The 84th Legislative Session passed House Bill 1842, allowing Texas public school districts to become Districts of Innovation and thus permitting exemption from certain provisions of the Texas Education Code. On January 19, 2017 the Pecos-Barstown-Toyah Board of Trustees passed a Resolution to Adopt a District of Innovation (DOI) Plan to increase local control over District operations and to support innovation and local initiatives. The adoption of this plan seeks to increase the District's flexibility in order to improve educational outcomes for the benefit of the students, staff, parents and community. Districts of Innovation may be exempted from a number of state statutes such as the following (but not limited to):

- Educator Certification
- Teacher Contracts
- First and Last Day of School
- Length of School Day
- Class Size
- Certain Purchasing and Contract Requirement

Thus giving the district:

- Greater local control as the decision makers over the educational and instructional model for students;
- Increased freedom and flexibility, with accountability, relative to state mandates that govern educational programming; and
- Empowerment to innovate and think differently.

**Term**

The District of Innovation Plan will become effective in March 2017 and will remain in effect for five years, through March 2022, unless terminated or amended earlier by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the law. Any amendment to the Innovation Plan must follow the same process as the plan development. The District of Innovation Committee would consider any proposed amendment/s. Any amendment/s would require majority approval of the District of Innovation Committee, a majority approval of the District Site-Based Committee, and posting on the district website for 30 days. A 2/3 vote by the Board of Trustees would be required for final approval of any amendment/s.

**DOI Advisory Committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivas, Luzema</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Evans, Lori</td>
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<td>Redmon, Karen</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Ontiveros, Art</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<td>Velez, Cindy</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Corrales, Lisa</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<td>McGraw, LeAnn</td>
<td>Interim-Principal</td>
<td>McKinney, Analisa</td>
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<td>Fowlkes, Stacie</td>
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<td>Rayos, Jenny</td>
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<td>Matta, Nikki</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Torres, Precilla</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<td>Mondragon, Marty</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Wimberly, Susan</td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Munoz, Horacio</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Aguilar, Carly</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<td>Mitchell, Alicia</td>
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<td>Flores, Belia</td>
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<td>Aguilar-Lane, Felicia</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Galindo, Iris</td>
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<td>Chavez, Anabelle</td>
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<td>Salgado, Omar</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Strickling, Lee Ann</td>
<td>Community</td>
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<td>Lara, Lucy</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Fields, Cynthia</td>
<td>Ex-Officio Member</td>
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<td>Rios, Art</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Haley, Jim</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porras, Alma</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Richard, Teresa</td>
<td>Curriculum/IT Director</td>
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Areas of Innovation

1. First and Last Day of School
   (EB Legal, Local) (TEC §25.0811)

Under current Texas state law, “a school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August” (TEC 25.0811).

Removing the constraints of the current uniform start date PBT ISD would be able to determine locally and on an annual basis what is best for our community. Having the ability to modify the start date provides for increased local control of the instructional calendar to balance semester days; align classes to college courses, advanced placement exams, and state assessment timelines; and be more responsive to community needs. PBT ISD will not develop a calendar that begins before the 3rd Monday of August.

2. Campus Behavior Coordinator
   (FO Legal, Local) (TEC 37.0012)

Under current Texas state law “The person designated as the CBC may be the principal of the campus or any other campus administrator selected by the principal.

Implementation of TEC 37.0012 limits the ability of children to develop positive relationships with a variety of adults who have a vested interest in their mental and emotional development and wellness. Current law restricts the ability of campus administrators and educators to focus on each student’s needs through a collaborative disciplinary approach.

A collaborative disciplinary approach will be developed at the campus level and may include: educators, counselors, and administrators. The Assistant Principal/Administrator most closely related to the disciplinary situation will contact the responsible adult of student(s) involved. Each campus will undergo a development plan process that collaboratively creates a chain of communication that best meets the needs of the campus.

3. Educator Certification
   (DK Legal) (DK Exhibit) (DBA Legal) (DBA Local) (TEC 21.002) (TEC 21.003)

Under current Texas state law, 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.

TEC 21.002 states that “a school district shall employ each classroom teacher, principal, librarian, nurse, or school counselor under either a probationary, continuing, or term contract.”

TEC 21.003 states that “a person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern, or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter b.”

In order to best serve the students of PBT ISD, decisions on certification will be handled locally.
   a. The principal may submit to the superintendent a request to allow a teacher to teach subject(s) out of their certified field. The principal must specify in writing the reason for the request and document what credentials the teacher possesses which would qualify this individual to teach this subject.
   b. An individual with experience in a CTE field could be eligible to teach a vocational skill or course through a local teaching certificate. The principal will submit the request to the superintendent with all the individual's credentials. The superintendent will then approve the request if they feel the individual could be an asset to students. The superintendent will then report this action to the Board of Trustees prior to the individual beginning any employment. The employee will be at-will.
c. This plan will provide more flexibility in our scheduling and more options for our students in class offerings.

4. **Teacher Contracts**

*Probationary Contracts* (DCA Legal) (TEC §21.002, §21.102)

Under current Texas state law “the probationary period may not exceed one year for a person who has been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment by the district.”

A one year probationary period is not a sufficient amount of time to evaluate the teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. Currently, contracts for employees occur in March which demands that employment decisions must be made with very little time for evaluating teacher effectiveness and prior to state assessment results.

For experienced administrators, teachers, counselors, librarians, or nurses new to the district that have been employed as an educator in public education for at least five of the eight previous years, a probationary contract may be issued for up to two/three years from the first day of employment.

5. **Mentor Teachers**

(DEAA Legal) (TEC 21.458)

Under current Texas state law “Each school district may assign a mentor teacher to each classroom teacher who has less than two years of teaching experience in the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned.” Also under current Texas state law the mentor “qualifications must require that to serve as a mentor a teacher must: (1) complete a research-based mentor and induction training program approved by the commissioner; (2) complete a mentor training program provided by the district; and (3) have at least three complete years of teaching experience with a superior record of assisting students, as a whole, in achieving improvement in student performance."

This provision states that the district may only assign a mentor to a teacher with less than two years of teaching experience, despite the fact that a teacher at any level of experience may benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship. The District needs the flexibility to assign mentors to more experienced teachers in need of assistance. The statute also sets eligibility requirements for mentor teachers, which limits the available pool of mentor teachers.

In order to better serve the needs of the district, PBT ISD will exercise local discretion in assigning teachers with more than two years of experience a mentor that excels in areas that are targeted for improvement or innovation, such as project based learning. In addition, mentors would be exempt from the qualifications described in Subsection (b), thus increasing the pool of teachers from which the district could draw for these targeted mentoring programs. Teachers assigned to serve as mentors would be selected based on a variety of factors, including experience, knowledge, and areas of instruction targeted for improvement or innovation.