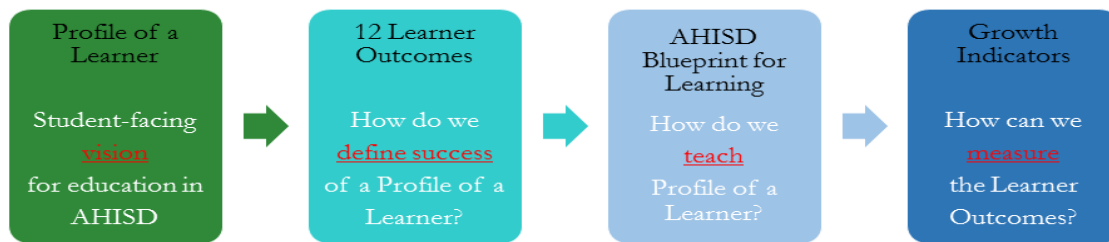
- Develop strong work ethic and exhibit professionalism
- Take risks, accept challenges and value the learning that comes from failure
- Demonstrate adaptability and flexibility in an ever-changing world
- Apply learning to real-world situations
- Effectively manage time, assess progress and evaluate results
- Display grit and resilience in the face of challenge
- Exhibit exceptional character

In tandem with academic skills, Alamo Heights Learners acquire the core skills needed to support success in higher education and the work place. Alamo Heights Learners are persistent in the face of challenge and courageous by taking risks in thinking. Alamo Heights Learners can anticipate and respond positively to shifting environments and situations. In addition, Alamo Heights Learners demonstrate personal accountability through integrity, punctuality, and workload management.

Engage Socially and Globally

- Model a spirit of mutual respect for all
- Understand their relationship and responsibility to society
- Value diversity as a strength
- Understand and engage in local, national and global issues
- Exhibit responsible digital citizenship
- Communicate effectively in more than one language
- Add value to the world through service

Alamo Heights Learners respect their own culture as well as the values, traditions, and personal histories of others to the point of empathy. Recognizing the strength of bilingualism, Alamo Heights Learners promote and seek language learning. Alamo Heights Learners model appropriate and responsible technology use. Contributing to a more just, sustainable and peaceful society, Alamo Heights Learners give back through engaging in service learning in the community and beyond.



Profile of a Learner

An Alamo Heights ISD education prepares students within a community devoted to creating lifelong learners, involved citizens, and caring people. The **AHISD Profile of a Learner** was developed with input from teachers, administrators, parents, and most importantly, students. Additionally, the School Board played an active role in the entire process. The core mission guiding the creation of the **Profile of a Learner** was to identify key skills, traits, and behaviors that Alamo Heights students will need to be successful beyond the walls of our schools- in college, careers, and relationships.

While remaining adamantly committed to academic excellence, the **AHISD Profile of a Learner** moves parents, staff members, and students beyond a high-stakes testing focus. We aim to educate the “whole child.” We strive to prepare all of our Alamo Heights learners to be competitive leaders in our global economy with an enormous capacity to adapt, create and engage in the world with empathy and integrity.

The **Alamo Heights Profile of a Learner** identifies six key aspirational traits for our students and describes the unique experiences students will need to develop those traits during their tenure in our schools.

Engaged Classrooms

To actualize the goals embodied in the **Profile of a Learner**, Alamo Heights ISD must adopt classroom practices in direct alignment with the Profile and design innovative and flexible learning environments and curriculum systems. Learning from pitfalls of other districts who unsuccessfully tried to implement one-to-one technology initiatives, Alamo Heights began with a responsible roll-out of classroom transformations, teacher training, and technology integration. This responsible roll-out began in the fall of 2016 with 17 Engaged Classrooms.

Through a rigorous application process, 17 classroom teachers were selected to pilot the Engaged Classroom model. These classrooms received new furniture designed to support flexible learning and collaboration. Additional technology was added into each Engaged Classroom so that each student has access to a device (iPad or Chromebook) to expand their personal boundaries of what can be accomplished in school.

Knowing that technology can only amplify what is already occurring in a classroom, teachers also were provided with a new planning process called the Blueprint for Learning that specifically identifies both student and teacher actions that support the **Profile of a Learner**.

Learner Outcomes

The measurement acquired through state assessments is completed after instruction concludes and is one snapshot of a student's achievement. In Alamo Heights ISD, we are committed to finding new and better ways to measure what matters to our local community as well as assessment of learning when there is still time to improve student performance. Through the work of a committee of stakeholders, AHISD identified 12 specific Learner Outcomes to measure the growth of our students within the Profile of a Learner and the success of our Engaged Classroom model to accelerate student growth. The 12 Learner Outcomes are measured annually through a combination of surveys, portfolio artifacts, and other data (see *"2016 Engaged Classroom Growth Indicators Plan"* on page 8).

Creating effective and reliable surveys requires a scientifically rigorous and reliable set of questions and a novel approach to survey administration. To generate information that can be trusted to make decisions, we need to ask the right questions in the right way. Panorama Education developed a menu of survey constructs that can be used to measure perceptions of teaching and learning and assess more than a dozen hard-to-quantify classroom dynamics like engagement, interest in subject matter, grit, relationships and school safety. Panorama provides data analytics based on robust national norms and provides reports and analysis that are clear, actionable, and focused on our specific Alamo Heights goals

Alamo Heights ISD as a District of Innovation

House Bill 1842, passed in the 84th Texas Legislative Session, provides an opportunity for Texas public school districts to modify state requirements at the local level to better meet the needs of their unique student populations, in order to prepare them for success and lifelong learning. As a District of Innovation, Alamo Heights ISD will be able to implement the work of our **AHISD Profile of a Learner** with the increased flexibility and freedom necessary to be innovative with the kinds of learning experiences afforded to our students. Making important educational decisions at the local level is the most effective way to support the innovation plans in our district.

District of Innovation Timeline:

Board Meeting: 3/25/21	Process begins either with a board of trustees resolution.
DEAC Meeting: 4/14/21	Chapter 11 district committee holds a public meeting to consider and approve the final version with a majority vote.
Board Meeting: 4/15/21	Board conducts a public hearing to consider developing an innovation plan.
Board Meeting: 05/13/21	Within 30 days of public hearing (done in April 2021) Board must formally decide to pursue or decline the opportunity (May 2021 intent to adopt).
5/14/21- 6/7/21	Post on your district website for at least 30 days.
Day After Board Meeting: 05/14/2021	Board notifies the Commissioner of intent to adopt plan,
Board Meeting: 6/16/2021	Board of Trustees adopts with two-thirds majority vote.

This plan is specific to the exemptions as outlined. The district intends to follow the Texas Education Code in all other areas. If at some point it is decided that changes or additional exemptions should be considered, as per the Districts of Innovation process, the district will reconvene the District of Education Advisory Committee to explore the request.

Under HB 1842, districts may identify certain requirements imposed by the Texas Education Code (TEC) "that inhibit the goals of the plan and from which the district should be exempted on adoption of the plan. . ." The **AHISD Profile of a Learner** demands innovative practices and opportunities for our students, and therefore, AHISD seeks exemption from the following permissible provisions of the TEC as allowed in the statute:

- Uniform Start Date
- Minimum Minutes of Instruction
- Class Size Ratio
- 90 Percent Attendance
- Campus Behavior Coordinator Provisions
- Teacher Certification
- Teacher Appraisal System
- Probationary Contracts

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 semester course curriculum.

In addition, flexibility in the start and end of the school year would allow students to enroll in college courses that begin in early June, thereby increasing college and career readiness. Removing the uniform start date could also allow AHISD to begin the first week of classes with a shortened week, easing the transition for students entering kindergarten, middle school, and high school. This will also allow for more flexible professional development opportunities for our staff.

Minimum Minutes of Instruction

(EC LEGAL & EB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.081)

Current Statute:

House Bill (HB) 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amends the Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.081, by striking language requiring 180 days of instruction and replacing this language with language requiring districts and charter schools to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction (including intermissions and recess). The bill also allows school districts and charter schools to add minutes as necessary to compensate for minutes of instruction lost due to school closures caused by disaster, flood, extreme weather conditions, fuel curtailment, or another calamity.

Proposed

The flexibility to adjust minutes of instruction will assist with personalizing learning to better meet individual student needs. Communication about student progress is essential for the innovative work taking place through our Blueprint for Learning. The AHISD community values the opportunity to meet face to face with teachers to discuss student progress. Early release time would allow parent-teacher conferences to occur both in the fall and spring semesters. A later start or additional early release time would accommodate professional development/collaboration opportunities for teachers.

Class Size Ratio

(EEB LEGAL) (Ed. Code 25.111) (Ed. Code 25.112) (Ed. Code 25.113)

Current Statute:

Kindergarten – 4th Grade class sizes are to remain at or below 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 completed at the start of a school year as well as anytime a child enrolls in an elementary school at a grade level where the ratio is already maintained according to staffing projections the previous year.

Proposed Flexibility:

AHISD offers an innovative language program, Spanish Immersion, for native English speakers who desire a one-way language bilingual learning experience starting in first grade. This program is highly sought after, which causes our district to implement a program lottery for placement. Parents sign a program commitment form to commit to a minimum of five years in the program. (The AHISD Spanish Immersion program is through grade 12). In order to plan for attrition during the first five years of the program commitment, AHISD creates the classrooms at a 24-1 class ratio and provides the classroom teacher with a full time paraprofessional. Annually, AHISD is required to seek a waiver to approve this practice that supports the program design.

In addition, flexibility around class size can be considered at the elementary level in configurations that support the work of the engaged classrooms and student needs at certain grade levels.

90 Percent Attendance Rule

(FEC LOCAL) (Ed. Code 25.092)

Current statute:

State law currently requires students attend class 90 percent of the school days on a district calendar to earn credit. The law requires districts to award class credit to students based on the time a student is present in a classroom for instruction, rather than mastery of content and subject proficiency.

Proposed flexibility:

The 90 percent rule is an arbitrary percentage, which means school districts award credit based on seat time rather than based on content mastery. Flexibility in the abstaining from the requirement means the district won't have to penalize students who miss class due to enriching activities, academic activities, or other extenuating circumstances that supports AHISD's goal to educate the whole child.

To meet the needs of 21st century learners, AHISD would like to investigate the option to provide students credit for courses based on content mastery, not the amount of time the student spends in the classroom.

This exemption would allow the district to provide innovative options to promote student engagement in course material in flexible ways, ultimately allowing learning to happen anytime, anyplace apart from the traditional way of delivering instruction.

Additionally, flexibility in this area directly supports AHISD's goal of educating the whole child. Our students attain valuable and meaningful learning from extra/co-curricular activities and experiences that currently count against the student's 90% attendance availability if a student has to miss part of the traditional school day.

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.

Campus Behavior Coordinator Provisions

(FO LEGAL & LOCAL) (Ed. Code 37.0012)

Current Statute:

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 flexibility:

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

Teacher Certification

(DK LEGAL, DK LOCAL, DK EXHIBIT) (Ed. Code 21.044, 21.003)

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.

Proposed Flexibility:

The flexibility in allowing AHISD 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, high demand dual credit courses.

In addition, the flexibility would offer the opportunity to expand course section offerings in world languages in response to student interest and proficiency levels at various times.

By obtaining exemption from existing teacher certification requirements, the District will have the flexibility to hire community college instructors, university professors, instructors with real world/native-expertise (after verification of language proficiency by district staff), 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.

Teacher Appraisal System

(DNA LEGAL, DNA LOCAL) (Ed. Code 21.203) (Ed. Code 21.352)

Current Statute:

The state is issuing a new 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:

A committee of district and campus administrators and teachers can convene to determine a best fit instrument to support the work of our **AHISD Profile of a Learner**. As we move forward with the implementation of the growth indicators for students, our professional staff will also set goals in coordination with these efforts, including multiple observations, goal setting and tracking, and student growth progress toward learning objectives, as evaluation measures on teacher and administrator appraisals.

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 Alamo Heights ISD. This will allow AHISD to better evaluate a teacher's effectiveness.

Group Health Coverage

(CRD LEGAL) (Ed. Code 22.004(i))

Current Statute:

Texas Education Code 22.004(i) states that a school district may **not** make group health coverage available to its employees pursuant to TEC 22.004(b) after the date a District implements the program of coverages provided under Chapter 1579 of the Texas Insurance Code. The current process allows no flexibility in the design of group health insurance benefits to fit the needs of all District employees. This provision also prohibits the District from procuring group health insurance benefits that may provide better coverage for its employees and at a lower cost. This provision does not give the District the flexibility needed to acquire benefits packages that would potentially be more attractive to prospective employees that would be the highest quality for our students.

Proposed Flexibility (adopted February 21, 2020):

In order to have the option to offer additional benefit options to employees, the District proposes that the District of Innovation Plan be amended to exempt the District from the health insurance requirements in Texas Education Code 22.004 (i).